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## **GENDER INEQUALITY AND EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF WOMEN FROM ETHNIC COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF TAJIK WOMEN FROM THE TURKESTAN REGION**

Gender inequality in education and professional development remains a pressing issue in modern society, especially among ethnic communities. This study analyzes the educational and career opportunities of Tajik women in the Turkestan region of Kazakhstan. The aim of the study is to examine the influence of traditional, Soviet and Western discourses on gender roles, educational aspirations and professional opportunities of Tajik women.

The methodology of the work is based on a qualitative approach, including narrative interviews and observations of the objects of study. The opinions of more than 16 respondents, represented by women of the Tajik ethnic group of different ages, levels of education and social status, were analyzed. The obtained qualitative data were processed using MAXQDA software.

The main findings of the study show that Tajik women face limitations related to traditional gender roles and the specifics of their ethnocultural environment. Despite the desire to provide their children with an education, social and financial barriers remain serious obstacles. The influence of family expectations, cultural traditions and socio-economic conditions limits their professional and educational prospects.

The work contributes to the study of gender inequality, demonstrating the complexity of the interaction of cultural discourses in the formation of women's social roles. The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of understanding barriers in education and in the professional realization of Kazakhstani women in general, using the example of Tajik women and in the development of opportunities aimed at increasing the level of education and social status of women to implement gender equality in Kazakhstan.

**Key words:** gender inequality, education, ethnic communities, career, Tajik ethnicity, women.

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### **Этникалық қауымдастықтардағы әйелдердің гендерлік теңсіздігі және білім беру ұмтылыстары: Түркістан өңіріндегі тәжік әйелдерінің мысалында**

Қазіргі қоғамда, әсіресе этникалық қауымдастықтар арасында білім берудегі және кәсіби қызмет көрсетудегі гендерлік теңсіздік өзекті мәселе болып қала береді. Бұл зерттеу Қазақстанның Түркістан облысындағы тәжік әйелдерінің білім алу және мансаптық мүмкіндіктерін талдауға арналған. Зерттеудің мақсаты – дәстүрлі, кеңестік және батыстық дискурстардың тәжік әйелдерінің гендерлік рөлдеріне, білім алу ұмтылыстарына және кәсіби мүмкіндіктеріне әсерін зерттеу болып табылады.

Жұмыс әдістемесі әңгімелеу сұхбаттары мен зерттеу объектілерін бақылауды қамтитын сапалы тәсілге негізделген. Жасы, білім деңгейі мен әлеуметтік жағдайы әртүрлі тәжік ұлтының әйелдерінен құралған 16-дан астам респонденттердің пікірлері талданды. Алынған сапалы деректер MAXQDA бағдарламалық құралының көмегімен өңделді.

Зерттеу нәтижелері тәжік әйелдерінің дәстүрлі гендерлік рөлдерге және олардың этномәдени ортасының ерекшеліктеріне байланысты шектеулерге тап болғанын көрсетеді. Балаларына білім беруге ұмтылғанына қарамастан, әлеуметтік және қаржылық шектеулер басты кедергілер болып қала береді. Отбасылық үміттердің, мәдени дәстүрлердің және әлеуметтік-экономикалық жағдайлардың әсері олардың кәсіби және білім беру мүмкіндіктерін шектейді.

Жұмыс әйелдердің әлеуметтік рөлдерін қалыптастырудағы мәдени дискурстардың өзара әрекеттесуінің күрделілігін көрсете отырып, гендерлік теңсіздікті зерттеуге үлес қосады.

теудің практикалық құндылығы тәжік әйелдерінің мысалында жалпы қазақстандық әйелдердің кәсіби іске асыру мен білім берудегі кедергілерді түсіну үшін пайдалы болып келеді. Сондай-ақ, зерттеу әйелдердің білім деңгейі мен әлеуметтік мәртебесін арттыру арқылы Қазақстанда гендерлік теңдікті жүзеге қамтамасыз етуге бағытталған мүмкіндіктерді әзірлеуді көздейді.

**Түйін сөздер:** гендерлік теңсіздік, білім, этникалық қауымдастықтар, мансап, тәжік этносы, әйелдер.

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### **Гендерное неравенство и образовательные устремления женщин из этнических сообществ: на примере таджикских женщин Туркестанского региона**

Гендерное неравенство в образовании и профессиональной реализации остается актуальной проблемой в современном обществе, особенно среди этнических сообществ. Настоящее исследование посвящено анализу образовательных и карьерных возможностей таджикских женщин в Туркестанском регионе Казахстана. Целью исследования является изучение влияния традиционных, советских и западных дискурсов на гендерные роли, образовательные устремления и профессиональные возможности таджикских женщин.

Методология работы базируется на качественном подходе, включающем нарративные интервью и наблюдения за объектами исследования. Были проанализированы мнения более 16 респонденток, представленных женщинами таджикской этнической группы разного возраста, уровня образования и социального положения. Полученные качественные данные были обработаны с использованием программного обеспечения MAXQDA.

Результаты исследования указывают, что таджикские женщины сталкиваются с ограничениями, связанными с традиционными гендерными ролями и особенностями их этнокультурной среды. Несмотря на стремление дать своим детям образование, социальные и финансовые барьеры остаются серьезными препятствиями. Влияние семейных ожиданий, культурных традиций и социально-экономических условий ограничивает их профессиональные и образовательные перспективы.

Работа вносит вклад в изучение гендерного неравенства, демонстрируя сложность взаимодействия культурных дискурсов в формировании социальных ролей женщин. Практическая ценность исследования заключается в возможности понимания барьеров в образовании и в профессиональной реализации казахстанских женщин в целом, на примере женщин-таджичек и в разработки возможностей, направленных на повышение уровня образования и социального статуса женщин для осуществления гендерного равенства в Казахстане.

**Ключевые слова:** гендерное неравенство, образование, этнические сообщества, карьера, таджикский этнос, женщины.

## **Introduction**

Social inequality refers to the unfair or uneven distribution of resources and opportunities among members of society (Koh, 2020), which is determined by their availability. Gender inequality, including in the educational sphere, remains a pressing issue in both developed and developing countries (Zajda, 2022). These issues continue to play a key role in the context of human development and sustainable economic growth.

In the context of accelerating digitalization, which creates risks of digital and other forms of inequality, the quality and accessibility of education at all levels are of particular importance. Kazakhstan ranks 76th among 146 countries with an

index of 0.710, which reflects significant progress in achieving gender equality. The highest indicators are noted in the field of education, where the index reaches 0.999, indicating full equality. At the same time, in the field of economic participation and opportunity, the results are less impressive, with an index of 0.751 (Global Gender Gap report 2024 Briefing)

Gender inequality in education can reduce the overall level of human capital in a society, reduce the positive externalities of education (Karimah & Susanti, 2022), increase income inequality (Badriah & Istiqomah, 2022), and slow economic growth (Ezekwe & Enweani, 2019). At the same time, eliminating gender inequality in education contributes to the growth of real GDP per capita (Esen & Seren,

2022) and increases economic productivity (Ben Saâd & Assoumou-Ella, 2019). In this regard, one of the Sustainable Development Goals is defined as “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (Leal Filho et al., 2022). According to the “3E” concept of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, education is a key factor in the empowerment of women, along with employment and entrepreneurship (OECD, 2014a).

The relevance of this article is due to several factors. Firstly, Kazakhstan is a country with a multinational population, where Tajiks, like representatives of other ethnic groups, comply with some of the community requirements, especially in the southern regions. At the beginning of 2024, 55,1913 Tajiks live in Kazakhstan, which is 0.3% of the total population of the republic. The majority of Tajiks live in rural areas (72%), namely in the Turkestan region 70.4% of people. Most of them live in the Maktaaral (15,228 people), Zhetysay (12,410 people) and Saryagash (9,491 people) districts (Population, 2024). Tajiks in Kazakhstan are known for having many children, however, it is worth noting that large families are typical not only for certain ethnic groups, but also for various ethnic groups in the southern regions (Kim G., 2024). Tajiks were chosen for interpretation in this article as one of the many ethnic communities of Kazakhstan, however, this does not mean that problems of access to education and professional development are typical only for this ethnic group, such features are also present in the indigenous Kazakh population. Tajik women, living mainly in the south of Kazakhstan, occupy an important place in the country’s economy due to their role in agricultural production. As representatives of the “melon people,” they are actively engaged in the cultivation of melons, such as watermelons and melons, which contributes to the development of the agricultural sector and provides a significant volume of the country’s exports. However, despite their contribution to the economy, Tajik women often remain outside corporate structures and formal employment, which limits their opportunities for social and professional development.

Secondly, Kazakhstan is actively implementing programs to promote gender equality and support communities. However, the lack of data on the special education and career opportunities of women from different ethnic groups makes it difficult to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. The example of Tajik women can be used to examine the common problems faced by women of many ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan. Re-

search into such cases allows us to identify barriers and offer universal recommendations for improving access to education and professional development, benefiting various groups in society.

Thirdly, Tajik women, as representatives of the community, face gender inequality. Traditional norms, the role of women in the family, as well as economic and language barriers can limit their opportunities for education and professional growth. Research on this topic is important for understanding how cultural and gender characteristics affect the social mobility of women from communities.

### Literature review

Kazakhstan has a unique combination of historical and contemporary cultural influences that shape gender role expectations. First, traditional culture, which intertwines nomadic and Islamic elements, has a significant influence. In nomadic culture, men and women were seen as equal participants in public life, sharing responsibilities for raising livestock, managing migration, and, when necessary, participating in military action or tribal leadership (Balgabayeva et al., 2016). These traditions are complemented by Islamic influences, as Kazakhs adopted Islam in the 12th century, although their religious practices remain moderate (Balgabayeva et al., 2016; Louw, 2007). Most women do not adhere to strict Islamic norms, such as wearing the hijab (Zhandossova, 2024).

The second major influence comes from Soviet ideology, which continues to leave its mark on the country’s life and political views. Soviet gender equality policies encouraged women’s participation in the economy, viewing them as an important part of the workforce. Women were provided with social guarantees, such as long maternity and childcare leave, but their access to leadership positions and decision-making was limited (Werner, 2003; Kandiyoti, 2007).

The third cultural influence is related to globalization processes and the spread of Western liberal values. These trends have contributed to the growth of women’s expectations regarding career development, equal wages and working conditions, but have also brought with them problems related to sexism and stereotypes transmitted through popular culture (Kandiyoti, 2007).

The combination of traditional, Soviet and Western values creates unique conditions that influence women’s choice of education and career path. However, the nature of this influence remains un-

derstudied. The study of these processes is important not only for Kazakhstan and Central Asia, but also for global theory devoted to issues of gender equality, education and employment. In a context of increasing globalization and cultural interaction, many women in different countries are confronted with a similar combination of influences that shapes their experiences in unique yet universal ways.

Gender role theory (Eagly, 1987) suggests that people engage in activities that conform to their culturally defined gender roles. According to social role theory, societal expectations about the roles of women and men are transmitted through the process of socialization (Eagly & Wood, 2011). Young women are socialized into gender role expectations and are raised to conform to expectations about their social roles (Eagly & Wood, 2011). Such gender role beliefs exist in society, contribute to the formation of certain norms and practices of socialization and encourage people to conform to these norms (Eagly & Wood, 2011). The impact of social roles and expectations on decisions about balancing work and family life. The study found that women often experience increased pressure to balance career and family responsibilities, which can affect their professional choices and career prospects. This suggests that societal expectations of gender roles and family responsibilities influence individual decisions and career advancement opportunities (Greenhouse A., 2016). The importance of social role theory in explaining gender differences in career achievement and in developing interventions that promote gender equality in careers. Social role theory examines the influence of social norms and stereotypes on people's behaviour and choices, providing a framework for analysing career differences between men and women (Koenig R, 2011) Translated with DeepL.com (free version) According to societal gender roles, men are associated with more powerful work positions, and women are associated with a domestic role and less powerful work (Kagazbekova, 2020).

Gender theory of organization suggests that the culture of any organization is not gender-neutral and that the formation of social and organizational structures and logics in organizations is based on a deep process of genderization (Acker, 1990). Through this organizational culture, women are often discriminated against because they occupy less powerful positions.

Research demonstrates that gender inequality in education also manifests itself in the professional sphere through the 'glass ceiling' effect. Shows that entrenched social and gender role expectations

perpetuate stereotypes that limit women's career advancement, even in the presence of high levels of education (Eagly & Wood 2011).

According to the theory of equal opportunity, the level of income, health and education depended on circumstances beyond the control of the individual and on the efforts that were within his or her responsibility. Initially, the theory of equal opportunity was developed within the framework of social philosophy, until D. Ramos (Ramos, 2016) proposed the introduction of a mathematical formula, which contributed to the development and application of quantitative methods. A new technique for assessing opportunities was also developed by F. Ferreira and D. Gignoux (Ferreira, Gignoux, 2014).

Many researchers believe that gender inequality will decrease with economic growth. N. Forsythe explained the differences between men and women by differences in human capital, wage levels and employment. (Forsythe, 2000) According to E. Boserup, the gender gap widens at the initial stage of economic development, but it decreases over time as a country's economy strengthens. However, economic growth alone is not enough – changes in the political sphere are also needed, as early stages of economic development are often accompanied by gender bias. (Boserup, 1970) Gender inequality is largely determined by patriarchal family structure, wage differentials and unequal distribution of property, and economic growth does not always have a positive impact on these factors.

Thus, K. Barone and L. Ruggera (Barone, Ruggera, 2018), when studying the factors that influence the acquisition of education, taking into account different opportunities that are not always equal for individuals, identified effects that they described as primary and secondary. According to researchers, the primary effect is influenced by the social status of the family (1. economic factor; 2. cultural and educational factor). The secondary effect is when the transition to a new educational level is correlated with the social background. And the influence here is exerted by: 1. The economic factor – the costs of education and 2. The psychological factor – the education of the parents is a certain point that the child wants to reach (Beimishева, 2023)

## Methods and methodology

The study is based on a qualitative method, which is used in the context of the limitations of existing research on the topic under consideration. A qualitative approach is also indispensable when



studying new, little-studied issues that are difficult to fit into a strict theoretical framework, the boundaries of specific or group choices (Baltacı, 2019). The qualitative method is used when the study of the object includes subgroups about which it is impossible to obtain detailed information (for example, gender, age or place of residence). In this case, the choice of a qualitative approach is due to the fact that the research problem has not previously been considered comprehensively and systematically in Kazakhstan. Given the specificity and small size of the groups studied, this method turned out to be the most effective for conducting field research.

The data for the analysis were obtained within the framework of the project of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education AR14870213 “Women from Ethnic Communities as a Channel for Reproduction and Formation of a National Project and Ethnic Identity (on the Example of the Turkestan Region and Shymkent city)”. The object of the study were women over 18 years of age of the Tajik ethnic group in the Turkestan region with experience in raising children.

The study used narrative in-depth interviews and sociological observation. Narrative interviews are unstructured, in-depth tools with different characteristics, conditioned by the respondent's life history and cross-sectional analysis of the situational context. This is an interview that encourages the interviewer to convey important events in the informant's life and social context. In this method, based on the idea of reconstructing social events based on the informants' perspective, the interviewer's influence on the conversation is minimal (Muylaert, 2014).

More than 100 women from ethnic communities took part in the study. In this article, we want to provide an interpretation of the data of Tajik women (16 in-depth narrative interviews). Before the interview, informants were provided with information on the topic and objectives of the study, voluntary participation. The participants were explained the conditions of anonymity, confidentiality of their data and were guaranteed their use exclusively for scientific purposes. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured format based on a prepared preliminary and adapted guide. The duration of each interview ranged from 1 to 1.5 hours. The MAX-QDA software designed for qualitative data analysis was used to process the data. This program was used to systematize, identify key narratives and interpret them.

## Results and discussion

### *Education and occupation of Tajik women*

As actors and beneficiaries, women are included in the processes of institutionalization of society. They are at both ends of this process. In this regard, the education system is of great importance. The sample of the sociological study also included women with different levels of education and occupations. The majority of Tajik women have secondary education (63%), and only 31.25% of informants have higher education.

Tajik women interviewed were employed in teaching, trade, medicine and other services; 6 out of 16 respondents were housewives. Most of the women interviewed said that they directly linked their development and the development of their children with education.

*Мұғаліммін. Тәрбиеші болып істедім. Қазір зерттеуші, информатика пәнінен сабақ беремін. Жоғары білімім бар. (Translation: I am a teacher, I used to work as a kindergarten teacher. Now I am a researcher, I teach computer science. I have a higher education).*

*Tajik woman, 41 years old, teacher*

*Білімім жоғары универде оқығанмын. Сырдарияда оқығанмын осы жақта, ағылшын тілі пәнінің мұғалімімін. (Translation: I have a higher education in the English language teacher specialty. I studied at the Syrdarya University, which is located in our region).*

*Tajik woman, 29 years old, teacher*

The majority of the population of mono-ethnic settlements prefer religious education in madrasahs as the most significant form of education, rather than higher education itself. During the interviews, there were also cases where families, especially older members, were against women's education. However, despite all such prohibitions, despite internal rules and traditions, there are Tajik women who plan to educate their children.

Observing the situation, it can be noted that the majority of Tajik women are still deprived of the opportunity to get an education. Social structures and family attitudes in society limit women's rights. Currently, one of the local opportunities to get secondary education is probably studying in the state language of one's country or, at least, studying one's native language as an optional course within

the school curriculum. It is worth noting that there are schools with Tajik as the language of instruction in Kazakhstan, mainly located in the Turkestan region. In addition, educational institutions with a multilingual focus have opened classes in which instruction is conducted in Tajik (Otar E., 2024).

### **Planning for children's future**

Tajik women discuss the future with their children, especially in terms of career choices. Mothers encourage their children's ambitions and emphasize the need for education. For example, daughters are encouraged to pursue higher education. According to the informants, this will provide them with stability and confidence in the future.

*«Жоқ, мен кішкене қызыма айтамын да, егер сен жақсы оқысаң, егер де мектепті жақсы 5-пен бітірсең, медик, невропатолог боласың». (Translation: I tell my youngest daughter that if you study well and graduate from school with straight A's, you will become a neurologist).*

*Tajik woman, 35 years old, housewife*

*«Болашағы туралы, және сен тәрбиелі болсаң анандай боласың, не оқуға кіресің және өз ақылымызды айтамыз». (Translation: We talk about the future, we say that you need to become educated, you need to study a lot, we give our advice).*

*Tajik woman, 44 years old, cleaner*

In interviews with Tajik women, it can be noted that they mostly direct their children to traditional professions, such as teachers, doctors and nurses. According to women of the Tajik ethnic group, some girls want to become teachers, inspired by the example of their school teachers, who “dress beautifully and wear heels.” There is also a desire to become nurses and doctors, with the goal of taking care of their parents' health in the future. Tajik women support their children's aspirations for such professions, although sometimes they suggested more applied specialties, such as cooking. Families also support the choice of professions by children, but mothers also have their own preferences.

*«Мына қыз мұғалім боламын дейді. Анау мектепте мұғалімдер әдемі болып жүреді дейді. Каблуктарымен тоқылдатып жүреді, әдемі болып дейді. Анау медсестра боламын дейді. Доктор боламын дейді де. Сізге қараймын ауырып қалмасыншы мамам деп». (Translation: This daughter wants to become a teacher. She says: “At*

*school, teachers walk around looking beautiful in heels.” The second one wants to become a nurse, a doctor. She says: “I will look after you so that you don't get sick.”).*

*Tajik woman, 31 years old, self-employed*

In addition, mothers emphasize the importance of moral education and hard work, convincing children that future success will largely depend on their upbringing and hard work.

### **Assessing the potential for self-realization**

Women note the availability of opportunities for self-realization in Kazakhstan, which in turn shapes their positive attitude towards the country. They are confident that they can achieve success using the provided social and economic resources. For them, Kazakhstan is a country that creates conditions for personal and professional growth. Women also stress the importance of a stable socio-economic environment that contributes to their confidence in the future. They note that reforms in education, health care and social security give them more opportunities to improve their quality of life. Many respondents pin their hopes on the development of the regions where they live and believe that investment in infrastructure and education in rural areas can significantly improve conditions for their families.

*«Көптеген мүмкіндіктер берілген негізі, пайдалана білсе. (Translation: In general, there are many opportunities if you know how to take advantage of them)».*

*Tajik woman, 29 years old, teacher*

*«Барлығы жақсы жағынан өзгеріп жатыр. (Translation: Everything is changing for the better)».*

*Tajik woman, 41 years old, teacher*

### **Socioeconomic barriers to education**

Almost every Tajik woman rightfully states that she would be ready or dreams of doing everything possible to give her children an education, but financial and other factors limit such opportunities. Tajik women note financial limitations as the main problem in obtaining an education. Women spoke quite a lot about their concerns about not being able to afford their children's education, especially when it comes to enrolling in schools in larger cities or studying for long periods of time. This highlights how important it is for families to balance their

needs with their children's educational opportunities.

*«Жоқ қарсы болмас еді, просто ақшамыз жоқ еді. «Сен оқып тұрсаң басқа ақша қалмайды үйде, сендер не жейсіңдер?» деп жылап қойды да мама. Басқа күшім жетпейді. (Translation: No, I wouldn't mind, we just don't have the money. "If you study, there won't be any money left to live on," Mom cried as she said this. I have no more strength)».*

*Tajik woman, 45 years old, housewife*

However, obtaining a higher education does not always guarantee employment, since there is a shortage of jobs in some areas in the village. The preference for choosing professions related to education and medicine is probably due to the fact that the employment rate in these areas is higher compared to other industries.

*«5 жыл болып жатыр дипломын алғанмызға, бірақ «жұмыс жоқ» деп үйде ол, диханшылық істеп жатыр. Жұмыс жоқ мектепте. Келін алдық, оқыған, жұмыс істеп жатыр мектепте. (Translation: My daughter got her diploma 5 years ago, but she doesn't have a job and sits at home, doing farming. My son got married, my daughter-in-law has a higher education diploma, now she works at a school)».*

*Tajik woman, 49 years old, housewife*

Thus, it can be assumed that young Tajik girls, having received secondary/higher education, return to their native village, however, they do not find work there. Moving to another region for the purpose of employment is not supported by the family, and they have no choice but to stay where the elders are, then they almost immediately get married, start a family, and become involved in the household.

### **Resources and opportunities for education**

Some Tajik women are willing to send their children to study in other cities if the opportunity arises. Most often, this concerns cities such as Shymkent, Zhetysay and Almaty, which are seen as resource centers that provide greater opportunities for education. In this case, the importance of going beyond the local environment for their children to receive a better education is noticeable.

*«Өзімізде, Жетісайда. Сол жеткілікті. ...Басқа жаққа неміз жоқ біздің, осы Алматы, Астана, Шымкент болса, болады. (Translation:*

*What we have in Zhetysay is enough for us. We can also go to Almaty, Astana and Shymkent. We have no other options)».*

*Tajik woman, 49 years old, housewife*

Tajik women's adherence to traditional gender roles and social norms has a significant impact on their decisions regarding their children's education and future. Tajiks send their male children to northern regions under the Serpin program. However, according to mothers, Tajik girls do not find the program effective because there are few or no young people of their nationality in the northern regions, making it difficult to find a partner for marriage. Women tend to be extra cautious when it comes to their daughter's education and relocation. In this regard, it is more likely that girls will be under the guardianship of relatives, which will give them the opportunity to study in other cities while remaining in a safe family environment. For example, when the question arises about sending a girl to study in another city, preference is given to those who have relatives to ensure safety and control.

*«Сол туысқандарға жіберіп оқытады ма? (про отца). – Иә. Олар қарап отырады. Біз қасына барып отырамыз. Сонымен өзімізді-өзіміз алдап отырмыз. (Translation: – Also sends them to study with relatives? (about father) – Yes, they will look after them, sometimes we ourselves will be there. This is how we console ourselves)».*

*Tajik woman, 30 years old, cleaner*

There are practices of Tajik youth going to Tajikistan to receive pedagogical and medical education. At the same time, there are few mothers who are ready to support studies abroad on a grant, which indicates the presence of ambitions and a desire to expand horizons for their daughters, but always with an eye on social expectations. Education of daughters is seen not only as a means of professional growth, but also as a tool for raising their status in society, especially if they can study abroad.

*«Енді ол жаққа оқытатын не жоқ-ау. ...Иә болады ғой грант болып не қылып жатса.... Жоқ, қарсылық жоқ. (Translation: Well, there is no such opportunity to study abroad, but if I get a grant, then I wouldn't be against it)».*

*Tajik woman, 31 years old, self-employed*

### **Gender differences in approaches to education**

The interviews revealed significant differences in the approaches to the upbringing and educa-



tion of girls and boys. Girls are brought up under stricter restrictions regarding their movement and social activity, while boys are given greater freedom.

In addition, girls are prepared from an early age to be wives and mothers. Their upbringing emphasizes learning household responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for the family. In some cases, girls receive religious education, but access to higher education may be limited due to parents' beliefs that a woman's primary role is to be a mother and keeper of the home. Some Tajik informants express their willingness to support their daughters' education, but the issue of marriage remains important, after which the decision about their future life and relocation will depend on the husband.

*«Енді ол күйеуі болғаннан кейін, тұрмысқа бергеннен кейін оның несі, сол күйеуі толықтай жауап береді. (Translation: After marriage, her husband is fully responsible for her, since he is the legal spouse)».*

*Tajik woman, 29 years old, teacher*

Boys enjoy greater freedom, and their education is often seen as a way to prepare them for leadership and economic independence. Mothers see them as the future of their families and communities, so they are less concerned about controlling their movements and decisions about further education. Expectations for boys are more optimistic and are related to their ability to return to their hometown after completing their education to develop a business and support the local economy. This reflects the strong desire of women to see their sons as leaders who can not only improve the lives of their families but also contribute to the development of their home region.

*«Бітірген соң осы ауылға қайтып келе ме? – Иә, осы ауылға қайтып келеді. ...Осы ауылда бизнес қыламын дейді. «Мама сен үлкен ақша тапсаң вулканизация ашамын, ауылды көркейтемін». Біздің ауылда ештеңе жоқ бір мойка ғана бар. Бизнес бастайын деп жатырық, әрекет қылып жатырық, бірақ болмай жатыр... (Translation: – Will he come back to this village after finishing his studies? – Yes, he wants to come back to the village. He wants to open a business here. He says: “Mom, if you make a lot of money, I’ll open a vulcanization shop and develop our village.” There is nothing in our village, there is only*

*one car wash. We are going to open a business, we are trying, but it hasn’t worked out yet)».*

*Tajik woman, 39 years old, self-employed*

## Conclusion

From the data obtained, it became clear that Tajik women are simultaneously exposed to two different discourses, formed under the influence of different cultural conditions inside and outside the country.

Influence of traditional (conservative) discourse. The analysis of interviews shows that cultural traditions and family values play a key role in the choice of professions and plans for children's education. Gender factors also influence the curriculum: girls are under greater control, while boys have more freedom and are seen as future leaders.

The impact of this discourse is particularly noticeable among those living in mono-ethnic areas, where the upbringing of girls and boys is based on clear traditional values, where girls are restricted in their movements and focus on domestic duties, while boys are given more freedom and opportunities for an active life. Girls are prepared for family life, while boys are developed as breadwinners. The main role of a Tajik woman is to arrange everyday life, educate the younger generation, respect and create conditions for elders and spouses. In the family/household, men help little in “women's” affairs, and women have to manage to do everything themselves. This characterizes the pronounced traditional approach to the upbringing of Tajik girls, that is, preparing them for their future role as daughters-in-law, wife and mother.

The influence of Soviet discourse. We noticed a slightly different discourse that also seems to influence girls from parents and extended family members. When analyzing Tajik women in the role of mother, the data showed that there is and remains a style of upbringing in the spirit of Soviet ideology, so they expect their daughters to be well educated (a legacy of Soviet views on female education), but believe that women should pursue a career, but within reasonable limits, and choose a job that will allow them to combine family and professional responsibilities. In interviews, Tajik women note that their children often mention traditional professions such as teachers, doctors, and nurses. Some girls want to become teachers, inspired by the example of their school teachers who “dress nicely and wear heels.” There is also a desire to become nurses and doctors, based on concern for the health of their parents. Ta-



jik women support their children's aspirations for such professions, although sometimes they suggest more applied specialties, such as cooking or seamstressing.

As predicted by gender role theory (Eagly, 1987) and social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2011), Tajik women can be seen to develop under the strong influence of the gender division of labor and gender role expectations dominant in society. Gender role expectations rooted in Tajik families shape women's career and educational aspirations. Traditional roles such as "wife" and "mother" remain dominant, limiting Tajik women's opportunities for professional growth. These roles are transmitted through the process of socialization, which is consistent with theory that emphasizes the dependence of career choice on gender norms.

In Kazakhstan, as in other countries, the phenomenon of the 'Glass ceiling' continues to be a significant obstacle to the career development of women, including Tajik women in the Turkestan region. For example, a Tajik woman with a higher pedagogical education and professional achievements is often unable to take up a managerial position because of persistent stereotypes and traditional norms that ascribe predominantly domestic roles to women. In addition to the gender wage gap, where women are paid less for similar roles, they face the double burden of combining professional and domestic work, which further limits their career opportunities. This example illustrates that despite government efforts to promote gender equality, invisible barriers continue to prevent women from realizing their full professional potential.

It should be emphasized that these processes concern not only Tajik women, but also the entire Eastern mentality, religion, values, etc. In this regard, when analyzing the role and position of women in society, it is necessary to focus on the social profile of women from various ethnic communities.

To form and strengthen the social status of women from communities, special mechanisms

should be developed, such as opening courses on self-development, legal and financial literacy, as well as fact-checking at the local level. These measures can significantly contribute to the process of integration and active participation of women in social and public life.

Promoting higher education among women requires raising awareness of its benefits and opportunities at the local level. It is important to remember that women's access to higher education is determined not only by their personal choices, but also by the decisions of the entire family. Therefore, outreach efforts should also cover other family members. Organize courses for women from ethnic communities that focus on mastering skills such as sewing, handicrafts, hairdressing and other crafts. These initiatives will not only create opportunities for earning money, but will also increase women's self-confidence, helping to improve their quality of life (Otar E., 2024).

Particular attention should be paid to the professional orientation of girls, the development of their communication skills and the culture of behavior in social networks. It is also important to stimulate girls' interest in studying new specialties, such as IT, agricultural sciences, biology and others. By increasing the activity of women in ethnic groups, providing them with educational and social opportunities, as well as increasing their civic activity and literacy, the state will be able to contribute to the formation of gender parity among future citizens of Kazakhstan.

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