



Women and formation of social identity: A study of multiple ethnic communities in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

This study investigates the following research questions: "what types of identities dominate the self-consciousness of Turkish and Uzbek women?", "How do these identities contribute to the formation of social identity in the future generation?", and "Within the dynamics of everyday life, can a woman simultaneously serve as both a central agent of influence and a nurturing figure?" The qualitative research conducted in the multi-ethnic region of Kazakhstan shows the peculiarities of the image of women and their role in the transmission of values and identity formation. The methodology is based on the qualitative approach of sociological research. Narrative interviews were used as the primary method, while participant observation served as an auxiliary method. *The findings indicate that women feel a deep emotional connection to their homeland, which influences their everyday lives.* Although Uzbek and Turkish women have the opportunity to move to other countries of ethnic origin, they believe that their place is in Kazakhstan. The women's ability to preserve and rationally adapt traditions, through their multilingual competence, and ability to sustain a strong emotional bond

with their children, enables them to act as key agents in the processes of upbringing and identity formation.

Keywords: Cultural difference, emotional connections, socio-economy, traditional ethnic communities.

Introduction

Kazakhstan's discourse is linked to the understanding of identity as belonging to a particular ethnic group or nationality, an approach that developed during the Soviet period (Sharipova, 2020). During this time, ethnic identity was supported by the state through the provision of education in native languages in schools, the support of the activities of ethno-cultural organizations, the publication of newspapers, and the development of theaters (Alexandrov, 2018).

Most researchers have focused on aspects of state policy and have often overlooked ethnic communities, which are the main actors in the process of identity formation. The role of women in the process of identity formation among compactly settled ethnic communities in the southern regions of Kazakhstan remains largely understudied. Given the fact that these groups are characterized by a rather traditional way of life, women's everyday experiences have largely been overlooked in scholarly research.

However, the role of women in identity formation is of great importance in ethnic culture and in modern society.

In this study, the authors pose a series of research questions aimed at examining, through the interpretation of women's everyday life, their role in raising children, the creation of an ethnic image of a woman and the shaping of their contemporary social portrait. The study explores how women assess their position within the family; how they influence their children's choice of profession and spouse; how traditional views are transformed; how ethnic culture is preserved; what values they share and how they reproduce them in the daily life of their family, social life, professional activities; and how this affects the upbringing of children. The main goal of this research was to find answers to the following questions: what types of identity dominate in the self-consciousness of women from Uzbek and Turkish ethnic groups; whether they transmit these markers to their children and grandchildren, i.e., to

the future generation; and if so, how? In order to understand what identity markers dominate in women's self-consciousness, the authors first of all, formed portraits of women and then analyzed their everyday life and reality.

These issues were investigated using the example of Kazakh, Uzbek, and Turkish women (Turkic ethnicity). All these groups are Turkic-speaking, Muslim, and live in a shared cultural space (Boeschoten, 2021). However, their historical experiences of settlement in Kazakhstan differ. Kazakhs are an autochthonous population. Uzbeks also inhabited the territory of Central Asia in the ancient and medieval ages. Turks were forcibly resettled to the territory of Kazakhstan in the 30s of the twentieth century. All three groups live compactly within the city of Shymkent and the Turkestan oblast. The authors consider the processes of identity formation as a directed process in the daily lives of women of ethnic communities and attempt to analyze it in terms of family status, education, employment and social environment.

Objectives of the study

- To identify and discuss the predominant type of identity, self-awareness in Turkish and Uzbek women.

- To investigate the role they play in shaping the social identity of the future generation, in both societies and in a comparative manner.
- To examine how women in these two communities, Kazakh and Turkish, can be considered as both a center of influence and child rearing (the future generation).

Literature review

Identity is one of the most widely used terms in the socio-humanitarian sciences. It reflects a person's personality, self-consciousness, sense of belonging to a certain group or community, as well as socio-cultural and historical aspects of his or her life. At the same time, the concept of identity is often faced with problems related to its definition, variability and multiplicity of interpretations. This highlights the importance of identity in the social self-determination of the individual and allows the external social reality to be understood, to some extent, as a product of internal social construction. In methodological terms, this led to the prioritization of the subject-activity approach over the structural-functional approach (Ritzer, 2013).

Identity is a complex concept, largely characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity. Although the concept of identity is interpreted by various

scholars, their views on this phenomenon differ significantly. These differences in the interpretation of identity are a consequence of the fact that a large number of scholars study identity from different disciplinary positions and assign different meanings to the semantic shell of this socio-philosophical category.

The empirical and theoretical concept of identity was developed within models of psychology, and social identity was equated with concepts of "likeness" and "self-identity" (Tyurin, 2022). This approach was first formulated by Freud (1989), who spoke about identity as an unconscious process of emotional connection between a young child and his parents. Thus, in post-Freudian psychoanalysis, subsequent researchers focused on identifying the psychological aspects of identity. Erikson (1960) introduced identity into interdisciplinary scientific discourse by considering it within the framework of social and humanitarian sciences, in the context of social roles, socialization and the individual's relationship with society. Ericson (1960) played a crucial role in the global dissemination of the term "identity" and introduced this concept into scientific discourse. The researcher identified identity as the internal

"continuity of an individual's self-transcendence", "lasting internal equality with oneself", the most important characteristic of personality integrity, the integration of a person's experiences of his or her identity with oneself and with social groups. The American scientist identified three important aspects of identity, namely, the sense of identity, the process of identity formation and identity as an outcome.

From Ericson's perspective, identity formation is the most important task in the development and formation of personality. He interprets identity formation not only as a person's spatial identity, but also as a temporal continuity (group identity). The process of identity formation relies on both individual and sociocultural grounds (Ericson, 1960). The scientist argues that identity formation is a simultaneous process of reflection and observation that takes place at all levels of mental activity. During this process, one evaluates oneself in accordance with the way one is evaluated by others and in accordance with typologies significant for one, and at the same time perceives oneself in accordance with others and in accordance with typologies significant for one. Thus, according to Ericson (1960), identity is a

complex, multilevel structure, the most important condition for the effective functioning of the personality and an indicator of psychosocial stability. In general, identity is a feeling of belonging to a certain social group within the framework of social roles and ego-states.

Most researchers agree that ethnic identity is not a biological phenomenon but a specially constructed one (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012). Ethnic identity is conceptualized as an expression of the relationship between two or more groups that are considered to carry a "cultural particularity". Hutnik and Street (2010) show that people within an ethnic community may adopt the cultural norms and practices of the groups to which they belong in order to define and affirm their ethnic identity.

National identity is expressed in the recognition of shared basic symbols that form the basis of solidarity among the citizens of a state (nation). Tishkov, (2021) stated that, If a nation is chartrised with historical, cultural and socio-political community of people, within a state entity, under a single sovereign authority, possessing a common identity and common values while maintaining cultural complexity , the national symbols can be categorized into several key domains. These include

symbols of statehood and patriotism (anthem, flag, coat of arms, etc.), historical and cultural symbols (Possel, 2016), language as a symbolic medium of national solidarity and symbols of everyday life (way of life).

Other studies have shown that ethnic identity has a more positive discourse than national identity. This is due to the fact that the feeling of belonging to one's own ethnic group acts as a buffer against rejection from other social groups, such as the dominant national majority (Jacobson, 1997). Civic identity, on the other hand, is formed artificially and symbolically. In other words, people accept the values of the society in which they live. The conflict between ethnic and civic identity is often encountered in scientific literature. Civic identity is conscious and emergent; it is already superimposed on ethnic identity along with other identities.

Civic identity can be considered as identification with the citizens of the country, a representation of the state, country, the image of "We", a sense of community, solidarity, responsibility for the affairs in the country, which includes not only cognitive and emotional components, but also behavioral ones. According to Drobizheva (2020), it is the activity

elements that distinguish civic identity from other forms, primarily from state and country identity. In other words, identity in this definition is not loyalty to the state, but also consolidation with the citizens of the country, their readiness to participate in political decision-making and take responsibility for affairs in the country (Steffek, 2007). Also, it can be a reflection in the consciousness of citizens of the political nation.

As a key dimension of civic identity, the sense of co-citizenship/citizenship, i.e. solidarity that removes private differences, can be used as a resource for the development of mono-ethnic societies as well, since division and "tribalization" take place not only along ethnic boundaries (ethnic and religious differences are more visible), but also along social, value, ideological, property, etc. In both individual and collective consciousness, ethnic and national identities coexist and overlap. An individual may simultaneously embody multicultural national identity, for example, Kazakhstani and monocultural ethnic identity, such as Kazakh, Russian, Tajik, Uzbek, etc.

As women are the primary agents of socialization in the family, their role in the formation of social identity is important. Recently observed conflicts and intolerance in the youth

environment have intensified discussions about the role of women in the formation of civil identity of the new generation of Kazakhstanis and how this process is combined with the formation of ethnic identity. The January 2022 events highlighted the urgent need to strengthen education for tolerance, civic responsibility, and social cohesion under new social and political conditions. In this context, the role and potential of women in this socially significant process is significant. At the same time, it is important to recognize that social networks and the environment are also powerful agents of influence on children and youth in the modern world. The importance of the study lies in the fact that understanding and respecting the cultural traditions and values of ethnic minorities transmitted by women in their daily practices not only contributes to the preservation of ethnic and cultural identity but also promotes tolerance and understanding between different ethnic groups.

Research methodology

In this study, a qualitative approach of sociological research was used. It is exploratory in nature, which makes it particularly useful when the researcher does not know which variables to consider in relation to the issue under study. In addition, the qualitative approach is important when

investigating issues that are new, have never been studied and cannot be applied to elucidate theories about specific groups and samples (Morse, 1991). At the same time, another reason for using qualitative research is the limitation of the research possibilities within the general population from which the sample is drawn (Baltacı, 2019). That is, when the object of study consists of small groups and it is not possible to extract detailed information about their sex, age, character and location from the general population, a qualitative approach is preferred.

The decision to use a qualitative method in this research was made for several reasons: firstly, the research topic has not been fully and systematically studied in Kazakhstan; secondly, the objects of the research, i.e. ethnic groups are considered to be small groups and also live compactly; and thirdly, the main reason for conducting this research project was the fact that the problem of Kazakh women has not been studied as a separate group, the dominant forms of identity in their self-consciousness have not been studied, and finally - their place and role in the Kazakh society remain underexplored.

Two qualitative methods were used in this project: narrative interviews and participant observation. Narrative can be understood as a narrative/story told from beginning to end about the informant's experience and the conclusion drawn from it (Titscher et al., 2000).

Narrative interviews are characterized by unstructured, in-depth instruments with in-depth features derived from the respondent's life stories and cross-analysis of the situational context. This type of interview aims to prompt the interviewer to recount important events in the informant's life and social context. In this method, based on the idea of reconstructing social events from the informants' perspective, the interviewer's influence on the conversation is minimal (Muylaert et al., 2014).

The narrative interviews used in the project were conducted by the researchers based on a pre-prepared guide. In general, since the role of the interviewer in a narrative interview is to keep the interviewee on topic by listening and asking the right questions at the right time, the guide consisted of only basic questions. Apart from basic questions such as women's socio-demographic status, place of work,

number of children and family members, the guide included questions about values, their role responsibilities, relationship with society, their daily life, and attitude towards socio-cultural ties. And the main questions often arose and developed spontaneously during the interview. However, during the interviews with women, special attention was paid to questions related to the main components that reveal civic and ethnic identity.

Narrative interviews with each informant were conducted for an average of 11.5 hours. All ethical norms were observed during the interviews. The interviews were conducted one-on-one in a quiet and comfortable environment for the informant. Any sociological data can be analyzed only after it has been recorded. Therefore, all interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The object of the study comprised women from the Uzbek, Turkish ethnic groups of the Turkestan region and Shymkent city, who have experience in raising children over the age of 18. Kazakh women were included as a control group. In selecting these ethnic groups, several factors were considered: 1) their socio-cultural peculiarities; 2) reflected tension; 3) presence of signs of concentrated life. A key principle that distinguishes

qualitative research from quantitative research is that it is not based on a specific sample. In a qualitative approach, the researcher is concerned with the completeness of the information rather than maintaining a precise, predetermined sample. This study prioritized the completeness and uniqueness of the information collected rather than the sample.

The method of informant selection was carried out by the "snowball method", which is commonly used in social work (Gierczyk et al., 2023). According to this method, the researchers first visited households in the study area and obtained permission to conduct a rapid interview with women. Second, only when women gave their consent, and their socio-demographic profile matched the pre-sampling procedure, did the researcher explain the purpose of the study and ask them to participate in the main narrative interview. In the third stage, he explained the conditions of the narrative interview and conducted the interview. However, in some rural areas, the researchers encountered the challenge of finding women to participate in the interview due to the influence of socio-cultural characteristics. There are several reasons for this: the first is that people in rural areas had never participated in

an in-depth or narrative interview. Refusal to participate was common because the method seemed unfamiliar to them; second, given that a number of ethnic groups give priority to the traditional values of society, they claimed that women were not allowed to participate in interviews until they obtain permission from the head of the family or parents; third, since the research was conducted in the spring season, the rural population justified it by lack of time because they were busy in agriculture.

Since it was difficult for the researchers to recruit participants using personal resources, measures were taken to seek help from representatives of local self-governments bodies, activists of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, employees of the KMM "Kogamdyk Kelisim" and other representatives of the cultural sphere to gain access to the first medium of information. Employees of regional, district, rural akimats, as well as "Kogamdyk Kelisim", not only served as a link between the interviewer and the informant, but also provided information support in the form of providing passports of the district/settlement, statistics on the population size in terms of ethnic groups, and documents related to the ethnic groups of their region.

More than 90 respondents took part in the study. In order to ensure the comprehensiveness of public opinion, as well as to listen to the opinion of all categories of the population, attention was paid to socio-demographic characteristics, level of education and social categories of respondents in the course of the study.

Shymkent city and the Turkestan region were chosen as the research areas. Narrative interviews with women of Kazakh, Uzbek and Turkish ethnicities of the Turkestan region in a multiethnic space were conducted in the city of Turkestan. Maidantal of Sauran district (with Kazakh women), and Ikan village (with Uzbek women) and in Lenger town of Tolebi district (Turkish women) were selected as mono-ethnic settlements.

In Shymkent city, Kazygurt district for Kazakh women, Sairam residential area for Uzbek women, and Karatobinsky district for Turkish women are defined as mono-ethnic spaces.

Results and discussion

In his report, "Visual Sociology", Sztompka (2007) notes that visual symbols describe social life, i.e. the reality of this society. Hence, any visual information is worth analyzing. For this reason, this study utilized an inclusive

observation method along with the main method. During the observation, the researchers' attention was focused on the external attributes of the informants. Public places (stores, restaurants, schools, streets, markets, etc.) were chosen as control areas. During the observation, diaries and cameras were also used to record any visual aspects of the social world that required analysis, such as women's clothing, their actions in certain situations, their style of communication with each other and with other ethnic groups, and visual representations of their behavioral patterns.

Also, it is important to note that the project developers themselves were involved in conducting the interviews, which eliminates or reduces the distortion of the information obtained and the reality.

Uzbek women

According to the data of the national census of 2021 in Kazakhstan, 614,047 people—representatives of the Uzbek ethnos—live there. During the inter-census period, the number of Uzbeks increased by 34.4% or 157,050 people. This is the fastest-growing ethnic group in Kazakhstan. According to the 2009 census, the Uzbek population numbered 496,997, while in 1999 it was 370,663

(<https://stat.gov.kz>). In the ethno-demographic structure of Kazakhstan's population, Uzbeks ranked third after Kazakhs and Russians, accounting for 3.2% of the country's total population.

The number of urban and rural residents is approximately the same. Urban residents make up 51% while rural residents account for 49%. At the same time, Uzbeks live predominantly in the southern regions of the country, which has a historical background. According to historians and ethnologists, Uzbeks have lived in the territory of modern Kazakhstan since ancient times. The formation of Kazakh and Uzbek ethnos occurred in parallel. Both peoples are Turkic-speaking and share a common history (Muratov, 2007). Researchers note that "in the period of XIX - early XX centuries, the area of settlement of the Uzbek population of Kazakhstan was the south of the country. The bulk of Uzbeks settled in dense, compact groups, forming their own ethnic settlements. Materials for statistics of the Turkestan region show that the main occupation of the Uzbek population was agriculture" (Muratov, 2007, p.128).

The largest city where Uzbeks live is Shymkent, which has the status of a city of republican significance and has 1,200

thousand inhabitants. It is located in the south of Kazakhstan, in the border area with the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The majority of rural Uzbeks live in Turkestan province, which is also located in the border zone with Uzbekistan. This oblast is the most densely populated and multi-ethnic compared to other regions of Kazakhstan. Thus, Tajiks, Russians, Turks, Azerbaijanis, Kurds and others live here. According to the 2021 census, the total number of people living in the oblast was 2,054,021, which is 18.2% higher than in 2009.

The majority of Uzbeks live separately in Turkestan city (47,486 people), Kentau city (82,553 people), Sairam (152,375 people), and Maktaaral (11,093 people) districts.

Sample among Uzbek women in Kazakhstan.

Thirty-two interviews were conducted with women aged 18 to 74 years old, living in the city (Shymkent and Turkestan) and rural areas (Iskhan village, Turkestan province). All are or were married; the sample includes widows and those who are divorced for various reasons.

All interviewed women have children. Most of them, 9 out of 16 informants,

have four children. Two women have two children each, and two more have one child each. Thus, the majority of the women have many children. Some of them also have grandchildren whom they raise together with their children.

Social portrait of Uzbek women

The sample included women with different levels of education and professional backgrounds. The daily lives of women who do not work outside the home are organized around the schedules and needs of their family members. Working women have rather structured and demanding routines, as they balance employment outside the home with domestic responsibility.

Uzbek women are employed mainly in traditionally female-dominated sectors, such as pedagogy, medicine, and trade. Among the informants, only two are engaged exclusively in housekeeping, the rest have permanent jobs.

Young women are generally active in public and community life. They demonstrate clear goals and a strong desire for self-realization.. During the interviews, female respondents expressed a positive desire to educate their children. They see higher education as a key avenue for personal and professional fulfilment and seek to instil in their children the understanding

of the importance of education as a basis for success.

The perception of ethnic image of Uzbek women is connected with traditional ideas about the role of women in the family as wives, mothers and daughters-in-law. Most often, women talk about the exceptional qualities of Uzbek women in managing the household, welcoming guests, and respecting elders. Some agree that these qualities are very similar to those of Kazakhs (Abdikadyrova et al., 2018). However, some emphasize that these qualities are more pronounced among Uzbek women.

Language proficiency

Uzbek women are bilingual or polylingual. As a rule, almost all informants speak two or three languages - Uzbek, Kazakh and Russian. Uzbek is used primarily within the family, while Kazakh and Russian are spoken depending on the place of residence and professional environment of the women. In Turkestan, some women know Turkish. This is due to their work at the Kazakh-Turkish University named after Yassawi. Women with higher education speak English, Arabic and Turkish. This has a strong influence on their children, who are also polylingual and try to learn English and Turkish. At the same time,

respondents note that children study English as a compulsory subject at school, regardless of the mother's level of education.

Formation of civil and ethnic identity

For the women interviewed, the concept of homeland is closely tied to their place of birth and residence. Kazakhstan is perceived as their homeland—the country where they were born, where several generations of their relatives have lived, and where their children will continue to live. In their understanding of homeland, there is a clear distinction between “their own” country and a neighboring state. Thus, the informants refer to Uzbekistan as a neighboring country, rather than their ethnic homeland. They emphasized that they were born in Kazakhstan and many generations of their family were born and raised there, particularly in Turkestan and Shymkent (Sadvokassova, 2024).

The image of homeland is manifested in the emotional and cognitive perception of one's place of birth and citizenship. Women participate in elections, noting that it is important for them, for their future. Older women are involved in the work of local community organization, such as the Mothers' Council and help in public affairs of the “village” and “Mahalla”. In interethnic issues, the

women describe themselves as open and tolerant. Living in their own ethnic environment, they do not perceive significant difference in everyday life, communication, and relations within their community.

In multi-ethnic areas, women speak of strong similarities between Kazakh and Uzbek traditions, rituals and behavior. This is a peculiarity of southern Kazakhstan, where, in general, Turkic-speaking culture has its vivid manifestation in contrast to other regions of Kazakhstan. Ethnic culture is promoted through Uzbek-language schools, theaters, and newspaper publications. However, women did not specifically mention cultural events in their interviews (Busi, 2014).

The striking feature of ethnic culture A striking feature of ethnic culture, according to the women interviewed, is ethnic cuisine and traditional clothing. Home cooking is an important part of the responsibility of every woman. If a woman works, it does not exempt her from meal preparation. In case the family lives together with the mother-in-law, the working daughter-in-law may be exempted from cooking, with the mother-in-law assuming that responsibility.

Identity and everyday life as interpreted by Turkish women

The Turkish ethnic group in Kazakhstan was resettled in Kazakhstan as a result of the deportation policy of the Soviet Union. Starting in 1933, the Soviet Union began a campaign of mass resettlement of various ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, Central Asia and Siberia for various motives.

Archival documents of the Central Executive Committee of the RK prove that the resettlement of the first group of Ahiska Turks to the Republic took place against their will, together with Kurds and Armenians, at the end of 1938. For example, they were registered in state farm No. 13 "Kuchuk" of Iliyskiy District of Almaty Region (TGA of the RK. F.1137; Op. 1, d 48; Op. (3) 6. - L.20). At that, the forced resettlement of Meskheti Muslims, i.e. Akhiska Turks, began on November 14, 1944, and ended in January 1945. This plan was to relocate 86,000 Muslims from 220 settlements, and in fact, 96,367 were forcibly resettled. In this list, Turks numbered 66,823, Kurds 8,843, and Hemşin 13,997 inhabitants (İbreşeva & Özmen, 2020). Statiev (2009) also notes that the deportation of ethnic groups reached its peak in 1944. However, the data provided by the author on the number of resettled

people differs from that of İbreşeva and Özmen (2020). According to him, a total of 91,095 Meskhetian Turks, Kurds and Hemshins were expelled from Georgia in November 1944. They were accused of having relatives abroad with whom they allegedly organized cross-border smuggling operations (Statiev, 2009).

During the years of deportation, 6,300 Turkish families, i.e. 27,833 people, were resettled in Kazakhstan. According to the People's Commissariat of the Kazakh SSR (2024), they were they were distributed as follows: Almaty (2,544 families/11,004 people), Zhambyl (822 families/3415 people), Kyzylorda (373 families/1826 people), Taldykorgan (337 families/1441 people), and South Kazakhstan oblasts (2,233 families/10147 people) .

The Turkish ethnic group of Kazakhstan is called "Akhyski Turks" and "Meskhetian Turks" in scientific literature. Today, their fourth generation is growing up in the country. According to the data from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 88,506 Meskhetian Turks live in the country at the beginning of 2023 (<https://stat.gov.kz/ru/>), which is 0.4% of the total population. Of these, 52.7% are men and 47.3% are women. They

predominantly live in the southern part of Kazakhstan, namely in Almaty, Zhambyl and Turkestan regions, in the cities of Shymkent and Almaty, i.e. almost the same places where they were initially deported.

In the Turkestan oblast, their number is 11,981, while in Shymkent city it is - 6,692 (<https://stat.gov.kz/ru/>).

Turkestan Region ranks third in terms of the size of the Turkish population after Zhambyl Region and Almaty Region, while Shymkent ranks fifth, following Almaty. Compared to other ethnic groups, the Turkish ethnos of Turkestan Oblast and Shymkent is not characterized by compact or closed settlement patterns. Rather, their settlement pattern can be described as concentrated: several families may live on the same street or within a few neighboring streets, but not in fully homogeneous or isolated enclaves.

Portrait of Turkish women

Based on the results of the field study, it can be emphasized that Turkish women in Shymkent and the Turkestan region share common external markers that allow researchers to identify them as representatives of one ethno-confessional group. For example, in both urban and rural settings, many women wear scarves, long skirts or dresses. At the same time, wearing a

headscarf among older women can be characterized as a traditional practice, and is not necessarily associated with the Muslim hijab or burqa.

Nevertheless, young women wearing hijab, though rare, were found among informants. Also, when talking to the Turkish women, one can realize that religiosity has intergenerational differentiation in Turkish society as well. According to them, young people today are more committed to religion, read fivefold namaz, observe fasting (Oraza), and sometimes they can even instruct their parents and older relatives on the need to adhere to the canons of Islam. The generation of Turks over 50 also adheres to a similar religious attitude. Informants aged between 35 and 50 years old noted themselves as no longer practising believers.

In general, the social portrait of Turkish women can be described as that of women who have passed what they themselves call a "school of preparation for family life". In many Turkish families, the upbringing of girls is more focused on shaping them as future brides and mothers. Interviews indicate that, from an early age, girls are prepared for family life through the transmission of family values, the teaching of household skills, and the cultivation of responsibility. A central element of this

upbringing is respect for elders and for male authority within the family. At the same time, their preparation for family life does not end in the parental family; after marriage, they must also pass through what they metaphorically describe as the "mother-in-law school". For example, almost all women who participated in the interviews noted that they live with their spouse's parents or have lived with them for a long time. In the second "school", the nature of education and upbringing is almost the same as in the parental family, except that here they are integrated into the traditions and routines of the new family. The women's narrative shows that during the whole period of their upbringing, they develop a clear understanding that men are in charge of the family, and that their authority is fundamental. Consequently, throughout their lives, women are subject to the decisions of men. In the parental household, this authority belongs to the father or older brothers; in marriage, it is vested in the husband. Even in matters of personal importance, men are often described as having the final say. For example, in the interviews we often met women who noted that many women from her surroundings, or they themselves—despite having higher education, professional qualifications, and a desire

to work, remain housewives because their fathers or husbands do not permit them to pursue employment in their field of specialization. For this reason, many women characterize their path toward higher education and professional self-realization as “thorny”. The complexity of this experience is encapsulated in a statement shared by one elderly respondent.

At the same time, it should be noted that in the parental family, if the economic situation allows, they try to give girls the opportunity to pursue a profession. In most cases, girls are enrolled in colleges or universities in their home community or in a nearby city. Their parents do not approve of their moving to distant cities or regions. Preferred specialties for them are nursing, midwifery, pharmacy, pedagogical psychologist and elementary school teacher, etc., as these are popular and in demand in the place where they live. Obtaining higher education or at least a secondary technical specialty is not an urgent problem for young Turkish women; in most cases, parents support them in this matter. The barrier to this may be a lack of material opportunities, a lack of desire on the girl herself or a lack of consent from her father. From several

interviews, it is possible to understand that early marriage among girls is still a topical issue for Turkish society. During the field interviews, we met women who started a family at the age of 16.

It is also interesting to note that many women, except for rare cases when they marry a person from another region, live their whole life in their native locality. For women, the issue of migration is largely related only to the creation of a family, and in other cases, this issue is not relevant. At the same time, they can go for short-term trips to visit relatives in other regions, for medical treatment, etc., whereas men can migrate for work and study not only to other cities and regions, but also to other countries.

The everyday life and routine of Turkish women are similar. Non-working women are engaged in the household duties, take care of their spouse's parents, and raise their children and grandchildren. On average, women have three to four children, while the older generation often has five or more. Because women in this community start a family early, they have several grandchildren each at a young age. In everyday life, they wake up early, do household chores (cleaning the house, washing, cooking, etc.), and if they live in the village, they also deal with

livestock, make dairy products (cheese, brynza, ayran, kurt, chechil, etc.) with their own hands. They use the prepared products themselves and sometimes sell them to neighbors and acquaintances. It is noteworthy that in most cases, it was non-working women who reported a lack of time. They have almost no free time, and when they have free time, they spend it with their husband's relatives and children. Because of the lack of free time, there is also no understanding of the culture of spending it. Both in Shymkent city and in the Turkestan region, many respondents noted that they do not have time to visit cultural and entertainment places with their children, such as cinemas and theaters, and shopping malls. They also noted that reading culture is not widely practised. From the interviews, it can be understood that young girls are also restricted in their families in their desire to visit such places if they are not accompanied by their parents or older relatives.

Despite differences in the socio-demographic status, Turkish women are generally portrayed as hospitable homemakers, wise figures within the family, and custodians of the hearth and tradition, responsible for preserving and transmitting family and ethnic values

from generation to generation. Turkish women are active in public life, attend all school meetings, do not miss elections, and follow daily events in Kazakhstan and the world. For them, the most important and almost the only value is family. They also place great importance on personal integrity and human qualities. They speak several languages. In addition to their native language, they can freely express their thoughts in the state and Russian languages. Turkish women of Turkestan province, due to the predominance of Uzbek ethnicity in their settlements, can also speak freely in Uzbek.

Child rearing: If there is a husband's support, then a woman can also raise her children as she wants.

The results of the field study suggest that in Turkish society, a significant share of the responsibility for child rearing is assigned to women. Due to men's employment patterns, they are not able to fully participate in the upbringing of children. According to the interviews, many men work in the logistics and transportation sector. Usually, they go to other regions of Kazakhstan or other countries for long periods of time in order to provide transportation services for goods on kamazes. Hence, their absence from home may last from several weeks to

several months. Under such conditions, men assume primary responsibility for managing the household and raising the children. Nevertheless, mother-in-law or other relatives of the spouse also provide support in child upbringing.

Based on the results of the study, it can be noted that in Turkish families, the upbringing of girls and boys differs significantly. In families, girls' upbringing is focused on teaching domestic skills, preparation for family life, and maintaining strict supervision over their behavior and social interactions (Asim et al., 2024). A female respondent narrates thus; I always brought her up to talk less, to say the word 'no' less, to respect men always, to respect her parents, and to behave normally there when guests come (Dadabaev, 2013). I was preparing her for marriage. So that when she got married, no one would poke me, saying that you brought up your daughter wrong. This is how our parents brought us up.

From interviews with women, it can be concluded that the result of good parenting is social recognition and approval, particularly in the context of the widespread tradition of matchmaking. According to the female respondents, families with adolescent sons often inquire within their social

networks about potential daughters-in-law who would be suitable for their household. Therefore, the evaluation of one's community is an important factor in determining a successful upbringing of girls.

At the same time, mothers are more democratic in raising boys. In addition, it can be understood from the interviews that fathers play a more decisive role in the socialization of boys within the family. This conclusion is based on the literature that many young men in the family rely on their fathers' experience when choosing a profession. For example, many Turkish women noted that their sons, even after enrolling in universities, did not express a desire to continue their studies; instead, they prefer to follow in their father's footsteps, i.e. to continue the family trucking business.

Turkish women noted the importance of education through labor. In their opinion, by teaching children to do household work and distributing it equally among children, it is possible to instil in them a sense of responsibility and respect for other people's work.

It is noteworthy that fathers in families play a dominant role in child-rearing, despite the fact that they are frequently absent from home. As already

mentioned, all decisions in the family, from the minor to the most urgent ones, are made after men's approval.

The Role in the Formation of Civic and Ethnic Identity

The important components of social identity are its emotional, cognitive and behavioral components.

If we interpret the women's responses from the perspective of the emotional component, we can say that they instil in their children love for the Motherland and their native settlement. They consider Kazakhstan to be their homeland and instil the same understanding in their children from early childhood. According to them, it is important that children stay close to their families. Although men of Turkish ethnicity frequently engage in migration for education and work, they would always return to their native home. They also believe that the place where they live is the most favorable for them, as it is convenient for the development of agriculture and cattle breeding. They also do not approve of the idea of relocating their children to their historical homeland, i.e. Turkey. Based on the data analysis, it can be emphasized that they identify themselves more with the place from which they were deported and where

they live now than with Turkey. In their opinion, there are socio-cultural differences between Meskhetian Turks and Turkish Turks in terms of language, tradition and culture in general. The results of the field research conducted in four settlements show that Turks do not support the idea of moving to other regions of Kazakhstan. For them, "home" is considered to be the settlement where the older generation was born and raised.

The role of higher education and self-development is also beginning to take on a defining role in Turkish society (Sincar et al., 2020). In particular, women noted the need to have a profession and to acquire knowledge of languages. Although many women may still stay at home to perform domestic duties after obtaining a profession, they still strive to provide their children, especially girls, with higher education. In several interviews, women spoke of insisting that their sons receive higher education. Residents of cities and neighboring settlements make efforts to enroll their children and grandchildren in various courses, clubs, and extracurricular activities whenever possible. Some women did not hide their desires to educate their girls abroad, but they spoke about it only as a dream.

In this study, cognitive and behavioral markers of ethnic identity are clearly evident. Despite the deportation and assimilation policies in the Soviet Union, Turkish women have not lost their ethnic culture. This is observed in their preservation of tradition, native language and national cuisine. Among the Kazakh people living with the Turkish ethnos in the same locality, Turkish cuisine, especially their dairy products and lavash are popular and in high demand. In interviews, the women noted that they do not have sufficient access to written materials on their history and culture, as many historical sources and literature were lost during the deportation. However, they retain knowledge of their ethnic history and culture through their elders, who transmit these values from generation to generation orally. Today, these elders continue to serve as the channels of transmission of ethnic symbols of culture and history. At the same time, the positive influence of the Internet and cable television on strengthening ethnic identity is emphasized. Nowadays, young people can learn and develop their mother tongue through watching Turkish TV series and various programs on YouTube and Turkish channels. They also learn a lot of useful information about Turkish culture through these media resources.

The history of deportation occupies a special place in the life of the Turkish ethnic group. During the interviews, while telling the story of deportation, each woman's voice trembled, and there was excitement in their eyes, as if they were reliving the experience of their ancestors. It was observed that, among all aspects of their ethnos' history, this narrative is the one most frequently shared with their children and grandchildren. In the city of Shymkent, there was a weak network among young people of the ethnic group. Due to their dispersed pattern of residence, they are unable to maintain strong ethnic ties in the urban environment. Nevertheless, the Turkish Consulate is assisting them in this regard in every possible way. They largely meet each other in the activities organized at the Consulate.

At the same time, women are concerned about some issues caused by globalization. For example, they noted that their influence on children is weakening today, due to the development of social media and the Internet in general. In particular, they were concerned that children are spending more time on social media networks and internet pages. Another concern they had was the problem of divorce. One of the most important

problems of family and marriage in Kazakhstan has also affected young people of Turkish ethnicity. Although rarely, women expressed their dissatisfaction and anxiety about it. According to the results of the study, it was found that many women do not know or do not remember the history of their homeland. For this reason, they assign the responsibility for this educational function to formal educational institutions. And they regularly learn about the social and political life of the country through television and the Internet, and discuss them at the table in the family circle.

They have a special attitude towards their ethnic group. They have not lost their ethnic culture and traditions and preserve them to this day, transmitting them to the next generation. Based on the results of the study, it can be stated that the main mission of women in this society is the transmission of cultural values from generation to generation. At the same time, they themselves note that many of their traditions have been blended with Kazakh traditions. Today, like Kazakhs, they hold family celebrations as *betashar*, practice *səlem salu*. The transformation of tradition, though insignificant, is due to the fact that they have been living with Kazakhs for many years and practising

interethnic marriages. Although they do not support the latter, as they believe that disagreements in the family may arise due to socio-cultural differences.

Summarizing the results of the study, it can be noted that Turkish women play an important role in the upbringing of children and, consequently, help shape their social identity by their example and knowledge. At the same time, Turkish women today clearly express markers of ethnic identity, which they pass on to the present and future generations. Nevertheless, they take into account modern conditions and understand the need for cultural modernization and try to keep pace with contemporary society. In general, of all the interviews conducted, one deserves more attention. It can be called a separate case study. In it, a young, 19-year-old, very beautiful Turkish woman from Shymkent narrated her life story. This case study covers early marriage, early motherhood, problems with her spouse, his absence from the house, divorce, returning home, getting medical education, relationship with her parents, seeking help from a psychologist, returning to her former spouse, reevaluation of her values, a second divorce, returning back home once again, parental support, getting rid

of psychological traumas. This case is not a reflection of the life of a Turkish woman; it cannot be used to create a general portrait of them. Nevertheless, such a life exists in this society, and this case study illustrates it. The case study shows that the current state of Turkish women's society is undergoing a transformation, despite the fact that there are strong understandings about education, the role of women and men in society, and the need to preserve ethnic cohesion and collective identity.

Kazakhs as a control group

Sampling

Twenty in-depth narrative interviews were conducted with Kazakh women as a control group. The participants were located in the southern region of Kazakhstan, specifically in the city of Shymkent, the city of Turkestan, the Turkestan region, and the village of Maydantal. The study areas were also selected by mono- and poly-ethnicity of the settlement. A total of 10 Kazakhs were interviewed from the city, 10 Kazakhs from villages, 10 Kazakhs from poly-ethnic settlements and 10 Kazakhs from mono-ethnic settlements. Accurate nested calculations taking into account important parameters strengthen the quality of the sample; we selected qualitative methods. All

informants have two or more children. 10 of the informants, i.e. half of them, have five or more children.

Undoubtedly, this list is dominated by women of the Turkestan region rather than Shymkent city. Thus, we can see that a large number of children is peculiar not to certain ethnic groups, but to many women of southern regions. Kazakh women work in the pedagogical and food spheres and are engaged in entrepreneurship. While some are housewives, their number is relatively small (five informants). This is an indicator that Kazakh women of Shymkent city and the Turkestan region are economically active, acting not only as mothers and wives, but also as professionals and entrepreneurs. All interviewed Kazakh women have at least secondary and technical education. Most of them have higher education (13 out of 20), and four of them have higher pedagogical education.

Portrait of Kazakh women

Analysis of the narrative interview sample revealed that Kazakh women are primarily employed in traditionally female sectors, such as pedagogy, similar to Uzbek and Turkish women. This characterizes a pronounced traditional approach in the upbringing of girls in these regions. Kazakh women

are also engaged in small and medium-sized individual entrepreneurship, as it gives them a flexible schedule that allows them to have time to do household chores. In a traditionally organized patriarchal family/household, men hardly engage in "female" tasks, and women have to manage everything themselves. In addition, the list of important things to do includes self-actualization activities dictated by modern challenges. Among the informants, only two are engaged in housekeeping; the rest have permanent employment.

Child rearing

The interview data showed that for Kazakh women, the most valuable thing in their lives, and the very purpose of life, is their children.

Kazakh women consider it their duty to instil national traditions and ancestral knowledge in their children. In spite of busy schedules, all members of the family gather at one table to have dinner together. Instilling respect for elders is regarded as an essential component of upbringing in Kazakhstan (Kazakh Culture) (Altayev and Imanbayeva, 2021). The role of older grandparents in Kazakh families is very important. Those families, where they live separately from their husband's parents, send their children to ata-azha

on weekends. Kazakh women claim that children learn the peculiarities of national culture and traditions from them. In extended Kazakh families, where three generations live, grandparents play the main role in children's socialization. They often assume parental responsibilities while parents are occupied with work or household duties. At the same time, mothers tend to devote more attention to younger, preschool-aged children. Ataaje take them to circles and sections, go to parent-teacher meetings at school. The interviews also revealed that Kazakh women do not read books with their children or tell them fairy tales. This role is assigned to the older generation of ata-azhe.

According to the informants, the roles of child rearing in Kazakh families of the southern region are distributed between spouses. There were answers that said that the head of the family is mainly engaged in upbringing, that she covers the primary needs of children: feeding, bathing, taking them to clubs, buying them clothes, and preparing them for school. At the same time, women underestimated their big role in upbringing process.

It is important to note that the father remains an irreplaceable authority in child upbringing. The traditional family

model—where mothers discipline children by invoking the father’s authority (e.g., “If you do not obey, I will tell your father”)—continues to be preserved. As a result, children are more likely to seek advice and emotional support from their mothers, while fewer feel comfortable turning to their fathers. There are some Kazakh families where the father helps the children with their homework. However, in most cases, mothers take primary responsibility for academic support, and older siblings often help younger ones. In situations of marital disagreement, women reported that their husbands are sometimes dissatisfied when mothers defend the children, take their side, or conceal their mistakes.

Kazakh women talked about spending leisure time together with their families, going to cinemas, and to the circus. After watching films, they analyze the message of the film together with children.

When asked how culturally active they are, Kazakh women answered that they do not go out to cultural events much, but they do not miss events related to children, such as competitions and concerts where they participate. They invest in the education and all-round development of children. They send

them to sports clubs and hobby groups. They try to give higher education to all children.

What admonitions do Kazakh women give to their children?

The main things of Kazakh women lifestyle; “is to walk quietly, learn your lessons, if you learn and we're good.” “Raised well. Always said don't smoke, don't drink, socialize with your elders” (Kudaibergenova, 2018; Kabylova et al., 2025). Gender difference in upbringing is expressed by the fact that Kazakhs bring up girls more strictly, taking into account all customs and traditions: trying to bring up girls more tightly, not to give them freedom. Since they will go to another family as daughters-in-law in the future (Atemova et al., 2022, 116-120). Some of the informants' answers even noted that girls are given education so that later on they would not speak about them as bad parents, and their matchmakers would thank them; like My daughter got a higher education. She got married and is working (Kudaibergenova, 2018). The matchmaker is happy. She says thank you to me. The analysis of the data suggests that Kazakhs try to preserve and retain the peculiarities of the ethnicity, bringing up the future generation strictly according to traditional parameters, thus preserving

ethnic identity. According to identity researchers, parents can use ethnic identification to keep their children from adopting undesirable behaviors and attitudes.

Knowledge of languages

Kazakh women said that the language of communication at home is Kazakh. A distinctive feature among Kazakh women in Shymkent and the Turkestan region is their insistence that children speak their native Kazakh language within the household. In Turkestan city, we met Kazakh women who did not speak Russian well, but understood the language very well. In Shymkent, Kazakhs also know the Uzbek language, which is related to the sphere of activity, neighborhood or moving from Uzbekistan. Kazakh women send their children to learn English in addition to Russian. The study finds that Kazakh women are mostly bilingual, but their children are more often bilingual. The study of foreign languages by children is connected with plans for the future, most often it is studying abroad. However, there is a certain fear among women to let their children go abroad. In addition to Kazakh and Russian languages, there were also those who studied Turkish and Arabic. Television content is predominantly watched in the Kazakh language. The Russian

language program is watched mainly at the recommendation of children.

Formation of civil and ethnic identity

Self-identification of an individual with the Motherland determines the vector of the country's destiny. The patterns of ethnic communities are largely predetermined not only by the objective conditions of existence, but also by the established system of worldview and perception of the world, and the presence of a certain system of values. If something is not included in the value system of an individual or community, its loss will be perceived as something insignificant for further existence and development. Perceiving the country as a homeland, the individual identifies himself with it and perceives its successes and failures as his own, assesses possible losses as irreplaceable and irreversible and therefore makes maximum efforts to solve the existing problems. The answers of Kazakhs regarding feelings for the Motherland are characterized by sincere love and empathy for their native land.

In detail, motherland is like a home and must have value and protection.

As soon as they talk about my homeland, I immediately get a feeling of love for my land. I don't miss it and

definitely go to the elections. I wish my country a bright future.

Means "My homeland is Kazakhstan. We live for the sake of our homeland, the land"

There are also answers that express dissatisfaction with the vector of the country's development; again, this is related to empathy: "Rather than being a sultan in a foreign country, it is better to be a footstool in your native land..." "of course, it is a little bit offensive that we are lagging behind. They say that we are friendly, but unfortunately, we are not like that. We put our footsteps." (Taspulatova, 2023)

Patriotism was also measured by the willingness of Kazakh women to send their sons to serve in the country's army. The answers of informants can be divided into those (1) who are not against it, and (2) who said that if her son wants to do it himself, she is not against it. There were women who did not want to think about it, referring to the fact that children are small and there is still time to think about it (3). Also, of course, there were Kazakh women against serving in the army (4): it is under question that many different accidents and deaths occur. 2 out of 20 Kazakh women have sons who are specialists in the military profession (Serikbaevna et al., 2024)

It should be emphasized that Kazakh

women, compared to other ethnic groups, have a strong civic identity. Kazakh women, even if not in detail, know the history of Kazakhstan. This study was also interested in associations regarding the history of Kazakhstan. The answers of Kazakh women were diverse. The most frequently mentioned events included "Holodomor," "December 1986," "victims of repression," "Alash," "January events," "civil war," and "World War II." In addition, the historical figures they most frequently cited as memorable were Abylai Khan, Abai Kunanbayev, and Makhambet.

The reason for such answers is annoyance and sadness about the dark moments of history, which strongly influenced the number and fate of Kazakhs.

It is worth noting that there were Kazakh women who were unable to recall historical events or notable figures. This can be explained by a low level of education, early marriage, preoccupation with everyday life and satisfaction of basic needs of life, and low material security of some informants.

Confidence in the bright future of one's country is one of the important indicators not only of social well-being,

but also an indicator of personal identification and representation of oneself with a certain place, homeland. Kazakh women of the Turkestan region and Shymkent city, in most cases, see themselves as citizens of Kazakhstan and are confident that in the future it will only develop and flourish. However, many respond positively to the possibility of their children moving abroad in the future, stating, for example: If it will be convenient for them to work in another place and they will tell us to go with them, we will have to agree.

Kazakh women feel quite safe in Kazakhstan. It is worth emphasizing that the field research was conducted during the period when the earthquake occurred in Turkey (Bankoff & Oven, 2020). There were women who were sure that their children would never move abroad and that they themselves could only see a life in Kazakhstan.

Kazakh women said that they are proud to be Kazakh; they respect the culture of their people, honor the traditions which they pass on from mother to daughter and from daughter-in-law to future generation. Many expressed the hope that their granddaughters would continue this process of cultural upbringing. During the interviews, Kazakh women were invited to describe

what they perceived as the characteristic traits of Kazakhs. Most of the informants noted that Kazakhs are characterized by their development, modernity, versatility. They described Kazakhs as respectful toward elders, modest, and unpretentious rather than proud. Family was consistently identified as the highest priority; according to the perceived hierarchy, the husband comes first, followed by the children, and only then the woman herself. The older generation of women emphasized such qualities as religiosity, courtesy, politeness, and knowledge of tradition.

In general, the image of women from the three ethnic groups living in Shymkent city and the Turkestan region has similar social characteristics and lifestyles. At the same time, they are not quite clear about their role in identity formation, as it is more perceived as an everyday culture, caring for family members and striving to be useful to others, to justify the trust of parents, husband, and children. In women's everyday narrative, the image of man is created as strict, significant, wise and as a father. By contrast, the image of the mother-in-law in the interviews is not particularly portrayed as an influential figure. However, the lifestyle developed within the parents'

family serves as a model for children's socialization. At the same time, the social success of parents is perceived as directly linked to the potential success of their children and grandchildren.

An important factor in the studied regions is multi-ethnicity. Neighborly and friendly relations with different ethnic groups were often mentioned in the interviews. The presence of people of other ethnic backgrounds does not appear to significantly affect everyday family life. At the same time, women somewhat expand family boundaries and admit the possibility of the presence of other ethnic groups as part of their family members.

In mono-ethnic settlements, women take their environment as a given and do not try to break this habitual way of life. However, the influence of the broader information space shapes children's choices, and they try to direct their interests towards more rational goals.

Urban women demonstrate more individualistic attitudes, but they are not against the interests of the family. Women find ways to develop themselves and their children. It should be noted that women find development in learning languages, reading books and travelling. Virtually no time is given

to socializing with girlfriends. Some pointed this out as a problem. However, if we correlate this information with the rules of girls' upbringing (not to say unnecessary things, not to go out, etc.), it becomes evident that this pattern may be a consequence of early socialization.

Conclusion

In the process of identity formation, Women, on the one hand, rely on the experience of the previous generation and, on the other hand, orient themselves toward the interests and preferences of children. This allows them to preserve traditions without remaining confined within the rigid framework of traditional rules and norms. At the same time, the system of values remains stable and is connected with the family, children and homeland. There is a sense of concern about the future and the desire not to miss important stages in the life of children, in their formation. Identity formation is transmitted through daily conversations with children, common meals, and holidays. Attitudes towards her husband, her husband's relatives and her parents provide a behavioral model for her children and grandchildren. Attitude in the homeland has an emotional attachment. Women imagine their life near their relatives in the

places they were born, which shapes their feelings and attitude towards their homeland. Although Uzbek and Turkish women have the opportunity to move to countries of ethnic origin, they believe that their place is in Kazakhstan. If their children wish to study or work in another country, they are willing to accept it, although it will require additional effort to maintain their children's connection to their cultural roots.

In conclusion, it should be noted that ethnic and cultural specificity in the formation of ethnic and civic identity is crucial for women. The ability to preserve and rationally use traditions and expand the range of their interests through the mastery of several languages, constant emotional connection with their children, gives them the opportunity to be the main actors in the process of upbringing and identity formation.

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