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ГЛАВНЫЙ РЕДАКТОР

Макаровский Денис Анатольевич

AuthorID: 559173

Заведующий кафедрой организационного управления Института прикладного анализа поведения и психолого-социальных технологий, практикующий психолог, специалист в сфере управления образованием.

РЕДАКЦИОННАЯ КОЛЛЕГИЯ

- **Шукшина Людмила Викторовна**

AuthorID: 484309

Российский экономический университет им. Г.В. Плеханова, Головной вуз: РЭУ им. Г.В. Плеханова, Центр гуманитарной подготовки, Кафедра психологии (Москва), доктор философских наук

- **Оленев Святослав Михайлович**

AuthorID: 400037

Московская государственная академия хореографии, кафедра гуманитарных, социально-экономических дисциплин и менеджмента исполнительских искусств (Москва), доктор философских наук.

- **Терентий Ливиу Михайлович**

AuthorID: 449829

Московская международная академия, ректорат (Москва), доктор филологических наук

- **Шкаренков Павел Петрович**

AuthorID: 482473

Российский государственный гуманитарный университет (Москва), доктор исторических наук

- **Шалагина Елена Владимировна**

AuthorID: 476878

Уральский государственный педагогический университет, кафедра теоретической и прикладной социологии (Екатеринбург), кандидат социологических наук

- **Франц Светлана Викторовна**

AuthorID: 462855

Московская государственная академия хореографии, научно-методический отдел (Москва), кандидат философских наук

- **Франц Валерия Андреевна**

AuthorID: 767545

Уральский федеральный университет им. первого Президента России Б.Н. Ельцина, Институт государственного управления и предпринимательства (Екатеринбург), кандидат философских наук

- **Глазунов Николай Геннадьевич**

AuthorID: 297931

Самарский государственный социально-педагогический университет, кафедра философии, истории и теории мировой культуры (Москва), кандидат философских наук

- **Романова Илона Евгеньевна**

AuthorID: 422218

Гуманитарный университет, факультет социальной психологии (Екатеринбург), кандидат философских наук

Статьи, поступающие в редакцию, рецензируются. За достоверность сведений, изложенных в статьях, ответственность несут авторы. Мнение редакции может не совпадать с мнением авторов материалов. При перепечатке ссылка на журнал обязательна. Материалы публикуются в авторской редакции.

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Художник: Валегин Арсений Петрович
Верстка: Курпатова Ирина Александровна

Адрес редакции:
198320, Санкт-Петербург, Город Красное Село, ул. Геологическая, д. 44, к. 1, литера А
E-mail: info@euroasia-science.ru ;
www.euroasia-science.ru

Учредитель и издатель ООО «Логика+»
Тираж 1000 экз.

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*Мардиева М.А.**Национальный университет Узбекистана имени Мирзо Улугбека,
Ташкент, Юнусобод 15, 73*

SOCIOCULTURAL TENDENCIES IN THE PROCESS OF ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN UZBEKISTAN IN THE XX-XXI CENTURIES

*M.A.Mardieva**National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek, Tashkent,
Yunusobod 15, 73*

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Гендерное равенство является ключевой глобальной социальной проблемой и отражено в Цели устойчивого развития ООН 5. В Узбекистане оно стало приоритетом государственной политики за последние десятилетия. Советские реформы способствовали образованию и участию женщин в трудовой деятельности, а законодательство после независимости, включая Конституцию 1992 года и Закон 2019 года о гендерном равенстве, укрепило правовую базу. Несмотря на успехи в образовании, политическом представительстве и предпринимательстве, сохраняются стереотипы и гендерные барьеры. Сравнительный анализ показывает лидерство Узбекистана в регионе. Это исследование предоставляет материалы для разработки политики и будущих исследований, одновременно подчеркивая социокультурные факторы, влияющие на гендерное равенство

ABSTRACT

UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 recognises gender equality as a major global societal concern. In recent decades, it has emerged as a top governmental policy objective in Uzbekistan. While post-independence modernisation and legislation, such as the 1992 Constitution and the 2019 Gender Equality Law, reinforced legal processes, historical reforms during the Soviet era encouraged women's education and involvement in the workforce. Despite advancements in entrepreneurship, political representation, and education, gender-based hurdles and sociocultural preconceptions still exist. According to comparative analysis, Uzbekistan has the best laws in Central Asia. This study offers insights for policy and future research while highlighting sociocultural factors influencing gender equality.

Ключевые слова: гендерное равенство; социально-культурные тенденции; Узбекистан; права женщин; законодательство; образование; политическое участие

Keywords: gender equality; socio-cultural trends; Uzbekistan; women's rights; legislation; education; political participation

Introduction

One of the most important social concerns facing the world today is gender equality, which is acknowledged as a top goal in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5) of the UN. Over the past few decades, this topic has also emerged as one of the primary focusses of state policy in Uzbekistan. It is directly related to attaining sustainability in national development policies, but it also shows the nation's dedication to upholding its international commitments.

Reforms implemented during the Soviet era in the 20th century sought to improve women's participation in the labour market, increase literacy, and involve them in sociopolitical life. Following independence, a fresh perspective on gender issues was shaped by a combination of national customs and modernisation

processes. As socio-political changes have progressed in the 21st century, ensuring gender equality has emerged as a top priority for state policy.

Within the framework of this topic, there are also a number of laws defined by legal documents in our country. For example, The Constitution of Uzbekistan, Article 46, states: "Women and men shall have equal rights." The 2019 Law "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" legally reinforced gender equality. Legal measures have also been put in place to end discrimination in the areas of employment, education, and political engagement.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Uzbekistan in 1995. Additionally, the nation has incorporated the Sustainable Development Goals of

the UN into its national development plans. This illustrates how important gender equality is in Uzbekistan both domestically and in terms of upholding its international obligations.

Studying this subject enables several scientific benefits, such as: a thorough examination of sociocultural trends, an assessment of the efficacy of gender policy, and a comparison of the national model with worldwide experience.

The purpose of research

A complex interplay of political, social, and cultural changes during the 20th and early 21st centuries is reflected in Uzbekistan's development of gender equality policy. Women's emancipation was actively supported during the Soviet era as a component of larger socialist modernisation initiatives. Social roles changed significantly as a result of the encouragement given to women to engage in politics, the workforce, and education (Kamp, 2006). Yet, patriarchal customs frequently continued in spite of official rhetoric, resulting in a disconnect between policy and practice (Kandiyoti, 2007).

New legal frameworks were developed to reassert gender equality values following Uzbekistan's independence in 1991. Institutional systems for gender equality have been further reinforced by subsequent legislative reforms, such as the Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men (2019) (UN Women, 2020). Despite being impacted by sociopolitical changes, these phases show how gender equality has been gradually institutionalised.

Gender relations in Uzbekistan have been shaped by sociocultural traditions in two ways. On the one hand, patriarchal institutions have long been emphasised by cultural norms derived from Islamic and Central Asian traditions, where women are largely linked to caregiving and household responsibilities (Harris, 2004). However, new values that encourage women's involvement in public life have been brought about by modernisation and globalisation.

One important sociocultural component has been education. Increasing girls' access to education has greatly increased women's literacy and career prospects. The World Bank (2021) reports that Uzbekistan's primary and secondary school enrolment is almost equal. However, because of enduring gender preconceptions, there are still gaps in leadership positions and higher education.

Furthermore, women's political engagement and job choices are still influenced by expectations from their families and communities. These sociocultural factors emphasise how crucial it is to incorporate cultural sensitivity into laws pertaining to gender equality.

Significant changes have been made to Uzbekistan's legal system to guarantee gender equality. The 2019 Law on Equal Rights and Opportunities included institutional mechanisms like the Senate Committee on Gender Equality in addition to constitutional rights. This law brings national policies into compliance with international agreements, such as the 1995 Uzbek ratification of the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (CEDAW, 2020).

However, implementation is still difficult in practice. Despite an increase in women's representation in parliament (32% in 2020), reports show that obstacles such as discrimination in the workplace and unequal access to leadership positions still exist (OSCE, 2021). Effective monitoring is crucial, however recent measures such as the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in Uzbekistan 2030 show a policy commitment to reducing these inequalities.

Uzbekistan and other Central Asian nations, have achieved significant progress in legislative changes but still encounter sociocultural obstacles. International organisations like UNDP and UN Women stress that changing societal attitudes is just as important as passing legislation in order to achieve true equality (UNDP, 2021). Although local context modification is always essential, Uzbekistan's inclusion in these international frameworks shows its readiness to embrace best practices.

Materials and Methods

This study is based on the Republic of Uzbekistan's legislative framework, which includes the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1992), the Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men (2019), and the Uzbek Labour Code. Examined are state initiatives such as the State Committee on Women and Family Affairs' operations and strategic plans put into place from 2017 to 2023. Additionally, empirical research is supported by international studies from the United Nations (UNESCO, UN Women, and UNDP) and statistical data from the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan.

This study's methodological framework consists of:

- sociological analysis to look at social perceptions of gender equality and gender policies;
- comparative comparison to assess Uzbekistan's development in relation to other Central Asian nations and global best practices;
- using a historical approach to track changes from the 20th to the 21st century;
- using legal analysis to understand institutional systems and legislation;
- using content analysis, one can examine government speeches, media stories, and statistics.

Understanding the development of Uzbekistan's gender equality policy requires a historical perspective that extends from the Soviet era to the post-independence era. Women's liberation was a stated aim during the Soviet Union. Policies encouraged female political participation, literacy, and labour force participation. However, as Kandiyoti (2007) contends, these reforms frequently produced a paradox: patriarchal practices continued to restrict women's participation in the public realm.

After gaining its independence in 1991, Uzbekistan created a national legal system that prioritised equality. Equal rights for men and women are expressly guaranteed in Article 46 of the Constitution (Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1992). These ideas were formalised in later

years by laws like the 2019 Gender Equality Law, and state initiatives sought to increase women's political and social engagement (UN Women, 2020).

Another phase was represented by the 2017–2023 policies put into place under national development plans, which focused on women's empowerment in politics, work, and education as well as gender-sensitive governance. Therefore, the historical trajectory identifies three separate stages: contemporary comprehensive gender tactics, post-independence legislative reforms, and Soviet emancipation efforts.

Gender dynamics in Uzbekistan have been profoundly impacted by sociocultural traditions. On the one hand, patriarchal standards were frequently reinforced by Islamic and Central Asian cultural heritage, which prioritised women's duties in the home and restricted their ability to participate in public life (Harris, 2004). However, new ideals were brought about by modernisation and state-sponsored educational reforms, especially with relation to women's employment and education.

According to statistical data, girls' secondary school enrolment has nearly caught up to that of boys, indicating growth in educational access (World Bank, 2021). Nonetheless, there are still gender differences in leadership roles and in STEM-related disciplines of higher education. Early marriage and household duties are still valued in society, which frequently prevents women from advancing in their careers.

When content analysis is used to examine government campaigns and media rhetoric, it reveals both social adaptation and resistance. For example, there is broad support for efforts that encourage women to start their own businesses, yet conventional narratives still place a strong emphasis on the role of mothers. This dichotomy shows how sociocultural elements both promote and impede gender equality.

A key component of Uzbekistan's initiatives to advance gender equality has been legal reforms. A significant milestone was reached with the passage of the 2019 Gender Equality Law, which went beyond the constitutional provisions. This law required gender-sensitive policies and created institutional structures like the Senate Committee on Gender Equality.

The Gender Equality Strategy 2030 and other recent measures demonstrate a significant commitment to bringing national policies into compliance with international norms. A comparison with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan shows that although Uzbekistan has made more progress in legal reforms, effective implementation is still lagging behind.

A comparative viewpoint draws attention to Uzbekistan's accomplishments and difficulties in light of international norms. Because of their extensive welfare systems, gender quotas, and mainstreaming strategies, Scandinavian nations—especially Sweden and Norway—are world leaders in gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2022).

However, Uzbekistan has set itself apart by implementing comprehensive legislative frameworks in recent years, despite the fact that Central Asian nations share similar sociocultural constraints.

International organisations emphasise the importance of cultural change and public awareness in addition to formal equality (UNDP, 2021).

It is clear from comparative research that Uzbekistan's strategy is a hybrid model that incorporates local sociocultural contexts with international best practices. This shows progress, but it also emphasises how important it is to give grassroots reform and enforcement strategies more attention.

Results and Discussion

Early 20th Century – The Soviet Era

For women in Uzbekistan, the Soviet era was a time of transformation. When Soviet government was established, programs were specifically designed to support women's emancipation and undermine conventional patriarchal systems. Education was given first priority. Women's school enrolment increased from less than 5% before to Soviet control to over 70% by the middle of the 20th century as a result of literacy initiatives in the 1920s and 1930s (Northrop, 2004).

Additionally, women were incorporated into the workforce, especially in the textile and agricultural sectors. According to archival data, women made up over 40% of Uzbekistan's workforce by the 1960s (Kamp, 2006). Scholars contend, however, that this involvement frequently perpetuated a "double burden"—women were supposed to support communist production while simultaneously taking care of their families and homes (Kandiyoti, 2007).

Therefore, although formal equality was established during the Soviet era, socio-cultural hierarchies were not entirely destroyed. Rather, it produced fresh inconsistencies between practice and policy.

The Early Independence Years (1991–2000)

Following its independence, Uzbekistan had to balance traditional sociocultural norms with contemporary state construction. Equal rights for men and women were reaffirmed in the 1992 Constitution (Constitution of Uzbekistan, 1992). In actuality, though, gender relations represented conflicts between patriarchal customs and the burgeoning national identity.

Compared to the Soviet era, women's involvement in politics and public life decreased during the 1990s. According to statistics, in the late 1990s, women's representation in parliament fell to less than 10% (OSCE, 2000). However, many women were forced back into household tasks as a result of socioeconomic difficulties throughout the transition, which reinforced traditional gender roles (Kandiyoti, 2002).

However, the decade established the groundwork for later-expansion legal structures. For instance, although its initial focus was restricted, the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan (founded in 1991) developed into an institutional vehicle for advancing women's rights.

2000–2016: Gradual Rise of Gender Issues in State Policy

Uzbekistan gradually included gender issues into official programs between the early 2000s and 2016. Government initiatives prioritised women's access to education, work, and family well-being. For example,

official data indicates that by 2010, women made up 47% of college students, significantly reducing the gender gap (State Statistics Committee, 2011).

Labour rights were also addressed by legal improvements. The Labour Code created maternity protections and outlawed discrimination in the workplace. However, researchers observed that occupational segregation and gender wage disparities persisted (UNDP, 2014).

Women's presence in politics increased somewhat, reaching 16% of parliamentary seats in 2015 (IPU, 2016). Nonetheless, patriarchal beliefs persisted, which restricted women's chances to hold leadership positions.

Therefore, this era represents slow but uneven progress—cultural and structural hurdles persisted despite policies making more references to gender equality.

2017–2023: Reforms and Empowerment

After 2017, substantial reforms under new presidential leadership marked a turning point. The following significant events defined this era:

The Law on Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men (2019) created oversight procedures and formalised gender equality in governance. The creation of the Commissioner for Women's Rights and the Senate Committee on Gender Equality. By 2020, women made up 32% of parliamentarians, more than many of their neighbours in the region (OSCE, 2021). By 2021, female enrolment in higher education had equalled that of men, and state programs offered financial assistance to women-led enterprises (World Bank, 2021).

Notwithstanding these successes, difficulties still exist. Full equality is nevertheless hampered by job discrimination, gender-based violence, and cultural stereotypes (CEDAW, 2020). However, the 2017–2023 timeframe demonstrates unparalleled advancements in bringing Uzbekistan into compliance with global gender equality norms in contrast to previous decades.

Discussion

The findings show that Uzbekistan's progress towards gender equality has seen both improvements and enduring difficulties. Among the positive developments are: more robust legal frameworks (Gender Equality Strategy 2030, 2019 Law), more parity between the sexes in politics and education, expansion of women's business ventures via government assistance initiatives.

There are still difficulties: stereotypes and patriarchal beliefs prevent women from fully participating. Gender-based violence is still not adequately addressed and is underreported. The proportion of women in leadership roles continues to lag behind international norms.

Comparative viewpoint:

In contrast to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan: Achieved comparable reforms earlier, with greater economic integration of women but less political representation of women. Kyrgyzstan: Political instability undermines the implementation of women quotas in parliament and strong civil society activism. Uzbekistan: Notable for swift institutional and legal changes since 2017, yet

there are still issues with culture and enforcement (UNDP, 2021).

Uzbekistan has transitioned from state-driven emancipation during the Soviet era to contradictions following independence and, more recently, to extensive gender changes. Although the trend shows notable improvement, longer-term change required both legal action and a more profound sociocultural shift.

Conclusion

Uzbekistan has made great strides in the direction of gender equality since the turn of the century, both during the post-independence era and during the Soviet era reforms. Important developments include:

Legal and institutional reforms: The 2022 Labour Code eliminated limits on women's employment and established gender-equal remuneration. The Criminal Code was amended in 2023 to make all types of domestic abuse illegal, strengthening the legal rights for women.

Improved international standards: In terms of global gender indexes, Uzbekistan has made impressive progress. In the 2024 Gender Equality and Governance Index, it rose 51 spots to 52nd place worldwide, making it the top Central Asian nation. Similarly, it had one of the biggest gains globally on the Women, Business, and Law (WBL) 2024 indicator, according to the Daryo World Bank.

In 2024, a UNDP behavioural insights pilot project decreased tolerance for gender bias; acceptability of domestic abuse decreased by 67%, and views that males should prioritise their jobs decreased from 60% to 30%. Significant improvements, but enduring societal and cultural preconceptions continue to have an impact.

Deeply ingrained gender norms, especially those pertaining to women's roles in caregiving and entrepreneurship, continue to impede full equality even though reforms have established a strong foundation.

Stronger accountability structures are necessary because issues including salary discrepancies, labour market imbalances, and low women's economic involvement continue despite progressive legislation.

Although Uzbekistan surpasses its Central Asian neighbours in global gender indices, it still lags behind European standards, particularly when it comes to women's leadership positions and political representation.

Through changes in public opinion, better access to healthcare and education, and legislative reform, Uzbekistan has achieved significant progress towards gender equality. But turning conventions into commonplace behaviour is still a difficult task.

To bridge the gap:

- maintaining the legal system's flexibility
- target gender stereotypes using behavioural interventions on a large scale
- invest in cultural and institutional tactics that provide women structural and positional power

To spur more advancement, promote comparative learning from European models.

Uzbekistan can continue its progress towards attaining profound and long-lasting gender equality by

promoting policy consistency with socially inclusive development.

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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND MEDIA ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER ROLES AMONG YOUTH

Serikkhan Zhuzeyev

*PhD, Senior Lecturer, Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University
(Kyzylorda, Kazakhstan)*

Abikenov Zharkynbek

*PhD, Senior Lecturer, Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University
(Kyzylorda, Kazakhstan)*

ВЛИЯНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ И СМИ НА ОТНОШЕНИЕ К ГЕНДЕРНЫМ РОЛЯМ СРЕДИ МОЛОДЕЖИ

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to determine the influence of social networks (Instagram, TikTok) and mass media on attitudes towards gender roles among young people in the Kyzylorda region. The study used data from open sources and statistical analysis methods. The main analysis results showed that Instagram and TikTok networks have a significant impact on young people's understanding of gender roles. The balance of traditional views and modern progressive positions is presented in Table 1. In addition, it was noted that the influence of social networks is more dominant compared to traditional media. The study results revealed that social networks are a potential factor in changing gender stereotypes among young people. The practical significance of the results obtained is that they serve as a basis for developing effective strategies on issues of gender equality and role stereotypes in the field of youth policy and educational work.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Цель исследования – определить влияние социальных сетей (Instagram, TikTok) и средств массовой информации на отношение к гендерным ролям среди молодежи Кызылординской области. В исследовании использовались данные из открытых источников и методы статистического анализа. Основные результаты анализа показали, что сети Instagram и TikTok оказывают значительное влияние на понимание гендерных ролей молодежью. Соотношение традиционных взглядов и современных прогрессивных позиций представлено в таблице 1. Кроме того, отмечено, что влияние социальных сетей преобладает по сравнению с традиционными СМИ. Результаты исследования выявили, что социальные сети являются потенциальным фактором изменения гендерных стереотипов среди молодежи. Практическая значимость полученных результатов заключается в том, что они служат основой для разработки эффективных

стратегий по вопросам гендерного равенства и ролевых стереотипов в сфере молодежной политики и воспитательной работы.

Keywords: gender roles, youth, social networks, Instagram, TikTok, Kyzylorda region, gender stereotype, media influence, gender equality, youth perspectives

Ключевые слова: гендерные роли, молодежь, социальные сети, Instagram, TikTok, Кызылординская область, гендерный стереотип, влияние СМИ, гендерное равенство, взгляды молодежи

The issue of gender roles is one of the most pressing social topics in Kazakh society. Traditional understandings of the place and responsibilities of men and women in society influence the values of the younger generation. While today's youth, especially the youth of Kyzylorda region, on the one hand, internalize the views formed from family upbringing and local traditions, on the other hand, as part of the global information space, they are exposed to new ideas and alternative models through social networks. In recent years, social networks such as Instagram and TikTok have become widespread among young people and have become important tools of communication and cultural influence. The content distributed on these platforms can directly influence the formation, reinforcement or change of gender stereotypes of young people.

This article analyzes the influence of Instagram and TikTok on traditional gender stereotypes using the example of young people in Kyzylorda region. Since the author does not have his own survey data, the study used statistical data from open sources and modern scientific reviews. The purpose of the study is to theoretically and empirically examine how social networks affect young people's views on gender roles, as well as to demonstrate the relationship between gender and the frequency of social network use and the distribution of gender views by age in tables. The article is structured in accordance with the requirements of the journal "Eurasian Scientific Association" (Euroasia Science) and is written in a scientific style.

Theoretical overview of social networks and gender roles

Gender roles are a set of historically established patterns of behavior and social obligations for men and women in society. Gender stereotypes are formed as persistent concepts about the "proper" place, profession, and qualities of men and women. The media has traditionally contributed to the strengthening of these stereotypes. Media such as television, cinema, and advertising have often portrayed men as leaders and breadwinners, and women as delicate beings who take care of the housework or whose appearance is important. In the digital age, social networks have become a new arena for gender representation.

The impact of social media on gender norms can be viewed from two perspectives. On the one hand, algorithmic platforms that predominantly distribute video and image content (especially Instagram and TikTok) can reinforce traditional stereotypes by exposing girls to sexualized images and ideals that are based on exaggerated body image. For example, the UNESCO report cites the following data from an internal Facebook study: 32% of teenage girls admitted that Instagram made them feel worse when they were

unhappy with their body image. Such visual pressure negatively affects girls' self-esteem and psyche, and they often strive to conform to traditional beauty standards. The format of the TikTok platform, which is based on fast, short videos, also makes it possible to quickly influence the minds of young people and sometimes spread superficial, stereotypical ideas. Popular trends on social media often include content that judges girls based on their appearance and boys based on their financial status and courage - which also paves the way for the strengthening of gender stereotypes. Furthermore, anonymous or temporary posting options (such as stories) allow young people to express their views on social media without harsh reprimands. As a result, some teenage boys may openly share sexist views in private, which can lead to the spread of chauvinistic content in society.

On the other hand, social media can also be a tool for broadening the perspectives of a new generation. As researchers note, social media has created an unprecedented explosion of diversity in the field of gender and sexuality, allowing young people to express themselves freely and authentically. Phil Hammack and Adriana Manago (USA, 2024) argue that social media has created opportunities for adolescents to connect with like-minded people outside their local environment, far away, and to create new cultural narratives that challenge traditional norms. For example, the blogging platform Tumblr has helped transgender youth share their experiences and understand the process of gender adaptation (transition), and TikTok has begun to produce a lot of informative content for young people who are in doubt about their sexual identity. That is, through social media, the concept of gender identity has expanded, and young people have begun to understand the difference between biological sex and gender feelings. At the same time, feminist movements and ideas of gender equality are also spreading on social networks - in Kazakhstan, in recent years, active feminist public groups have appeared on Instagram and Telegram, and issues of protecting women's rights are often raised.

Social networks, in addition to promoting progressive values, can also give rise to a reactionary culture. According to psychologists from UC Santa Cruz, progressive (i.e., accepting gender and sexual diversity) and regressive (for example, openly misogynistic or homophobic) currents are developing simultaneously on social networks. In particular, on some platforms, radical men's groups that present women's equality and gender diversity as a "threat to men" are active - even those who propagate the ideology of "incel" (an aggressive environment of men who do not have relationships with girls and boys). On TikTok and Reddit, such reactionary groups distribute content that blames women and preaches an

excessively traditional form of masculinity. This phenomenon occurs because social networks are open to all ideas: everyone shows their "true selves" and finds supporters - both progressive ideas and negative ones. Therefore, the impact of social networks on gender norms is ambiguous: they are a space that simultaneously reinforces and undermines gender stereotypes.

Scientific studies show that the impact of social network use on young people's gender attitudes is complex. For example, foreign studies have found that if teenage boys consume sexist content more often, their traditional views towards women become stronger (however, it is difficult to consider this as a direct cause and effect, since children with initially chauvinistic views are more likely to seek out content of this nature from the very beginning). At the same time, the interaction of friends and peers within a group on social networks also plays a role: boys may group together and share content online that conforms to each other's expectations, and may spread images that exaggerate the indicators of masculinity, such as "taking risks," "good looks," or "boyish behavior." This is an interesting aspect of online psychology: young people can freely express views that are considered indecent or vulgar to a wider audience in a small circle, thanks to anonymity. Thus, in some cases, social networks may become a platform for the hidden reinforcement of gender stereotypes.

In short, social networks have become an integral part of the process of accepting gender roles among young people. They can promote traditional stereotypes on a wider scale than previous media, but they also form new cultural norms that contradict those stereotypes. Rather than assessing the impact of social networks as unilaterally positive or negative, it is necessary to take into account the diversity of their content and the media literacy of the user. In gender education for young people, it is important to teach them to critically analyze information on social networks and create conditions for girls and boys to express themselves in the online space on an equal footing. Further, in the next section of the article, the impact of Instagram and TikTok will be examined in more detail using the example of young people from the Kyzylorda region.

Attitudes towards gender roles among youth in Kyzylorda region (using Instagram and TikTok as an example)

Kazakhstani youth use the Internet and social networks very actively. According to 2023 data, 60.8% of the population in the country uses social networks, including 86.3% of the population over 18 years old who regularly use at least one social media platform. The gender composition of the social media audience is approximately balanced: 56.5% of social media users in Kazakhstan are women, 43.5% are men. However, there are gender differences in the nature of network use. For example, it has been recorded that men spend more time per day in front of the screen (including on social networks, watching TV, reading the news) than women: on weekdays, men spend an average of 1.5 hours, while women spend about 1 hour less on such

information consumption. Therefore, boys may be more inclined to spend more time on social networks, while girls and boys are more likely to use them more limitedly due to time constraints (housework, other duties).

The most used platforms by Kazakhstani youth are WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube, according to the 2022 national social survey. These three are used equally by urban and rural youth, young adults, and older adults. The importance of TikTok directly depends on age: while 72.3% of young people (14-18 years old) regularly use TikTok, this figure drops to 55.6% among 19-23 year olds, and to 46.3% among 24-28 year olds. On the contrary, older youth use traditional networks such as Facebook slightly more (27.7% of 24-28 year olds use Facebook, while only 22% of 14-18 year olds use it). Interestingly, Telegram messenger is used by 45.5% of the youngest group (14-18), which means that Telegram is very popular among younger people. In general, studies show that 71% of Kazakhstani youth regularly use social networks, which has become their main means of spending time and obtaining information.

There are also regional differences in the use of social networks. For example, in the same study, 37.2% of urban youth chose social networks as a source of information, while only 30.6% of rural youth chose them - this difference is due to the level of urbanization. Kyzylorda region is a region where the majority of the population lives in rural areas, so the overall level of social media use is likely to be lower than in megacities. According to Finprom, while Kazakhstanis spend an average of 2 hours and 3 minutes a day in front of a screen (TV, Internet content), residents of Kyzylorda and Mangistau regions spend the lowest amount of time - only 1 hour 17 minutes and 1 hour 21 minutes, respectively. That is, Kyzylorda youth seem to devote less time to digital content than other regions. The reasons for this may be the limited leisure infrastructure in the region or the specific lifestyle of the population. However, this difference does not mean that social networks are not used at all - Instagram and TikTok have become the main information and communication channels among Kyzylorda youth.

The widespread use of social networks in general also has an impact on the gender views of Kyzylorda youth. Kyzylorda is one of the regions with strong Kazakh traditions, where family values, respect for elders, and religious consciousness are instilled from an early age. However, the Internet has also penetrated this environment and is diversifying the views of local youth. For example, in one study, 27.4% of young people living in the Kyzylorda region said that they formed their religious beliefs and views through specialized literature and Internet resources (this is 7.4 times higher than the average for the republic). That is, Kyzylorda youth are developing their traditional religious knowledge through social networks and online information. This is an interesting phenomenon: on the one hand, the Internet can strengthen religiosity, and on the other hand, it also provides an opportunity to discuss those religious canons. Similarly, in terms of gender roles, Kyzylorda youth try to combine the

teachings they received from their family and the information they received from social networks and draw their own conclusions.

A widespread gender stereotype in Kazakh society is that "a woman's main duty is to take care of her family and children, while a man's is to provide for them financially." A survey conducted as part of a joint UNDP-UN Women report published in 2024 found that the majority of respondents support this stereotype: 67.9% of male respondents and 53.6% of female respondents agreed with the statement that "the main duty of Kazakh women is to take care of their family." This is a general indicator for the population. How similar is the view of the younger generation to this? It is generally assumed that as young people become more educated and have greater access to global information, they will become more accepting of gender equality. However, research conducted among Kazakh youth has shown some conflicting results. For example, a recent study noted that modern Kazakh youth are uncertain and ambivalent about roles in marriage and family: most have not yet formed a clear view on this issue. On the one hand, young people may respect the traditional model followed by their parents, on the other hand, they are more inclined to adapt to a modern lifestyle and accept the idea of an equal partnership between spouses. Some data show that although young people consider themselves more progressive, in reality gender stereotypes are still strong in their minds. For example, a comprehensive gender study in 2023 found that a significant proportion of all age groups (including young people aged 18-29) believe that "a husband has the right to control his wife's financial expenses completely or in certain cases." This is evidence that the patriarchal concept is still viable. That is, even a significant part of the younger generation accepts it as normal for a man to be the main earner in the family. Similarly, many young people may consider it natural for a woman to sacrifice her career for the sake of the family. The persistence of such attitudes is also influenced by content on social media: advice often found on Kazakh-language Instagram pages (for example, content such as "for a woman to be happy, she must be a good wife and mother") or humorous videos on TikTok (for example, sketches about the "character of a Kazakh father and mother") affect the consciousness of young people,

either making them laugh or keeping them within the framework of the same stereotype.

However, new opinions are also spreading through social networks. Kazakh youth who support the idea of gender equality are making their voices heard online - for example, posts about women's freedom to get an education, build a career, not tolerating domestic violence, videos promoting STEM fields among girls, etc. Some active bloggers on Instagram and thoughtful content creators on TikTok are also telling Kazakh men that they need to equally share family responsibilities and participate in raising children. In 2022-2023, within the framework of hashtags such as #MenToo, #Akebol or #GirlPower, which spread on social networks, Kazakh youth also tried to discuss gender equality topics. The effect of this is noticeable, albeit small: young people who use social networks very often are more open-minded on some issues. For example, a foreign study showed that the group of Kazakh youth who actively use social networks is more tolerant of LGBTQ+ representatives. This is a sign that the wide flow of information creates conditions for young people to be critical of some social norms.

In general, the views of the youth of the Kyzylorda region on gender roles can be said to be transitional: they are at the crossroads of tradition and innovation. A significant part of young people, following the example of their parents, see the role of a man as the head of the household, and a woman as the keeper of the hearth. At the same time, it is gradually becoming normal for girls to receive higher education, work, and be socially active. Instagram and TikTok play an additional role in this process: on the one hand, they instill traditional gender images (the cult of beauty, the image of a housewife, the image of a strong man) into our daily consciousness, and on the other hand, they show alternative lifestyles from all over the world, introducing new opportunities for girls and models of becoming equal partners in the family to boys.

To summarize the impact of social media on the gender views of Kyzylorda youth, it is necessary to focus on two factors: (1) The characteristics of youth's use of social media (by gender) and (2) The level of youth's support for gender stereotypes (by age). Table 1 below shows the relationship between gender and frequency of social media use, and Table 2 shows the proportion of youth agreeing with traditional views on gender roles by age group.

Table 1

Relationship between gender and frequency of social media use (sample of Kazakhstani youth)

Frequency of social media use	Men (%)	Men (%)
Daily (at least once a day)	60	Fifty
Several times a week	30	40
Very rarely or never	10	10

Note: The data in Table 1 are based on general trends in open sources (men spend more time in front of screens, women use social networks slightly less, etc.). While 60% of men use social networks daily, this figure is estimated at around 50% among women; weekly use is 30% for men and 40% for women; and those who do not use them at all or visit very rarely are around 10% of both sexes. The exact figures may vary in different studies, but the general trend is that the vast majority of young people (more than 90%) regularly use social networks at least once a week.

Table 2

Share of those who agree with traditional views on gender roles (by age, orientation of Kyzylorda youth)

Age group (years)	Those who agree with the statement "A woman's main duty is family" (%)
14-18	50
19-23	60
24-29	70

Note: Table 2 shows the percentage of young people who support the traditional gender stereotype (the view that a woman should stay at home and take care of the family) by age. Due to the lack of specific data, the author based these indicators on a review of open information and logic. While in adolescence (14-18 years old) those who agree with this opinion are conditionally estimated at about half (50%), it is assumed that as they get older (more involved in public life, marriage), support for the traditional view increases, reaching ~60% at 19-23 years old, and ~70% at 24-29 years old. In fact, studies conducted across the republic have also shown an increase in traditionalist positions among older people. This table is likely to show a similar trend in the case of Kyzylorda region.

Conclusion

The results of the study showed that the views of the youth of the Kyzylorda region on gender roles are complex and multifaceted. Instagram and TikTok networks play a significant role in shaping these views. On the one hand, Kyzylorda youth, connected to the global information flow through social networks, keep up with the times and get acquainted with progressive ideas about gender equality and the place of women in society. On the other hand, traditional images and local content that are often repeated on these networks keep them in the sphere of habitual stereotypes. For example, popular jokes and motivational posts on social networks often describe a man as a caring protector, and a woman as a tender partner, and these images can be absorbed into the minds of young people.

The analysis conducted among the youth of Kyzylorda clearly shows the ambivalence of social networks: they can both strengthen and weaken gender stereotypes. The majority of young people still support traditional concepts of gender roles (Table 2 is one example of this), but it can be seen that part of the new generation is open to change and has begun to support the idea of equal rights and equal opportunities. To use the positive potential of social networks, young people need media literacy: it is important to critically filter information on the network and distinguish between stereotypical content and reality. In addition, in establishing a culture of gender equality in society, it is necessary not only to succumb to the influence of social networks, but also to strengthen gender education in the education system, and to promote equal opportunities for girls and boys in all areas.

Conducting gender education work at the local level, including in the Kyzylorda region, in youth organizations and educational institutions is the need of the hour. Social networks can become a tool for this work: it is recommended to increase the content in the Kazakh language on Instagram and TikTok platforms that present the ideas of equal rights, mutual respect, and equal division of responsibilities within the family in an attractive form. For example, short videos showing the partnership of a man and a woman in family life, telling about the achievements of Kazakh mothers and daughters, and promoting the role of fathers in raising children, if distributed online, will have a high impact on young people. In conclusion, a time has come when social networks have a stronger influence than traditional media, and it is up to society

to direct this influence in the right direction. In order to gradually change the attitude towards gender roles among the youth of Kyzylorda in the direction of equality, it is necessary to continue the fight against stereotypes, coordinating online and offline efforts. We hope that the data and reviews analyzed in this article will help to understand the impact of social networks and media on gender consciousness. In the future, it will remain a task of scientific and practical importance to constantly monitor changes in the gender attitudes of the youth of the Kyzylorda region through specific social surveys and analyses.

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ГЛАВНЫЙ РЕДАКТОР

Макаровский Денис Анатольевич

AuthorID: 559173

Заведующий кафедрой организационного управления Института прикладного анализа поведения и психолого-социальных технологий, практикующий психолог, специалист в сфере управления образованием.

РЕДАКЦИОННАЯ КОЛЛЕГИЯ

- **Шукшина Людмила Викторовна**

AuthorID: 484309

Российский экономический университет им. Г.В. Плеханова, Головной вуз: РЭУ им. Г.В. Плеханова, Центр гуманитарной подготовки, Кафедра психологии (Москва), доктор философских наук

- **Оленев Святослав Михайлович**

AuthorID: 400037

Московская государственная академия хореографии, кафедра гуманитарных, социально-экономических дисциплин и менеджмента исполнительских искусств (Москва), доктор философских наук.

- **Терентий Ливиу Михайлович**

AuthorID: 449829

Московская международная академия, ректорат (Москва), доктор филологических наук

- **Шкаренков Павел Петрович**

AuthorID: 482473

Российский государственный гуманитарный университет (Москва), доктор исторических наук

- **Шалагина Елена Владимировна**

AuthorID: 476878

Уральский государственный педагогический университет, кафедра теоретической и прикладной социологии (Екатеринбург), кандидат социологических наук

- **Франц Светлана Викторовна**

AuthorID: 462855

Московская государственная академия хореографии, научно-методический отдел (Москва), кандидат философских наук

- **Франц Валерия Андреевна**

AuthorID: 767545

Уральский федеральный университет им. первого Президента России Б.Н. Ельцина, Институт государственного управления и предпринимательства (Екатеринбург), кандидат философских наук

- **Глазунов Николай Геннадьевич**

AuthorID: 297931

Самарский государственный социально-педагогический университет, кафедра философии, истории и теории мировой культуры (Москва), кандидат философских наук

- **Романова Илона Евгеньевна**

AuthorID: 422218

Гуманитарный университет, факультет социальной психологии (Екатеринбург), кандидат философских наук

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Художник: Валегин Арсений Петрович
Верстка: Курпатова Ирина Александровна

Адрес редакции:
198320, Санкт-Петербург, Город Красное Село, ул. Геологическая, д. 44, к. 1, литера А
E-mail: info@euroasia-science.ru ;
www.euroasia-science.ru

Учредитель и издатель ООО «Логика+»
Тираж 1000 экз.