

Changes in the Traditional Occupations and Discourse of Women: New Element of Human Capital in Redesigned Kazakh Society

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Abstract: Redesigning of developing economies includes the challenge of the inclusive materialization of women's human potential. This paper investigates changes in the women's social status and the role of human capital in conveying the Kazakhs' traditional values. The study includes a sample of 400 women. The sample's overall demographic profile generally corresponds to the demographic profile of Kazakh society. The research findings established importance of traditional values and behaviors for Kazakh women. Educational attainment is a significant component of social status for Kazakh women, but the degree of its influence on achieving higher social status is perceived to be insignificant.

Keywords: ethnic groups, gender studies, human capital, traditional culture, traditional values, woman rights.

Contemporary Kazakh society is undergoing an intense overhaul and socio-economic change. Over the decades of independence, the government has focused on formulating and defining a national strategy and ideology, which could serve as a means of identity development, ensuring ethnic and religious peace and stability (Ryskaliyev et al., 2019; Shevchenko & Nazarova, 2014). During the society's development in the Soviet times and later on, the role of women in society and the extent to which they materialize their opportunities in all areas have increased significantly (Kudaibergenova, 2018; Muratovna & Serikbayevna, 2020). Kazakhstan has adopted most international documents ensuring women's rights, protection of motherhood and childhood, ensuring equal access to education, employment, and achieving social status (Abildina & Eskazinova, 2013; Alsaawi & Adamchak, 2000).

Still, researchers suggest that development processes in the country have specific features, which bear the imprint of the traditional structure of Kazakh predominantly nomadic society and its traditions (Moldagaliyev et al., 2015). According to a number of researchers, the socio-economic changes have not so strongly affected the way of life and social relations of the Kazakhs, as it happened with the other peoples of Central Asia (Baker, 1985; Karipbayev, 2021; Low, 2006). In terms of anthropology and ethnography, the role of women in Kazakh society is very significant, and traditional rights and opportunities for women are very broad and supported by traditional laws. Kazakhs have not imposed many restrictions on women common to other peoples of the region and to various Muslim communities. Such a lack of harsh pressure from traditional society and the high social status of women in traditional nomadic society may serve as a powerful incentive for women to remain committed to traditional values and maintain traditional patterns of family and community relations (Edelbay, 2012).

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In contemporary society, the need for women's employment and community inclusion is dictated by the production cycle, the characteristic features of communication and inputs (Abildina & Eskazinova, 2013; Low, 2007). Women are involved in the production of tangible and intangible goods on an equal footing with men, which contributes to the gradual erosion of traditional social structures throughout the modern world and promotes the universalization of the way of life, especially in urbanized regions (Dauletyarova et al., 2016; Durrani et al., 2022). Yet, Kazakhstan significantly lags behind other developing economies in terms of urbanization rates, and the ideology followed by the country's leadership was based on the traditional lifestyles and values of nomadic Kazakhs (Aljanova et al., 2016; Edelbay, 2012).

In most cases historically Kazakh women have been the keepers and transmitters of traditional forms of behavior and family ritual practices, and the women were responsible for shaping the children's worldview in their early years. The mother's influence on children's behavior later in life remained very significant. With age, an increase in the number of descendants and the expansion of family and kinship ties, the accumulation of personal experience, a Kazakh woman always raised her social status to the level of a kind of 'matriarch' with a large degree of influence on family and social processes (Low, 2006; Myrzabekkyzy et al., 2021; Rezvushkina & Karipbayev, 2021). Therefore, the specific features of traditional culture and special aspects of women's lives in modern Kazakhstan are an important, and perhaps the key factor in understanding the redesign processes, changes in the social status of women, and the materialization of their opportunities in society.

Literature Review

The theory of human capital put forward by Bordieu has become one of the defining ones in modern sociology and, starting with the works of Nobel laureate Paul Romer, human capital is considered a key factor in understanding economic growth in society (Fix, 2021). This theory considers personal attributes as defining the production process and includes skills, knowledge, health, education, and others. The theory is not only actively developed and used for sociological measurements and is included in a number of internationally recognized indices but is also criticized for a number of limitations (Marginson, 2019).

The human capital approach allows us to consider the processes of transformation and modernization of society on the basis of a holistic and well-studied set of parameters related to the possibility of self-realization of the individual. At the same time, there are very few studies that would apply this parameter in relation to the modernizing society of Kazakhstan or other countries of Central Asia (Najafizadeh & Lindsey, 2018; Spector, 2019).

At the moment, a growing number of studies by Kazakh and foreign authors address a feminist approach or the status of women, their rights, the ways of women's development in the modern world in the Kazakh context (Kudaibergenova, 2018, 2019; Low, 2007). More specifically, such studies focus on the issues of women's employment in the education sector, highlighting their role as both a mother, a producer of intangible values, and researcher (Kuzhabekova et al., 2018; Lipovka, 2018). Many traditional problems of feminist discourse, such as overcoming traditional patriarchal society, eliminating society's unacknowledged suppression of women and socially approved violence against women, are also relevant to the Kazakh context (Ryskaliyev et al., 2019; Schwab, 2012; Sharipova et al., 2018; Shreeves, 2020; Snajdr, 2007).

On the other hand, more objective studies by Western scientists emphasize the significant modernization of Kazakh society, and the social and economic component of women's equality (Najafizadeh & Lindsey, 2018; Spector, 2019; Werner, 2021). At the same time, researchers emphasize the higher burden on women associated with their role as guardians of traditional family values (Kolovich & Shibuya, 2018; Shreeves, 2020).

However, because of its traditional ethnic structure and the nature of production and lifestyles, Kazakh society has significant differences in the position and status of women in society. Unlike most nomadic cultures in Central Asia, as well as the vast majority of cultures that embraced Islam early in their history, Kazakhs gave women significant rights and a much higher degree of protection because of the important social functions women were entrusted with (Kuzhabekova, 2019; Low, 2006; Moldagaliyev et al., 2015). Many researchers agree that Kazakh women could take part in numerous contests, particularly equestrian contests, could be warriors, and could engage in trades and employments dominated by men (Najafizadeh & Lindsey, 2018; Werner, 2021). Women also bore traditional responsibility for many aspects of human life that were crucial to family and clan survival (Edelbay, 2012; Karipbayev, 2021). Accordingly, a woman had more rights in choosing a man, significant influence on the children and community inclusion of her clan and tribe, and had peculiar opportunities to raise her own social status and influence throughout her life (Kiynova et al., 2018).

Most researchers point out that the fate of Muslims among the Kazakhs is very mixed, and to a greater extent, Muslims act as an element of religious syncretism, dominated by the traditional elements of the shamanistic Tengri religion, which have received new, Muslim explanations or have simply been integrated into the everyday practice of Muslims, even though these elements themselves stand in absolute contrast to the doctrine (Edelbay, 2012; Myong & Chun, 2015). The significant influence of traditional local pre-Muslim beliefs and shamanism remains highly visible throughout the region, and in modern Kazakhstan, as researchers point out, is even being revived in the form of the religion of Tengrism (Roche & Torri, 2020).

The development of society in the Soviet Union and beyond led to an even greater social role for women due to the penetration of women into the government, central and local administrative bodies, elected governing bodies, and the civil service (Shevchenko & Nazarova, 2014; Shreeves, 2020; Zhansagimova & Smart, 2013). The range of professions available to and chosen by women has expanded considerably, with the percentage of women with secondary engineering and higher education also growing very rapidly (Seitkhozhina, 2014; Seralinova, 2017). A number of researchers emphasize that this is a significant advantage of modern Kazakhstan compared to other developing countries in Central Asia and even the Middle East (Aktakke et al., 2019; Spector, 2019). At the same time, some researchers point to the presence of positive gender norms in the Kazakh fiscal legislation, which are more advanced than in other countries of the region (Kolovich & Shibuya, 2018). Many Western researchers point out that despite available statistical data on obvious successes, the women's real influence on significant decision-making in central, local, and municipal governments remains quite low, which is typical of most post-Soviet and developing economies (Ryskaliyev et al., 2019).

Such a situation is somewhat aggravated by the traditional status of women in Kazakhstan and the willingness of most women to perform the traditional function assigned thereto, as it can serve as a peculiar form of gaining significant social influence and a form of personal development sanctified by tradition (Low, 2007; Muratovna & Serikbayevna, 2020). Therefore, a number of researchers believe that women have so far made little effort to accelerate the processes of feminization and gain greater rights and influence in public, economic, and political life (Moldagaliyev et al., 2015; Werner, 2004).

Contemporary academic literature on Kazakhstan has a significant gap in researching the connections of ethnographic and anthropological features of Kazakhs in their historical form with the current situation in the society and the materialization of significant civilizational values and ideas therein. Such ideas include feminism, the development of society's human capital, the creation of a multicultural and multifaith society, and many others. This study partially fills this gap and describes the links between the traditional ways of Kazakh society and the modernization processes taking place therein in relation to women and their place in society. Therefore, the main research question can be formulated as follows: Whether and if so,

what statistically significant changes exist in the assessment of the social status and materialization of women's human capital in Kazakh society and how do they relate to women's role in preserving the traditional Kazakh culture, its values, and behaviors?

Method and Materials

Participants

For this study, a representative sample was made by simple random sampling. Based on the census and the user database of mobile network operators, 400 women with Kazakh citizenship living in all regions of the country were randomly selected. Prospective participants received invitations to participate in the survey; the goals and content of the survey were explained. If a prospective participant refused to participate, invitations were sent to the next, also randomly selected participant. With this random sampling, 400 women were selected as the participant base for the survey. Based on the number of women in the population of Kazakhstan as of September 1, 2021 (9.7 million people), the sample can be considered representative with a confidence interval $p = .05$ or lower, and when the proportion of the desired feature exceeds 50%. The probable sampling error under these conditions does not exceed 4.9. Table 1 below provides the sample's detailed demographic profile.

Table 1

Sample's Demographic Profile by Age, Education, Family and Children, Religion, Region of Residence, and Ethnic Group

Region	Central	East	West	North	South	
Age	19 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	>60	
	57 (14.25%)	98 (24.5%)	99 (24.75%)	95 (23.75%)	51 (12.75%)	
Family	Have family		Alone		Divorced	
	289 (72.5%)		71 (17.75%)		40 (10%)	
Education	Secondary		Secondary special/professional		College/university	
	44 (11%)		156 (39%)		200 (50%)	
Children	0	1	2	3	>3	
	89 (22.25%)	111 (27.75%)	102 (25.5%)	51 (12.75%)	47 (11.75%)	
Religion	Muslim	Christian	Buddhism	Tengri	Others	
	268 (67%)	56 (14%)	46 (11.5%)	3 (0.75%)	30 (7.5%)	
Ethnic group	Kazakh	Russian	Uzbek	Ukrainian	Uighur	Others
	240 (60%)	98 (24.5%)	12 (3%)	10 (2.55)	7 (1.75%)	33 (8.25%)

The percentages of the respective demographic groups presented in Table 1 correspond to the data of the last census in Kazakhstan with an accuracy of 0.08, which once again implies a sufficiently strong statistical reliability of the sample.

Study Design

In order to answer the research question, the study was divided into a number of phases. First, an unstructured survey was conducted among participants to identify the most important components of social status that participating women considered being truly significant in their lives. This phase was critical in order to further determine whether or not changes in the women's social status over the course of their lives had actually occurred. The researchers did not seek to offer ready-made definitions of community inclusion to the study participants, but to obtain such definitions from them. The survey asked for a list of the most important components of social status that define the significant areas of each woman's life. After the answers were received, the component lists were presented again to all participants and discussed to make sure that all participants understood the same names and terms. Participants were then asked to rate the importance of each component of social status using a 5-point Likert scale, where a score of 1 indicated 'almost unimportant component' and 5 indicated 'one of the most important components'. The findings suggested that those component definitions that collectively scored below 0.5 on average were discarded. The components were compared with each other using multivariate analysis based on Student's *t-test* to check the null hypothesis that these components are not independent, and the differences between them in the respondents' assessments are random. Those components that demonstrated $p < .05$ as a result of the study were recognized as independent factors and were further used for the questionnaire of the second phase of the study. The results of this test are presented in Table 2.

A separate survey was conducted to determine the study participants' contribution to the preservation and conveyance of cultural values. The researchers proceeded from the hypothesis that involvement in traditional values manifests itself in behavior, that is, in the respondent's own energy, time, and other resources spent to share specific values characteristic of the respondent's ethnic group, religious denomination, etc. According to this assumption, a person cannot be considered a bearer of traditional values and culture if such person is not actively involved in traditional festivals and ceremonies, does not perform appropriate religious or other ritual practices in the family, does not adhere to the traditional calendar of ceremonies, that is, when such person does not build own life in one way or another in accordance with traditional values expressed in actions, ritual practices, and forms of behavior. Hence, it was important to evaluate, on the one hand, the assessment by the study participants of traditional values in their totality, as well as to assess the true level of participants' involvement in preserving and conveying such traditional behaviors and values to the next generations. To evaluate the subjective assessments, the importance of traditional national values was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 point implying 'has minimal importance in my life' and 5 points meaning 'determines all aspects of my life.' The outcomes of this survey are shown in Figure 1.

To assess objective involvement in traditional culture and values, participants were offered a list of traditional ritual practices, holidays, significant family ceremonies, and behaviors that are crucial for Kazakhs. In this context, only female participants who were either Kazakhs or Muslims participated in this component of the study. Such a decision was made because a significant part of the traditional ritual practices of the Uighurs, Kazakhs, and Uzbeks merged into everyday practices under the influence of long cohabitation and intermarriages, and the influence of Muslims. Since this study focuses on the Kazakhs, not only as a political nation but precisely as a state-forming cultural, ethnic and anthropological group, the focus was on the Kazakh national traditions and customs.

In order to ensure that participants' evaluations are not influenced by human factors, the survey of subjective and objective assessments of involvement in traditional culture was separated by 2 weeks.

In order to assess changes in social status, the respondents were asked to provide objective data on changes in one's position in relation to each of the components of social status that were highlighted in the first part of this study. In this case, all of the cumulative changes that occurred during the lifetime of a particular study participant in their resulting equilibrium outcome (that is, in relation to the participant's position at the time of this study) were taken into account. In this context, changes in social status include, for example, a change in salary, starting a family, getting an education, improving social position, etc. Both positive and negative changes were taken into account. A two-sided Likert scale modified by the authors was used for evaluation, with a score from -5 to +5. Negative values point to a decline in performance, a decrease in social status, or a deterioration of the situation. The positive part of the scale, respectively, measures the improvement in position and social status.

The acceptability of using the method of a two-sided Likert scale, including positive and negative scores on the same scale and their averaging, was supported by the results of the study. The same respondents indicated positive values of the scale for some of the studied factors and negative for others. There are no cases when the respondent indicated only negative or only positive values. The two-sided scale is more effective in assessing social phenomena that can be perceived ambivalently by the respondents. It is not the significance or importance that is assessed, but the degree of observed changes in a certain phenomenon, and the changes can be both positive and negative from the point of view of the observer.

The changes in human capital were studied by searching for correlations between the components of social status. This part of the study seeks to answer the following question: Are there significant correlations between changes in the components that define human capital (education, social and marital statuses) and changes in social status? In determining statistical significance, the mean values for tests were determined for each individual pair of social status components.

The last part of the study addressed the correlation between the degree of involvement in traditional values and changes in social status. Correlations were studied in all cases using the Pearson correlation coefficient in order to identify the most obvious relationships when they existed. The statistical significance of this correlation and its relative strength were also assessed.

Statistical Instruments

Statistical studies were performed using SPSS 26.0 software. Data were visualized and presented in Microsoft Excel 2019.

Ethical Issues

All respondents participated anonymously, with their personal data kept confidential. No personally identifiable information was collected, stored, or used in any way other than as described for research purposes.

Research Limitations

The study does not use multivariate analysis to explore more complex relationships between specific demographic profiles and changes in social status or the materialization of human capital, as the study addresses the most common significant trends in contemporary Kazakh society and connects social change with traditional values.

It should be noted that the study reflects quite objectively and representatively only the opinion of women. The results of the study do not include an assessment of the opinions of men

on the same issues, or the opinion of state bodies or independent experts, which would be necessary for the formation of fully objective conclusions.

Results

The following 5 most significant components of social status in contemporary Kazakh society were identified: educational attainment, marital status, income, the woman's position in the social stratification, and support from her family (Table 2). In this context, according to the common understanding of the terms that was reached with the respondents when discussing the definitions of the social status components, income is not primarily attributed to personal income, but to the contribution to the household's budget, which significantly affects the respect and involvement in decision-making on expenditures and purchases. The level of family support correlates to a greater extent with clan support and involves more than just psychological support, also including *mestnichestvo* (a system of seniority which dictated which government posts people could occupy), the influence of relatives and friends on the course of one's career, the possibility of receiving financial support in times of hardship, mutual childcare, and other forms of casual support and division of labor. Marital status is also a significant component of the overall social status because a married woman has stronger support in society and in the team, and greater respect. Her opinion is respected, and she receives a number of social bonuses, which are not stipulated by written rules but are very important: being able to work fewer hours, have more freedom in choosing work hours, asking men for help.

Table 2
Components of Women's Social Status

	Mean	SD	df	p
Education	3.69	0.33	399	.031
Marital status	4.02	0.19	399	.027
Income level	3.46	0.7	399	.033
Status in the social stratification system	4.20	0.29	399	.002
Family support	4.12	0.69	399	.002

To shorten Table 2, the average values for Mean and SD are presented and the worst values for p (the closest to the cutoff value of p (.05) of all values obtained in the multivariate analysis for this component) are proposed at publication. Accordingly, all other results for p showed lower values than those presented in Table 2 and also showed the presence of statistically significant differences.

A significant number of the other components proposed by the respondents did not receive majority support or were not statistically significantly different when compared with the other components at the established significance level ($p = .05$). Attention should be paid to the relatively small values of standard deviations for each of the components of social status, which suggests a relatively stable view shared by most participants on the definition of these components and significance thereof.

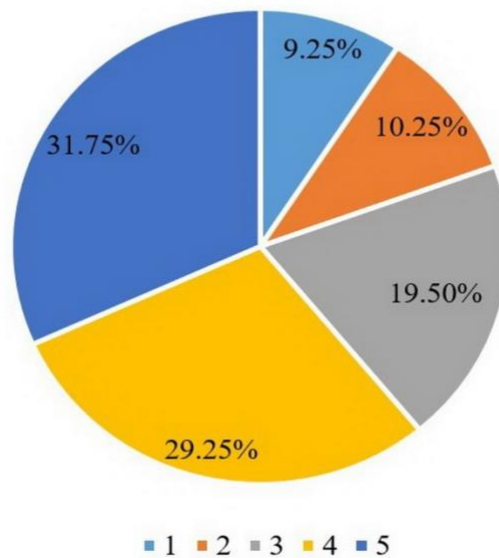
The most important next step was the participants' assessment of the importance of maintaining traditional values and following traditional behaviors (Figure 1). 61% of respondents identified traditional values and behaviors as determining their entire behavior or extremely important to them in various facets of life. The lowest scores (1 and 2 on the Likert scale) were given by only 20% of the participants. In this context, it is important to draw attention to the fact that Kazakhs and Muslims of other ethnic groups constituted only 35.7%

of such participants with the lowest scores. This point is important for understanding that Kazakh women are overwhelmingly very committed to traditional values or subjectively define themselves as adherents of traditional values and their keepers. This is due to the society's very high expectations of Kazakh women pertaining to their roles of the keeper of traditions and family. The rejection of these practices or such self-esteem can lead to a loss of social status or a loss of understanding by others and a lower social status.

Figure 1

Subjective Assessment of the Significance of Traditional Values (on a 5-point Likert Scale)

Percentage of rated (Likert's 5-point scale)



The assessment of actual involvement in traditional behaviors, family, and ethnic ritual practices in a certain way diverges from the subjective assessment, which can be assessed as an expected result (Table 3). Table 3 presents two estimates: the proportion of respondents proactively involved in specific activities (first column) and the proportion of the traditional activities performed by the respondents (second, right column). The second column gives a relative assessment, which ignores the subjective significance of holidays or other forms of traditional ritual practices, and evaluates only their quantitative indicators. For example, if, in the course of traditional family practices, a woman takes part in 6 out of 10 ceremonies related to marriage, matchmaking, and moving into the groom's house, a 60% score is specified. In this case, the assessment does not take into account which of these 10 practices is more important and to what extent, as such a qualitative assessment is extremely difficult and requires a separate anthropological and ethnographic study, addressing the weights (significance) of specific practices or traditional behaviors for the traditional ethnic consciousness.

Traditional family celebrations are undertaken by approx. half of the respondents, with about half of the number of such practices or traditional activities. Yet, traditional female behaviors are observed by 89.75% of all respondents. According to a number of respondents, such difference is attributed to the fact that women are increasingly busy at work and in the office, trying to earn more for their families and play a more important role in society, which reduces the time needed for traditional women's activities or family ceremonies. Furthermore, most traditional family ceremonies and celebrations are related to the birth and growing up of children, and the number of children in the family is dramatically reduced, which also reduces the need for action.

Table 3

Objective Assessment of Involvement in the Materialization and Transmission of Traditional Values and Behavior (According to a 5-point Likert Scale)

	Percentage of adhering participants, %	Percentage of the traditions that are observed, %
National holidays	98.5	100
Traditional family holidays	55.75	55.5
Traditional behaviors	89.75	56
Religious holidays	39.75	9.75

Kazakhs, as well as the vast majority of women, celebrate the national (public) holidays, which seems quite natural. Religious holidays have the least influence - only 39.75% of respondents are proactively involved in Muslim religious activities and ritual practices. Only 10.75% of the entire list of annual Muslim practices, according to the canon, are undertaken. This result is quite expected in view of the analyzed literature and studies of contemporary Kazakh society and its religious commitments. Most Muslim practices or activities related to religious beliefs are closely integrated into popular religious syncretism and are therefore rated by most respondents as a family or national holiday. Respondents do not distinguish between religious and family components of rites, childbirth, naming rights, etc. These traditional values and behaviors are unequivocally assessed as ‘family’ or ‘national’.

The assessment of changes in the women’s social status and human capital materialization opportunities were evaluated in the aggregate as a positive change (e.g., promotion, marriage, and family), as well as negatively (downgrade, divorce, quarrels with relatives, and loss of their support, etc.). Since both positive and negative values specified by respondents were included in the weighted average score, the standard deviation for each of the components turns out to be quite significant (Table 4). On the Likert scale, the amount of change in social status is relatively low in the growth of women's income and status in the social stratification system. Therefore, the human capital (perceived as the educational attainment, the support by relatives and family) is scarcely materialized for women as the real influence in society or the purchasing power and personal freedom afforded by financial independence. The most significant positive social changes are traditionally associated with the marital status component. Own family, children, and protection from relatives and in-laws remain the most significant part of social achievement for most women (3.99 on a 5-point scale). A very important point for determining the changes taking place in society is that the educational attainment component was ranked second (2.81 points) in importance. Education becomes the tool for building human capital for women and the hope of materializing it in the future.

Table 4

Assessment of Changes in Social Status and Materialization of Human Capital

	Mean	SD	df	p*
Education	2.81	0.16	399	.033
Marital status	3.99	0.72	399	.019
Income level	2.16	1.39	399	.003
Status in the social stratification system	2.09	1.16	399	.041
Family support	2.56	0.93	399	.009

*p - weighted average for all paired tests, but in all cases not higher than .005.

The correlation between objective involvement in traditional ceremonies and behaviors with the social status components gives the answer to the main research question. The most significant and strongest correlations between changes in social status are observed with a woman's marital status, her status in the social stratification system (already achieved at this point), and family support. The status in the social stratification system has a relatively low correlation strength ($r = .609$), while the family ties and position within the family have a very strong correlation and significance level (Table 5).

Table 5

Correlation Between Changes in Social Status and Involvement in the Materialization and Conveyance of Traditional Values

	r	p
Education	.189	.342
Marital status	.781*	.034*
Income level	.452	.002
Status in the social stratification system	.609*	.002*
Family support	.801*	.005*

* - correlations that can be considered statistically significant and fairly strong.

The study demonstrates that most Kazakh women today highly appreciate the significance of traditional values and behaviors prescribed to women by ethnic and religious traditions. In most cases, improvements in social status and hopes of materializing the human capital are associated with the achievement of a certain marital status prescribed and recognized by society and with the support of relatives, both within own household and society. Education is now an important and widely perceived part of the accumulation and materialization of human capital, but it does not yet affect directly the achievement of appropriate social status and is less related to the materialized of women's human capital.

Discussion

Researchers of women's status in contemporary Kazakh society suggest that with all the necessary statutory rights and opportunities, ensuring the protection of the rights of mothers and female employees, reality continues to be shaped more by traditional values (Kudaibergenova, 2019; Kuzhabekova, 2019). When it comes to these traditional values, a woman acts primarily as a mother and later on as a matriarch, a keeper of traditions, and the first teacher and educator of children (Abildina & Eskazinova, 2013; Baker, 1985; Dugarova, 2019). In this way, the formal granting of rights and opportunities does not always mean the ability to fully enjoy them. The research findings presented herein suggest that resorting to education, especially engineering and higher education, to build a woman's own value and human capital, is still developing (Khassanova, 2001; Low, 2006; Muratovna & Serikbayevna, 2020). A number of researchers suggest that women receive higher engineering education even more often than men, but less often and to a lesser extent implement it, and do not hold positions high enough compared to the educational attainment (Buribayev & Khamzina, 2019; Nuketaeva et al., 2012). When it comes to assessing the reasons for such a situation, the most important is that women continue to be more involved in the household than men. The care and upbringing of children are also carried out predominantly by women (Rezvushkina & Karipbayev, 2021). Therefore, it is harder for a woman than for a man to build the necessary expertise and skills.

Due to the ambitious promotion and acceptance of traditional values by a large part of society as a means of identity development, and under the influence of the government's efforts in this context, Kazakh society remains extremely patriarchal (Kuzhabekova et al., 2018; Low, 2007). Within such a traditional patriarchal society, women's role is valued very highly, and their social status is strong. A woman is sufficiently protected, which is an engaging factor for most women who are indeed willing to perform the roles assigned to them within traditional society (Moldagaliyev et al., 2015; Rezvushkina & Karipbayev, 2021). Yet, women's tasks and role models in Kazakh society are quite free, in terms of materializing personal development opportunities, independence in managing money and raising children, etc. Researchers and ethnologists draw attention to great differences in the traditional role of Kazakh women, their rights, and opportunities in comparison with the traditional Sharia law in most Muslim countries and in comparison with other peoples of Central Asia (Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmens, etc.) (Moldagaliyev et al., 2015; Myong & Chun, 2015; Nuketaeva et al., 2012). A certain role in promoting women's gender self-sufficiency is played by reliance on religions that support gender equality in certain aspects, for example, in the tradition of Orthodox monasticism (Naizabayeva et al., 2022). Kazakh women can turn to such traditions as an argument for their emancipation.

A number of researchers suggest that a woman acts as the 'mistress of the house', where the man is a 'guest', as he is responsible for 'external' business and protection, providing basic resources, while the woman is responsible for domestic prosperity and raising children. Such allocation of roles is not imposed and forced, but in most cases appears to be natural, related to the nomadic activity cycle (Edelbay, 2012). Contemporary society, with its new forms of division of labor compared to traditions in the case of Kazakhstan, as suggested by researchers, has not made fundamental changes, which is reflected in the social and educational trends (Seralinova, 2017; Shreeves, 2020).

The number of women receiving higher and secondary engineering education is higher than that of men (47.3% and 38.1%, respectively). The proportion of working men is slightly higher than that of working women (51.6% and 48.4%, respectively). In only 3 regions of Kazakhstan out of 17, the number of working women exceeds that of men (Ryskaliyev et al., 2019). In general, men earn more but are employed in more physically demanding and better-paying operations. Therefore, women are left with more educational opportunities, but relatively fewer prospects for materialization thereof (Werner, 2004; Zhansagimova & Smart, 2013). Researchers suggest that educated women are more valued as wives and have more respect, which also encourages them to get an education (Ryskaliyev et al., 2019; Seitkhodzina, 2014). These observations fully corroborate the findings of this study, giving a high value to education as a significant component of social status, suggesting that its role in changing such status and the materialization of human capital cannot be determined statistically.

Despite the growing role of religious consciousness as an element of society's identity development and the stronger representation of religious components in the traditional family and household ceremonies of Kazakhs, as suggested by many Kazakh and foreign researchers, women still rank religious values (as a component of social status, and perhaps habitus) well below traditional behaviors and family values, as defined by the ethnic tradition (Edelbay, 2012; Snajdr, 2007). Ethnological and sociological studies equally suggest that the Eurasian nomads, rather than Muslims, play a major role in Kazakhs' behaviors and personal choices. Muslim elements are now only persistently infiltrating public life, but still affect it insignificantly, as suggested by this study (Moldagaliyev et al., 2015; Myong & Chun, 2015).

A woman's everyday life is largely changed, traditional behaviors are transformed into their symbolic substitutes, which simplify the traditional ceremonies and reduce efforts and time required for implementation thereof (Edelbay, 2012; Khalykov & Karzhaubajeva, 2013). Such changes are dictated by the nature of the division of labor and women's involvement,

instead of traditional nomadic occupations or animal husbandry, in other production operations, with the increased contribution of women to the tertiary sector (Karipbayev, 2021; Kiynova et al., 2018). Yet, researchers point out that traditional behaviors pertaining to entertaining visitors, maintaining family ties, eating and cooking together, and serving children remain largely unchanged. These are quite time-consuming and difficult to perform household responsibilities and practices (Kiynova et al., 2018). Most of the described actions traditionally fall on the women, given that they also earn money. As suggested herein, traditional family behaviors are most supported and followed by most women, because, as argued by other researchers, following such behaviors is attributed to the preservation of own social status (Durrani et al., 2022; Kudaibergenova, 2018).

Conclusion

The paper explores changes in the social status of women and human capital materialization opportunities in connection with women's contribution to the preservation and conveyance of traditional values in Kazakh society. The study was conducted with a statistically relevant simple random sample of 400 women. The sample's demographic profile generally corresponds to the gender, age, and geography of Kazakh society. In the course of the study, a number of surveys were conducted, making it possible to: identify the significant components of social status for Kazakh women; obtain subjective and objective assessments of the significance of traditional values and behaviors and the extent to which women are involved in the reproduction and conveyance of these values and behaviors. The assessment of social status components that are most significant for changes in social status, the materialization of opportunities, and their correlation with involvement in traditional values was based on multivariate analysis, with the use of Student's t-test and Pearson correlation coefficient. Most respondents praised the importance of traditional values and behaviors prescribed for women by traditions. In most cases, improvements in the social status and the materialization of human capital are attributed to the achievement of a specific marital status, prescribed by society and with the support of relatives at the household and community levels. Educational attainment is a significant and recognized part of the accumulation and materialization of women's human capital, but its impact on the achievement of appropriate social status is perceived as relatively insignificant.

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