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## AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF ATTITUDES TOWARD GENDER ROLES AMONG STUDENTS

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**Abstract.** In today's society, gender roles and attitudes towards them play an important part in social relations. The perception of gender roles among young students holds scientific importance in the context of social transformation and the interaction between tradition and modern values. Therefore, this research article empirically analyzes the social factors that shape students' attitudes towards gender roles.

This study aims to identify young students' attitudes towards gender roles and the social determinants that shape them. It also assesses how institutional influence and perceptions of gender change in society impact attitudes towards gender equality. The study analyzes young students' gender positions using structural modeling and explains the mechanisms underlying the formation of gender attitudes.

We used a quantitative methodology and analyzed survey data using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) from 556 students at Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University. We grouped attitudes towards gender roles into four latent constructs: traditional gender roles, attitudes towards gender equality, perceptions of gender changes in society, and institutional influence. The results indicate that perceptions of societal changes in gender and institutional influence have a positive and significant effect on attitudes towards gender equality, while institutional factors particularly reinforce traditional gender roles. These findings clarify that students' gender attitudes are both complex and varied, directly shaped by societal and institutional factors.

**Keywords:** gender roles, gender equality, youth, institutional influence, social transformation, PLS-SEM, social determinants.

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## Introduction

Socio-cultural changes in a society with developed information technology are leading to a revision of attitudes towards gender roles and a significant change in their content. The process of accepting gender roles, especially among young students, is emerging as a complex social phenomenon, shaped by the interaction of social, cultural, economic, and educational factors. Attitudes towards gender roles in society directly affect the socialization process, life strategies, professional orientations, and social behavior of young people. In this regard, the study of the social determinants of students' attitudes towards gender roles is considered one of the most relevant areas in the field of social science. Among post-Soviet states, Russia, Estonia, and Ukraine are at the forefront of gender research, while the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, with the exception of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, contribute less (*Rakhimzhanova et al., 2025*).

Previous studies have shown that family upbringing, cultural traditions, educational environment, and social norms play an important role in the formation of gender roles (*Yilmaz et al., 2017*). Several authors have noted that parental influence and social environment determine young people's attitudes towards gender roles (*Malik et al., 2018*). Cultural stereotypes and traditional understandings, including the balance between patriarchal and egalitarian views, are also considered factors that influence students' educational and career plans (*Sanchez et al., 2020; Lam et al., 2012*). Gender roles and socially expected behavioral patterns in different national and ethnic backgrounds have been extensively studied (*Miville et al., 2017*). Researchers have analyzed the relationship between gender roles and cultural values, showing that the preservation of traditional norms and the spread of egalitarian attitudes go hand in hand (*Nagaraj et al., 2019*). This trend has a significant impact on the formation of public opinion regarding gender stereotypes among university youth (*Litvinova et al., 2020; Manchana & Gannavarapu, 2024*).

The educational system is also an important factor in shaping students' attitudes towards gender roles (*Scott et al., 2015*). Courses focused on gender equality in higher education institutions, values in the academic environment, and social interactions influence students' reconceptualization of gender positions (*Ullrich et al., 2022*). In addition, family environment, parental education, and socioeconomic status play a significant role in shaping young people's attitudes towards gender roles (*Sanchez et al., 2020; Kharouf & Daoud, 2019*). Some studies also cite sociocultural contexts and institutional factors as important determinants of attitudes towards gender roles (*Venta et al., 2021*). Social networks, religion, tradition, and economic independence may simultaneously reinforce or change young people's attitudes towards gender equality and traditional roles (*Silva et al., 2022*). Gender stereotypes have also been shown to affect the psychological well-being and social adjustment of young people (*Skinner & McHale, 2017; Ochieng, 2022*).

However, most previous studies have examined gender role attitudes in terms of individual factors. This suggests that comprehensive modeling of their interrelationships is insufficient. In particular, few studies empirically analyze the social determinants of gender role attitudes among young students, taking into account institutional influences and perceptions of gender change in society.

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to empirically analyze the social determinants of students' gender role attitudes and to determine the impact of institutional influences and perceptions of gender change in society on attitudes towards gender equality. The study used a quantitative methodology, and the data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (*PLS-SEM*). The results will allow us to clarify students' gender perspectives and develop scientific and practical solutions to promote gender equality.

The research is based on the theory of gender socialization and sociological perspectives that explain the institutional formation of gender norms. From the perspective of gender socialization, attitudes towards gender roles emerge from individuals' gradual internalization of norms and values in the social environment.

Institutionally, these norms are effectively established in cultural, religious, communicative, and socio-economic contexts. However, these contexts do not directly determine individual attitudes. Rather, they act as a system of social conditions that shape them. In this regard, the study considers social factors not only as causal determinants, but also as contextual factors related to gender attitudes.

### Materials and methods

The study aimed to empirically identify the social determinants of students' attitudes towards gender roles. The study aimed to identify social factors that influence students' attitudes towards gender equality, examine how institutional influence and perceptions of gender change in society explain these attitudes, and assess the extent to which institutional factors influence the maintenance of traditional gender roles. In accordance with this goal, the hypotheses were proposed that the perception of gender change in society has a positive effect on attitudes towards gender equality, that institutional influence strengthens attitudes towards gender equality, and that it affects the maintenance of traditional gender roles.

**Table 1. Respondent Profile**

Category	Group	Frequency (N)	%
Gender	Female	439	78.9%
	Male	117	21.1%
	Other	0	0%
	Refused to answer	0	0%
Residence	City	360	64.8%
	District/village	196	35.2%
Education level	Bachelor's degree	541	97.3%
	Master's degree	15	2.7%
	Technical/vocational	0	0%
	Doctoral degree (PhD)	0	0%
Marital status	Single/single	529	95.1%
	Married/married	9	1.6%
	Other	1	0.2%
	Refused to answer	17	3.1%

The study population was selected as the study population of students studying at Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University. It should be noted that the empirical data of the study were conducted among students of one university and that the majority of the respondents were women (78.9%). This indicates that there are certain methodological limitations in directly generalizing the results obtained to all students in Kazakhstan. It is also possible that such an imbalance in the gender composition indicates the dominance of female students in their views on gender equality.

Moreover, the study conducted within the framework of one university allows for a deep analysis of the institutional and cultural context. In this regard, the results obtained provide a clear and reliable description of the features of the formation of gender attitudes among students of Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University. They serve as a basis for drawing specific conclusions that have scientific and practical significance at the regional level. As shown in Table 1, empirical data were collected from 556 respondents using a questionnaire method. The sample included diverse social groups in terms of gender, place of residence, education level, and marital status, ensuring the reliability of the results obtained.

**Table 2. Classification of questionnaire items by latent constructs**

Nº	Concepts	
Q1	Traditional values determine the roles of men and women in society	
Q2	A woman's main task is to do housework	
Q3	A man should be the breadwinner and decision-maker	
Q4	Traditional society hinders women's career aspirations	
Q5	Social networks influence gender roles	
Q6	Religion and tradition harmoniously shape gender relations	
Q7	Modern youth adhere to traditional gender roles less	
Q8	Gender equality is not contrary to Kazakh culture	
Q9	Women's economic independence influences family decisions	
Q10	Equal opportunities for men and women in society increase social stability	
Q11	Gender roles in society have changed	
Q12	In modern families, responsibilities between men and women should be equally divided	
Q13	Traditional gender roles should be preserved	
Q14	Women's social activity interferes with family responsibilities.	
Nº	Latent constructs	
1	(Traditional Gender Roles – TGR)	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q13, Q14
2	(Gender Equality Attitudes – GEA)	Q8, Q10, Q12
3	(Perceived Gender Change – PGC)	Q4, Q7, Q11
4	(Institutional Influence – II)	Q5, Q6, Q9

A structured author's questionnaire consisting of 14 statements was used to collect data. The statements were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 - completely disagree, 5 - completely agree).

agree). This allowed for a comprehensive assessment of students' attitudes towards gender roles and gender equality.

The study used a quantitative research methodology, and a type of structural equation modeling method - Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the data. That is, the use of the PLS-SEM method helped to comprehensively verify the structural and dimensional validity of the theoretical model proposed in the study. Each of the given latent constructs was operationalized by several indicators. They were aimed at assessing and measuring various social aspects of attitudes towards gender roles. The quality of the given measurement model was objectively assessed using indicator loadings, composite reliability, convergent and discriminant validity indicators. This approach proves that the questionnaire used is capable of empirically measuring the relevant latent concepts and ensures the scientific reliability of the research results. This method is considered suitable for analyzing complex relationships between latent variables and testing the theoretical model in a medium-sized sample. During the analysis, the quality of the measurement model was first assessed using indicator loadings, component reliability, convergent and discriminant validity indicators. Then, the structural model was tested based on path coefficients and coefficient of determination. Statistical significance was assessed using the bootstrapping method. All analyses were carried out using the SmartPLS 4 program.

The cross-sectional design of the study does not allow for causal inference. Therefore, the PLS-SEM method was used in this study to analyze the structural relationships among latent variables. All relationships shown in the model are used correlationally and do not imply a causal interpretation.

Our methodology enabled us to analyze students' gender attitudes across multiple social determinants. However, since the study is based on survey data, it reflects respondents' subjective assessments.

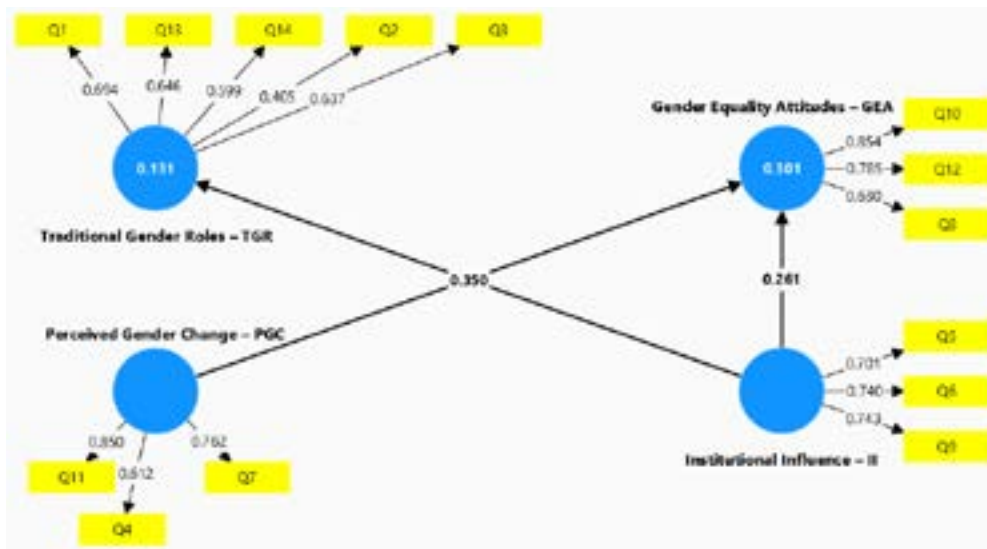
### **Results and Discussion**

The connections identified in the study should not be seen as evidence of social transformation or institutional causality. They suggest that students' gender attitudes are shaped in a complex social context where traditional and egalitarian norms coexist.

We discuss the results of our empirical study, which identify the social determinants of gender role attitudes among students, and compare them with previous scientific studies. The results draw upon a structural model, descriptive statistics, and path coefficients obtained via PLS-SEM.

Figure 1 shows the results of the structural model explaining students' attitudes towards gender roles, obtained using the PLS-SEM method. The model consists of four latent constructs according to the plan. They are: traditional gender roles (Traditional Gender Roles), attitudes towards gender equality (Gender Equality Attitudes), perception of gender changes in society (Perceived Gender Change) and institutional influence (Institutional Influence). All identified constructs were considered in a reflective measurement model. During the study, the latent construct «institutional influence» was measured using indicators such as religion, tradition, social networks and women's economic independence. Although the indicators are not homogeneous, they reflect social influences at different levels that shape students' attitudes towards gender roles. Specifically, religion and tradition reflect the influence of cultural and

normative institutions at the macro level. Social networks reflect the influence of the information and symbolic environment at the meso level. And women's economic independence reflects the formation of gender positions at the micro level through personal experience and socio-economic position. The concept of «institutional influence» has been effectively viewed as an integrative construct that comprehensively explains the social conditioning of gender attitudes at the macro, meso, and micro levels.



**Figure 1. Structural Model of Gender Role Attitudes Based on PLS-SEM Analysis**

The structural model results show that perceptions of societal gender change have a positive, relatively strong effect on attitudes towards gender equality ( $\beta=0.350$ ). This finding indicates that when students perceive changing gender roles, they increase their support for equal opportunities for men and women. We also found that institutional influence positively and significantly affects attitudes towards gender equality ( $\beta=0.261$ ). This result shows that religion, tradition, social networks, and economic factors shape youth gender attitudes.

The model's explanatory power was moderate, accounting for 30.1% of attitudes towards gender equality ( $R^2=0.301$ ). The explained variance for the traditional gender role construct was 13.1% ( $R^2=0.131$ ). The results obtained confirmed the importance of social transformation and institutional factors in shaping attitudes towards gender equality.

**Table 3. Path Coefficients of the Structural Model (PLS-SEM)**

Path	$\beta$ (Path coefficient)
Institutional Influence → Gender Equality Attitudes	<b>0.261</b>
Institutional Influence → Traditional Gender Roles	<b>0.361</b>
Perceived Gender Change → Gender Equality Attitudes	<b>0.350</b>

Table 3 presents the main path coefficients in the structural model calculated using the PLS-SEM method. The results revealed that institutional and social change factors play an important role in shaping students' gender attitudes.

In particular, institutional influences (religion, tradition, social networks, and economic factors) were found to positively affect attitudes toward gender equality ( $\beta=0.261$ ). This result indicated that institutional structures have a certain level of influence on the formation of equality-oriented attitudes among young people.

It was also observed that institutional influences significantly reinforce traditional gender roles ( $\beta=0.361$ ). This suggests that tradition, religion, and social norms contribute to the maintenance of patriarchal gender attitudes.

And the perception that gender roles in society have changed was associated with a positive, relatively strong effect on attitudes toward gender equality ( $\beta=0.350$ ). This characteristic suggests that students' perceptions of social transformation increase their support for equal opportunities for men and women. The results showed that perceptions of social change and institutional influence simultaneously influence the formation of attitudes towards gender equality, while traditional norms remain an important factor.

**Table 4. Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) of the Structural Model**

Construction	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$
Gender Equality Attitudes (GEA)	<b>0.301</b>	<b>0.298</b>
Traditional Gender Roles (TGR)	<b>0.131</b>	<b>0.129</b>

Table 4 shows the  $R^2$  and Adjusted  $R^2$  values, which characterize the explanatory power of endogenous latent variables in the structural model. The results allowed us to assess the model's effectiveness in explaining gender attitudes.

According to the results, 30.1% of gender equality attitudes (GEA) were explained by the model's factors ( $R^2 = 0.301$ ). This indicator is considered an average, satisfactory level for PLS-SEM studies in the social sciences. That is, institutional influence and perception of gender changes in society explained students' attitudes towards gender equality to a significant extent.

At the same time, the explained variance for the traditional gender roles (TGR) construct was 13.1% ( $R^2 = 0.131$ ). This result indicates that institutional factors influence the formation of traditional gender attitudes, but it also suggests that other socio-cultural factors may affect these attitudes.

Overall, the  $R^2$  values indicated that the proposed structural model was empirically significant and had strong explanatory power for students' gender attitudes.

**Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Latent Constructs**

Construction	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	N
Gender Equality Attitudes (GEA)	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.169</b>	<b>-3.032</b>	<b>1.675</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>-0.608</b>	<b>0.509</b>	<b>556</b>
Institutional Influence (II)	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.005</b>	<b>-2.800</b>	<b>2.267</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>-0.304</b>	<b>0.636</b>	<b>556</b>
Perceived Gender Change (PGC)	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-0.077</b>	<b>-2.871</b>	<b>2.204</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>-0.175</b>	<b>0.650</b>	<b>556</b>
Traditional Gender Roles (TGR)	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.033</b>	<b>-3.011</b>	<b>2.783</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>-0.269</b>	<b>0.707</b>	<b>556</b>

Note: Latent variables are standardized (mean = 0, SD = 1).

Table 5 presents descriptive statistics for the latent constructs included in the study. All variables were standardized in SmartPLS.

The results showed that the median of the Gender Equality Attitudes (GEA) was positive (Median = 0.169), indicating that students are generally inclined to support gender equality. The Institutional Influence (II) and Perception of Gender Change in Society (PGC) indicators exhibit median values close to zero, suggesting that participants' acceptance of these factors is heterogeneous.

The median Traditional Gender Roles (TGR) score is close to zero, indicating that traditional attitudes are not completely dominant among students but are still preserved to some extent. The skewness coefficients for all constructs range from  $-0.61$  to  $-0.17$ , indicating that the data are approximately symmetrically distributed. Since the kurtosis values are close to zero, the distribution is close to normal.

In this study, the concept of "institutional influence" is not defined as a single institution but as an integrative, contextual construct that describes how students perceive themselves within their religious, cultural, communicative, and socio-economic environments. Although these components operate at different social levels, they are evident in students' everyday experiences regarding gender norms. This integration does not imply a causal mechanism and is considered a methodological limitation of the study.

The results of descriptive statistics indicate that the data are suitable for structural modeling and that students' gender attitudes are not homogeneous, but are relatively evenly distributed.

## Conclusion

The study aimed to conduct a comprehensive empirical analysis of the social determinants of students' attitudes towards gender roles. The results of the study showed that the formation of gender attitudes occurs through the interaction of social transformation and institutional influence. The results of the structural model confirmed the validity of the conclusions we presented and revealed that attitudes towards gender roles are multidimensional rather than unidimensional.

The study found that perceptions of societal changes in gender are the most important empirical determinant of students' attitudes towards gender equality. This result shows that young people's openness to social change increases their tendency to support equal opportunities for men and women. It was also found that institutional influence, in addition to having a positive effect on attitudes towards gender equality, also strengthens traditional gender roles. This result shows that institutional influence operates in contradictory ways, indicating the multidimensional nature of gender relations.

The results obtained show that the transformation of gender attitudes among students is not achieved through a complete rejection of traditional norms, but through rethinking them. The formation of attitudes toward gender equality was closely related to the institutional environment and perceptions of social change. However, it was found that traditional gender roles are still preserved to a certain extent. This problem underscores the need to consider cultural and social contexts in developing gender policy and educational programs.

The scientific contribution of the study lies in examining students' attitudes towards gender roles within the system of social determinants and in empirically substantiating these attitudes using the structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method. The results obtained complement

theoretical conclusions in sociology with specific data and provide a more detailed explanation of the relationship between gender equality and traditional norms.

From a practical point of view, the results of the study can be used in improving educational programs aimed at gender equality in higher education institutions, developing youth policy plans, and planning social projects aimed at reducing gender stereotypes. In future studies, it is recommended to analyze the temporal dynamics of attitudes towards gender roles, use qualitative methods, or conduct comparative studies between different regions and social groups. Also, taking into account the methodological limitations of the study, interpreting the results obtained within the institutional and cultural context of a specific social environment increases their scientific validity and forms an empirical basis for subsequent comparative studies. The proposed directions contribute to a deeper understanding of the processes of changing gender relations and the further development of scientific knowledge. The results of the study suggest that students' gender attitudes are shaped by the social and institutional contexts they perceive. The results obtained during the study should be interpreted in the context of the epistemological limitations of cross-sectional data.

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### **Authors' contribution**

**V. Enseyeva** – development of the idea and design of the research, substantiation of the scientific problem, preparation of the questionnaire, collection of empirical data, writing the main part of the article text, and editing on a scientific basis.

**S. Zhuzeyev** – scientific supervision of the research article, development of the theoretical and methodological basis, clarification of the research concept, sociological analysis of the results, development of conclusions and recommendations, scientific analysis of the content of the article.

**Zh. Abikenov** – analysis of the philosophical and socio-humanitarian methodology of the research work, development of the theoretical part, socio-philosophical interpretation of the results, systematization of the structure of the article, and scientific editing.

**M. Syzdykova** – review of scientific literature, comparative analysis of domestic and foreign studies, participation in the discussion of empirical results, stylistic and substantive improvement of the text of the article.

**B. Tursynbayeva** – participation in the statistical processing of survey data, analysis and visualization of results, preparation of the empirical section, and clarification of conclusions.

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## СТУДЕНТТЕР АРАСЫНДАҒЫ ГЕНДЕРЛІК РӨЛДЕРГЕ КӨЗҚАРАСТАРДЫҢ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК ДЕТЕРМИНАНТТАРЫН ЭМПИРИЯЛЫҚ ТАЛДАУ

**Аңдатпа.** Бүгінгі қоғамда гендерлік рөлдер мен оларға қатысты көзқарастар әлеуметтік қатынастардың маңызды бөлігі болып табылады. Әсіресе білім алушы студент жастардың гендерлік рөлдерді қабылдауы қоғамдағы әлеуметтік трансформация, дәстүр мен заманауи құндылықтардың өзара ықпалы жағдайында ерекше ғылыми маңызға ие. Сол себепті зерттеу мақаласы студенттер арасындағы гендерлік рөлдерге көзқарастардың қалыптасуына әсер ететін әлеуметтік факторларды эмпириялық тұрғыдан талдауға бағытталды.

Зерттеудің мақсаты – студент жастардың гендерлік рөлдерге қатысты көзқарастарын және олардың әлеуметтік детерминанттарын анықтау. Сонымен қатар институционалдық ықпал мен қоғамдағы гендерлік өзгерістерді қабылдаудың гендерлік теңдікке көзқарасқа әсерін бағалау болып саналады. Зерттеудің ғылыми маңыздылығы студент жастардың гендерлік ұстанымдарын құрылымдық модельдеу арқылы талдаумен және гендерлік көзқарастардың қалыптасу тетіктерін кешенді түрде түсіндіруімен негізделеді.

Зерттеу жұмысы сандық әдіснамаға негізделіп, арнайы құрастырылған сауалнама деректері Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) әдісі арқылы талданды. Зерттеуге Қорқыт ата атындағы Қызылорда университетінде білім алатын 556 студент қатысты. Гендерлік рөлдерге қатысты көзқарастар төрт латентті конструкция аясында топтастырылды. Олар: дәстүрлі гендерлік рөлдер, гендерлік теңдікке көзқарас, қоғамдағы гендерлік өзгерістерді қабылдау және институционалдық ықпал.

Нәтижелер қоғамдағы гендерлік өзгерістерді қабылдау мен институционалдық ықпалдың гендерлік теңдікке қатысты көзқарастарға оң және статистикалық тұрғыдан мәнді әсер ететінін дәлелдеді. Сондай-ақ институционалдық факторлардың дәстүрлі гендерлік рөлдерді күшейтуге ерекше ықпал ететіні анықталды. Зерттеу барысында алынған нәтижелер студент жастар арасындағы гендерлік көзқарастардың күрделі әрі көпқырлы сипатқа ие екенін дәлелдеді.

**Негізгі ұғымдар:** гендерлік рөлдер, гендерлік теңдік, жастар, институционалдық ықпал, әлеуметтік трансформация, PLS-SEM, әлеуметтік детерминанттар.

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## ЭМПИРИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ ФАКТОРОВ, ОПРЕДЕЛЯЮЩИХ ОТНОШЕНИЕ К ГЕНДЕРНЫМ РОЛЯМ СРЕДИ СТУДЕНТОВ

**Аннотация.** В современном обществе гендерные роли и отношение к ним являются важной частью социальных отношений. В частности, восприятие гендерных ролей студентами имеет особое научное значение в контексте социальных преобразований в обществе, взаимодействия традиций и современных ценностей. Поэтому настоящее исследование направлено на эмпирический анализ социальных факторов, влияющих на формирование отношения к гендерным ролям среди студентов.

Цель исследования – выявить отношение студентов к гендерным ролям и их социальные детерминанты. Кроме того, рассматривается влияние институционального воздействия и восприятия гендерных изменений в обществе на отношение к гендерному равенству. Научная значимость исследования основана на анализе гендерных позиций студентов посредством структурного моделирования и всестороннем объяснении механизмов формирования гендерных установок.

Исследование основано на количественной методологии, а специально разработанные данные опроса были проанализированы с использованием метода структурного моделирования методом частичных наименьших квадратов (PLS-SEM). В исследовании приняли участие 556 студентов Кызылординского университета имени Коркыт Ата. Отношение к гендерным ролям было сгруппировано в четыре латентных конструкта: традиционные гендерные роли, отношение к гендерному равенству, восприятие гендерных изменений в обществе и институциональное влияние. Результаты показали, что восприятие гендерных изменений в обществе и институциональное влияние оказывают положительное и статистически значимое воздействие на отношение к гендерному равенству. Также было установлено, что институциональные факторы оказывают особое влияние на укрепление традиционных гендерных ролей. Полученные в ходе исследования результаты подтвердили, что гендерные установки среди студентов сложны и многогранны.

**Ключевые слова:** гендерные роли, гендерное равенство, молодежь, институциональное влияние, социальные преобразования, PLS-SEM, социальные детерминанты.

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