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## Intercultural marriages and social adaptation: online representation of Kazakhstan women married to foreign citizens

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**Abstract.** This article examines the patterns and primary drivers of intermarriages among females in Kazakhstan, as well as the features of these unions. In recent years, the increase in intercultural marriages has been closely associated with the global rise in migration. Marriages between Kazakh women and foreign nationals have emerged as a significant social phenomenon; however, this topic remains insufficiently explored in academic research. When Kazakh women enter cross-cultural unions, it often leads to transformations in their ethnic identity, cultural values, and gender roles, making this an important subject for further scholarly investigation.

The aim of this article is to analyze, through content analysis, the self-presentation patterns of Kazakh women married to foreign citizens on social media. Specifically, it examines their self-representation strategies, social integration into new communities, and cultural adaptation processes.

The article uses method of content analysis to examine the social media pages of Kazakhstani women who have married foreigners using the content analysis methodology. The objective of this academic article is to use content analysis to pinpoint the clear aspects of Kazakhstani women's self-presentation on social networks that are expressed in their marriages to foreigners.

The study focuses on characterizing their social media persona, the principles and social standards they uphold, and the fundamental aspects of their cultural environment adaptability.

**Keywords:** intercultural marriage, Kazakhstani women, migration, gender aspect, globalisation

## Introduction

In modern society, intercultural marriage has become one of the most pressing topics requiring research, particularly in the field of sociology. Globally, the number of intercultural marriages is increasing every year, and Kazakhstan is no exception to this trend.

Marriage is a complex social institution that varies across cultures and time. It establishes rights and obligations between partners, regulates sexual behavior, and influences family structures. Marriage serves important social, economic, and legal functions in society. It creates kinship networks, facilitates resource sharing, and establishes legal rights between spouses (Carter & McGoldrick, 2022). Multicultural marriages have become widespread, leading to acculturation. The differences in people's beliefs, identities, and attitudes toward each other are crucial factors that affect their selection of partners and decision to get married (Supanichwatana, Laeheem, 2024).

This topic has been explored internationally by scholars such as J. Berry (Berry, 2005, p.712) and V.I. Kozlov, Yu.V. Arutyunyan, and E.A. Nazarova. Among Kazakhstan's researchers, Z.K. Shaukenova, M.S. Azhenova, K.G. Gabdullina, and S.K. Ualiev have contributed significant works examining marriage institutions, migration, ethno-demographics, and gender equality (Shaukenova, 2003, pp.17-18). Their foundational research provides the theoretical basis for understanding the intercultural marriage experiences of Kazakh women married to foreign nationals.

According to researchers, the number of intercultural marriages is persistently increasing worldwide. It is exciting the diversity of definitions that describe marriages between different cultural ties: mixed marriage, intercultural marriage, transnational marriage, ethnoracial marriage, and bioethnic marriage. It is noticeable that there are some differences among these conditions, and they also overlap in their content within family patterns. These dissimilarities are mainly bound to the level of social congruence within family patterns. This is because ethnically and religiously varied couples, while living together in one society, can adapt to their partner's culture, acquire knowledge about that culture, and participate in the process of integration. According to scientific data, factors such as racial, ethnic, religious, and social congruence, value orientations, and the alignment of primary needs influence an individual's intention to marry and their approach to the process (Alaguev, 2021).

American sociologists often examine intercultural marriages through the lens of racial relations. In the study by Kroeger and Williams, it is noted that intercultural romantic relationships often do not lead to marriage, and if such a marriage occurs, the likelihood of divorce is higher than in marriages between individuals of the same race. Based on the National Survey of Family Growth conducted by Bramlett and Mosher, it was found that 29% of monoethnic marriages dissolve within the first ten years, while for intercultural marriages, this figure is 40% (Feldman-Bianco, 2020, pp.195-196).

The rate of Kazakh women entering marriages with foreign nationals has shown a steady increase in recent years. This emerging phenomenon reflects shifting dynamics within Kazakhstan's family institution. The rise of interethnic and intercultural marriages necessitates scholarly attention to their impact on women's gender roles and social positioning within

society. Research indicates that Kazakh women's choice to marry foreign citizens is frequently pragmatic, driven by socioeconomic and material considerations. These cross-cultural unions have generated significant societal resonance, particularly on social media platforms, sparking diverse public opinions and debates about contemporary marriage norms.

The family is the foundation of societal development, a guardian of universal and cultural values, national traditions, intergenerational experience, and behavioral norms. In other words, the family, as a social institution and a small social group, is based on marriage, parental, and kinship ties. To ensure the life of society, the family performs a number of important functions (Ashirbayeva & Smagambet, 2024, p.520). Recent years have witnessed a marked increase in interethnic marriages involving Kazakh women and foreign partners, signaling a transformative shift in Kazakhstan's family structure. This emerging social phenomenon demands scholarly examination of how proliferating intercultural unions are reshaping women's gender roles and social status within the community. Empirical observations suggest that Kazakh women's decisions to marry foreign nationals often reflect pragmatic considerations, predominantly influenced by socioeconomic factors. These transnational marriages have become a subject of intense public discourse on social media platforms, generating polarized viewpoints about modern relationship dynamics in Kazakh society.

The phenomenon of Kazakh women marrying foreign citizens has far-reaching implications that extend beyond family structures, significantly influencing women's gender roles, social status, and personal identity in society. In Kazakhstan, women have traditionally been viewed as the cornerstone of the family unit, embodying a unique synthesis of traditional and modern values. However, while patriarchal norms have historically confined women to roles as mothers, supportive partners, and child-bearers, contemporary trends increasingly emphasize their pursuit of higher education abroad, professional development, career advancement, and financial independence. Intercultural marriages represent a convergence of diverse cultural values, traditions, ethnic perspectives, and religious beliefs, requiring mutual understanding and adaptation. Studying these unions through sociological theories provides critical insights into their underlying motivations and broader societal consequences.

The relevance of this study is to understand the changing social roles of Kazakh women married to foreign nationals and identify current trends in intercultural marriages on social networks, with the main research method being the analysis and synthesis of data from various sources.

The main research method is the analysis and synthesis of information obtained from various sources. It includes the following methods and approaches: the initial methodological of the article is grounded in scientific rigor and a comprehensive approach to studying social processes. The article applies the transnational social field theory by N.G. Shiller, L. Bash, and Kristiana Blank-Saton, as well as the theories of simulacra and hyperreality by J. Baudrillard.

**Systematic literature review:** The study involves researching and critically analyzing scientific works published on the topic. This includes searching, selecting, and synthesizing information from scientific articles, conferences, and other sources, as well as a theoretical analysis of the methods used to define the concept of "intercultural marriage" presented in the academic literature. Secondary data analysis through a review of multiple authors' scientific works and analysis based on the cited articles.

## Research Methodology

This study examines the meaning and historical development of intercultural marriage through analysis of works by foreign and domestic scholars, employing content analysis as the primary empirical method to investigate the social media representation of women married to foreigners, their social adaptation, and societal perceptions, using Instagram profiles of such women as key data sources. Content analysis allows for the identification of significant units from textual, visual, or digital data and their systematic analysis (Tarshis, 2021).

The subject of the research. The research focuses on Kazakh women married to foreign nationals, examining their cultural adaptation on social media, the values and norms they promote, and the image they portray. Selection criteria included being married for at least 6 months, with content primarily covering marriage, family, cultural adaptation, and public opinion topics, and having posts published within the last year. The study analyzed 40 accounts, 600 posts were analyzed, covering content from January 2023 to January 2025, using a combination of inductive and deductive content analysis methods. For this study, the videos, images, hashtags, texts, and comments found in the posts were analyzed as primary research materials.

The content was categorized based on the following indicators:

- General content characteristics;
- Posting themes;
- Emotional tone;
- Societal adaptation & national identity;
- Ethnic identification level;
- Public opinion and reaction indicators:
- Nature of social media comments;
- Depth of public discussion.

In the process of data collection and material handling, the aforementioned indicators were established, and for the qualitative analysis of likes, reposts, comments, views, reels, and engagement levels, the NVivo analytical tool was employed. These indicators help analyze the social media image of Kazakh women married to foreign nationals.

## Results of the Study and Analysis

The study of migration processes in Kazakhstan shows that the primary migration dynamics are linked to the CIS countries. According to data from 2024, 74.9% of Kazakhstan's emigrants have moved to CIS countries. Among them, 3,977 married individuals relocated to CIS countries, while 1,404 individuals moved to other countries. According to national experts, the number of emigrants who are married has increased by 11.6% compared to 2023 (Bureau of National Statistics, 2025). Reasons Kazakh women move abroad.

Several factors contribute to emigration abroad, including:

- Education and career growth – many stay after completing master's or PhD programs abroad;

- Higher salaries and better earnings incentivize long-term settlement;
- Labor migration, some initially move for work but later marry and settle;
- Family Reunification: Migration based on the invitation of relatives, parents, or a future spouse who have already moved abroad is also a common reason for emigration;
- Socio-Economic Conditions: The higher standard of living in certain developed countries, as well as the efficiency of healthcare and social security systems, influence the decision to move to another country.

In traditional Kazakh culture, women are primarily seen as homemakers responsible for raising children, while men are expected to build careers and provide financially for the family. However, under the influence of Western values and globalization, modern perspectives have shifted – women are now more active in the labor market, gaining economic independence and challenging traditional gender roles. According to Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and hyperreality, contemporary gender roles are often artificially reconstructed through media and cultural products, blurring the lines between reality and constructed ideals (Baudrillard, 2015, p.212).

This scientific article examines the lives of Kazakh women married to foreigners through content analysis, focusing on their intercultural marriages, personal and family dynamics, cultural differences and similarities, as well as their challenges and peculiarities in adapting to a new society while preserving their national identity. The findings reveal that Kazakh women in mixed marriages actively use social media, attracting significant public interest in their lifestyles.

Their posts often highlight everyday experiences, contrasting and comparing traditions between their home and host countries. Notably, Kazakh women married into Muslim-majority nations tend to face fewer conflicts regarding national identity and religious beliefs, while those married to non-Muslim spouses experience a longer and more complex adaptation process to both societal and family norms. The study underscores how social media serves as a platform for these women to navigate cultural integration, negotiate identity, and showcase their unique transnational experiences.

The digital technologies of the 21st century open new opportunities for the social integration of transnational migrants. Social media has become an important platform for the self-identification of women in migration, their cultural identity, and the perception of gender roles. The activity of Kazakhstani female migrants in the online space influences their intercultural connections and social adaptation processes.

The following main categories were defined for the analysis:

1. Content themes.
2. Manifestations of gender and national identity.
3. Level of audience engagement.
4. Emotional tone of the content.

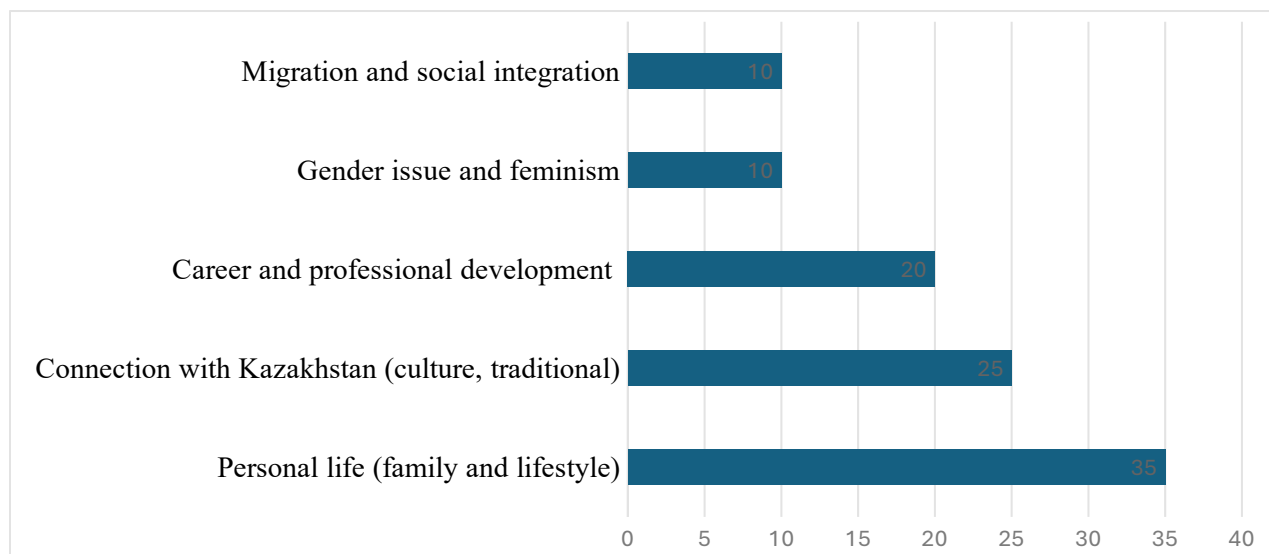


Figure 1. Content thematic direction

Content analysis results show that for Kazakhstani women, supporting family life and the cultures of both countries are of utmost importance. A larger portion of the content focuses on family and personal life. Specifically, 35% of posts focused on personal life. The subsequent 25% of the posts illustrate the individual's connection to Kazakhstan. Kazakh women tend to publish posts highlighting their connection by means of their home country, involving components of national culture and traditions, the occurrence of visits to Kazakhstan, and comparative assessments between their current and native environment. As research has shown, 20% of the posts are for career and professional development. Career and gender issues are also important, but they are not the primary focus. 10% posts concentrated on the gender issue and feminism, posts about migration experience are few, indicating their efforts to adapt to the new society. In addition, 10% of all content is focused on migration and social integration issues. Through their page, they share personal experiences with migration challenges, emphasizing the paperwork involved in mixed marriages and the process of acquiring a residence permit.

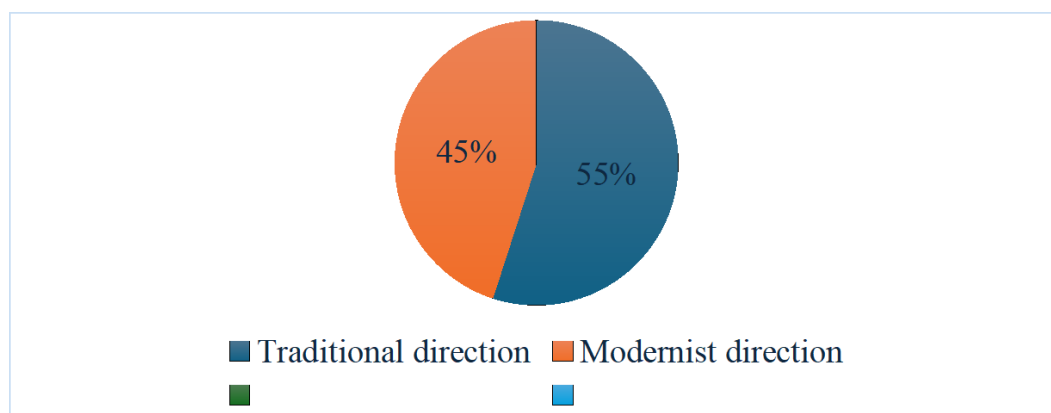


Figure 2. Spread of traditional and modernist perspectives

Traditional direction: There is a trend of portraying women as the cornerstone of the family, promoting Kazakh culture, and integrating Kazakh customs into lifestyles.

The modernist perspective emphasizes women's professional development, career advancement, societal integration, gender equality, and educational growth. Social media accounts of highly educated Kazakh women married abroad frequently feature discussions on gender equality, women's rights, and empowerment, particularly among those living in Europe, Switzerland, the UAE, and South Korea.

In the social media profiles of Kazakh women married to foreign nationals, marriage to foreign men is portrayed as a strong motivation for improving economic status, with positive portrayals of marriages and foreign husbands giving the content an inspirational character; however, Kazakh society holds conflicting views on mixed marriages, with many netizens believing international marriages undermine our nation's uniqueness and lead to detachment from national traditions and values.

Social media users are divided in their views: one side expresses support for such marriages with comments like Kazakh women deserve happiness no matter who they marry, love knows no nationality or religion, and what matters is that Kazakh women are happy wherever they are, while the opposing side rejects interethnic marriages, viewing them as a threat to national unity; there are also netizens who remain neutral toward mixed marriages.

First, in the studied materials, foreign marriages are romanticized and viewed as a tool for social and economic mobility. In this discourse, marrying foreign men is described as an opportunity for Kazakhstanian women to improve their quality of life. Gender equality and a high level of social protection are also considered positive factors in this context.

Second, there is a widely spread negative discourse in the media regarding the phenomenon. In this discourse, foreign marriages are linked to potential risks, including challenges in intercultural relationships, legal issues, and the risk of women becoming vulnerable. The issue of the threat to national identity and traditional values is often raised.

Third, the debates in the media continue on social networks, revealing conflicting views on foreign marriages. Some readers support this trend as a personal choice and life strategy for women, while others view it as a departure from national identity.

The role of women in intercultural marriages is closely related to the social norms and gender policies of the host country. In Western countries, where the principles of gender equality are highly developed, women are able to balance career and family life. In Eastern countries, patriarchal traditions prevail, often forcing women to adapt to traditional roles. Kazakhstanian women in foreign marriages are influenced by two contrasting factors: on one hand, adapting to the demands of the new society, and on the other hand, maintaining their cultural-gender identity. Kazakhstanian women living abroad are compelled to reconsider their initial gender roles. The content analysis revealed the following key trends in modern interethnic marriages:

The visa-free regime between Kazakhstan and neighboring CIS countries facilitates Kazakh women's migration for various reasons, while the unrestricted cross-border movement of citizens between these nations also contributes to the increasing number of intercultural marriages.

There has been a noticeable increase in marriages with Western nationals. More Kazakh women studying in Western Europe/America or working for international organizations are forming marital unions with local citizens.

Strengthening ties with Asian countries. Recent years have seen a rise in marriages between Kazakh citizens and nationals of Asian countries, particularly South Korea. Content analysis reveals that most Kazakh women initially move to South Korea for work or graduate studies, subsequently marrying local citizens.

Influence of the Kazakh diaspora in countries like Turkey, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and China. Due to the significant Kazakh diaspora in these countries, mixed marriages are common both among compatriots and with the local population.

Factors influencing intercultural marriages:

- Role of digital dating platforms. Social media and international dating websites have expanded the opportunities for citizens from different cultural backgrounds to meet and marry.
- Mutual Attraction Between Partners – genuine romantic connection between individuals from different cultural backgrounds.
- Financial Considerations – interest in the foreign partner's economic and social status.
- Intercultural marriages come with both advantages and challenges.
- Cultural and worldview similarities: Compatibility in core values, life goals, and worldview.
- Adaptation to the linguistic environment: Today, English has become a global communication tool, and multilingualism facilitates intercultural connections (Crettaz & Dahinden, 2019).

Additionally, there are both positive and negative factors influencing intercultural marriages, including:

- On the plus side:
  - o They help people grow - you learn new languages, cultures, and make diverse friends;
  - o Kids get a unique upbringing, becoming naturally bilingual and culturally aware.
  - o Strengthening cultural and economic ties between the two countries.
- Some negative aspects:
  - o Cultural and religious conflicts, family disputes;
  - o "Divided identity" syndrome, emotional distance between the home country and the country of residence;
  - o Misunderstanding and social stigmatization from relatives and friends.

Explaining the new forms of migration and family life is the foundation of N.G. Schiller, L. Bash, and Christiane Blank-Szaton's idea of the transnational social field. This idea holds that Kazakhstani women who marry foreigners maintain their cultural and social identities in a transnational setting without breaking off their connections to their homeland. Through social networks, they actively engage in both communities. It is clear from researching women's family experiences that they work to maintain the culture and values of their native country in addition to adjusting to the society in which they live (Glick Schiller, Blanc-Szanton, 1992, p.124).

## Conclusion

The intercultural marriages of Kazakhstani women living abroad are considered a multifaceted social phenomenon influenced by globalisation processes and migration dynamics. As discussed in the article, the key factors contributing to intercultural marriages include migration for educational purposes, the labor market, and socio-economic interests. The freedom of personal



choice, the ability to adapt to foreign cultural spaces, and the proliferation of digital dating platforms significantly contribute to the acceleration of this trend.

The analysis reveals that while Kazakh women adapt to their host societies, they strive to preserve their national identity and maintain balanced ties between both countries. The trend of Kazakh women marrying foreigners has significantly intensified due to migration factors and labor mobility.

The growing prevalence of intercultural marriages presents both global relevance and specific challenges for Kazakhstan. While this trend reflects increasing international integration, it raises critical concerns for nations with smaller populations like ours, where demographic preservation is crucial. Maintaining national distinctiveness remains a paramount consideration in this context.

The findings of the study can aid individuals and organizations in developing policies and strategies aimed at promoting and facilitating the adaptation of cross-cultural spouses to the broader social environment. Thus, spouses should be provided with training to help them understand and live in different cultures. Additionally, various forms of support should be developed, including online groups, for Kazakh women married to foreign husbands.

#### **Contributions of the authors:**

**E.Otar** – the methodologies employed, the findings analysis, and the main sections' organization.

**A.Y. Mantayeva** – contributed significantly to the introduction, the literature research, and the preliminary data analysis.

All authors contributed to the editing of the article and made individual contributions to its content

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### **Мәдениетаралық некелер және әлеуметтік бейімделу: шетелдік азаматтарға тұрмысқа шыққан қазақстандық әйелдердің онлайн репрезентациясы**

**Андатпа.** Бұл мақалада шетелдегі қазақстандық әйелдердің мәдениетаралық некеге отыру үрдістеріндегі негізгі ерекшеліктері мен себептері қарастырылады. Қазақстандық әйелдердің шетел азаматтарымен некелесу үрдісі жыл өткен сайын артып келеді. Қазіргі таңда мәдениетаралық некелердің көбеюі дамыған замандағы көші-қон саласының әлемдік деңгейде артуымен тығыз байланысты.

Қазақстандық әйелдердің шетелдіктермен некелесуі, қазіргі қоғам үшін маңызды құбылыстардың бірі, алайда бұл тақырып ғылыми тұрғыда жеткілікті дәрежеде зерттелмеген. Қазақстандық әйелдердің шетел азаматтарымен мәдениетаралық некеге отыруы – олардың этникалық, мәдени және гендерлік рөлдерінің өзгеруі тұрғысынан маңызды зерттеу алаңы болып табылады.

Мақаланың мақсаты – шетел азаматтарына тұрмысқа шыққан қазақстандық әйелдердің әлеуметтік желідегі өзін-өзі көрсету ерекшеліктері, олардың өзіндік репрезентациясы, әлеуметтік рөлдері және мәдени бейімделу ерекшеліктерін контент-талдау әдісі арқылы анықтау.

Зерттеуде әлеуметтік желіде шетел азаматтарына тұрмысқа шыққан қазақстандық әйелдердің парақшаларына сапалы контент-талдау әдісі – эмпирикалық құрал болды. Бұл зерттеу олардың әлеуметтік желідегі шынайы бейнесін, өмірлерінде ұстанатын құндылықтар мен әлеуметтік нормаларын, жаңа мәдени ортаға бейімделуіндегі ерекшеліктерді сипаттауға бағытталған.

Зерттеу нәтижелері әлеуметтанулық теориялар негізінде түсіндіріліп, трансұлттық неке институтының қазақ қоғамындағы рөліне баға беріліп, мәдениетаралық некеге отыруға

негіз болатын факторлар анықталды, атап айтқанда көші-қон, еңбек миграциясы, білім алу мақсатында шетелге кету, әлеуметтік-экономикалық жағдайлар.

**Негізгі ұғымдар:** мәдениетаралық неке, қазақстандық әйелдер, көші-қон, гендерлік аспект, жаһандану.

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### **Межкультурные браки и социальная адаптация: онлайн-репрезентация казахстанских женщин, вышедших замуж за иностранных граждан**

**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются процессы заключения межкультурных браков и основные причины, побуждающие казахстанских женщин, проживающих за рубежом, вступать в такие союзы. Процесс глобализации способствует усилению миграционных потоков и увеличению числа межкультурных браков.

Цель статьи — анализ особенностей социальной адаптации женщин, вступивших в межкультурный брак, в новом социокультурном окружении, их культурной идентичности и уровня принятия со стороны общества.

В работе применяется метод контент-анализа: исследуются страницы казахстанских женщин, вышедших замуж за иностранных граждан, в социальных сетях. На основе анализа выявляются особенности их саморепрезентации, социальные роли и характер культурной адаптации. Применение данного метода позволяет глубже понять роль социальных медиа в личной и общественной жизни, а также оценить миграционные процессы, гендерную динамику и изменения в институте семьи.

Целью настоящей научной статьи является выявление особенностей саморепрезентации казахстанских женщин, состоящих в браке с иностранцами, в социальных сетях с использованием метода контент-анализа. Исследование направлено на описание их образа в медиапространстве, ценностных ориентаций, социальных норм, а также специфики адаптации к новой культурной среде. Полученные данные интерпретируются на основе социологических теорий, дается оценка роли транснационального брака в казахстанском обществе и выявляются факторы, влияющие на вступление в межкультурный брак.

**Ключевые слова:** межкультурный брак, казахстанские женщины, миграция, гендерный аспект, глобализация.

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