

TRANSFORMING FAMILY VALUES IN THE PROCESS OF MODERNIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF KAZAKH FAMILIES IN TURKESTAN REGION

N.A. Baibakhov^{*1}, *K.E. Yusupov*², *M.B. Baibolov*³,
*D.N. Kelesbayev*⁴, *B.B. Yertayeva*⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}*Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University,
Turkestan, Kazakhstan*

E-mail: ¹*nurbol.baibakhov@ayu.edu.kz,* ²*kuanyshbek.yussupov@ayu.edu.kz,*
³*myrzakhan.baibolov@ayu.edu.kz,* ⁴*dinmukhamed.kelesbayev@ayu.edu.kz,*
⁵*bagdat.yertayeva@ayu.edu.kz*

Abstract. This study examines the impact of modernization on family values in Kazakhstan, focusing on Kazakh families in the Turkestan Region as a case study. Beyond economic and technological changes, modernization fundamentally transforms the structure of social institutions and the value systems of individuals. Against this background, the main aim of the study is to identify how modernization has reshaped the values of the traditional Kazakh family. The theoretical framework draws on Talcott Parsons' structural-functionalism, Alex Inkeles' modernization indicators, and contemporary theories of individualization. The study is based on empirical field research conducted among Kazakh families in the Turkestan Region. Quantitative data were collected from 584 respondents selected through a stratified sampling method, while qualitative data were obtained from 20 in-depth interviews. The findings reveal the emergence of a "dual structure" in family values. On the one hand, traditional values such as family unity, respect, and intergenerational solidarity remain strong. On the other hand, modern orientations -particularly individual freedom, gender equality, and joint decision-making- are increasingly prominent, especially among younger generations. Women's educational attainment and urbanization are identified as key factors driving the spread of modern family values. The study demonstrates that modernization does not lead to the erosion of traditional family values but rather to a process of selective adaptation and hybridization. These findings provide important insights for the development of family policies and the sustainability of intergenerational value transmission in Kazakhstan.

Keywords: modernization, Kazakh family, family values, social transformation, Turkestan region, intergenerational differences.

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^{*}the corresponding author

Introduction

Modernization is a multidimensional process that transforms both economic structures and cultural norms. It reshapes how people live, work, and interact. Industrialization, urbanization, education, and communication technologies have significantly changed social life over the past century. These changes also affect individual values and social institutions, particularly the family.

Historically, the family has played a central role in reproduction, intergenerational continuity, and socialization (Parsons, 1955). However, modernization has altered both its structure and functions. Traditional extended families based on hierarchy are increasingly replaced by more individualized and emotionally oriented forms (Goode, 1963; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

In Kazakhstan, the post-Soviet transition has intensified these transformations. Economic liberalization, migration, urbanization, and access to global media have reshaped family roles and relationships. Despite these changes, the family remains a central moral and social institution (Nurzhanova, 2019; Baimukhamedova and Yessimova, 2021). As a result, Kazakh families today reflect a dual process: the persistence of traditional values and the gradual spread of equality, autonomy, and shared decision-making.

This duality is especially visible in the Turkestan Region. The region is historically associated with strong kinship traditions and respect for elders. At the same time, it has experienced rapid urbanization, demographic growth, and increasing access to education and digital communication. These overlapping dynamics make the Turkestan Region a suitable case for analyzing family change in a culturally conservative context.

Although previous studies have examined family transformation in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, several gaps remain. First, most research focuses on the national level and provides limited regional evidence. Second, the coexistence of traditional and modern values is often described but rarely conceptualized as hybridization or normative restructuring. Third, the mechanisms linking modernization factors -such as education, residence, and media exposure- to value change across generations are not sufficiently specified.

This study addresses these gaps by examining how modernization reshapes family values among Kazakh families in the Turkestan Region. It focuses on the interaction between traditional norms -such as intergenerational solidarity and respect- and modern values, including individual autonomy, gender equality, and emotional fulfillment.

The study makes three main contributions. First, it provides new mixed-method empirical evidence from the Turkestan Region. Second, it conceptualizes family change as hybridization rather than decline. Third, it contributes to debates on non-linear modernization by showing that individualization can develop within culturally embedded family structures.

Literature review

Modernization theory explains the transition from traditional to more rational and individual-centered social structures. Classical sociologists such as Durkheim, Weber, and Parsons examined how social change affects key institutions, including the family.

Parsons (1955) argued that modernization transforms the extended family into a nuclear one and leads to functional differentiation. The family shifts from an economic unit to a space of socialization and emotional support. Similarly, Goode (1963) emphasized that industrialization promotes individual choice, particularly in marriage.

Modernization also involves cultural change. Inglehart (1997) showed that post-materialist values replace traditional authority-based norms with values of freedom, equality, and self-expression. As a result, family structures become more egalitarian and emotionally oriented (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Zhong and Wilkinson, 2025).

In the post-Soviet context, Kazakhstan has experienced simultaneous economic and cultural transformation. The transition to a market economy and the search for national identity have reshaped family structures. While marriage age has increased and fertility has declined, family cohesion remains strong (Baimukhamedova and Yessimova, 2021).

In Kazakh culture, the family is both a social institution and a carrier of cultural identity (Kassymbekova, 2020). However, globalization, media, and migration have contributed to changing family norms, especially among younger generations (Abisheva, 2022).

Recent research highlights that family transformation is shaped by gender and generational dynamics. Lee, Song, and Park (2025) show that rising gender conflict reduces support for marriage and childbearing, especially

among young women. At the same time, Liu (2024) demonstrates that although some forms of intergenerational support decline, core family solidarity remains strong.

These findings suggest that family change is uneven and multidimensional. It cannot be explained solely as decline or persistence.

The Turkestan Region reflects this complexity. Traditional values coexist with growing demands for equality and individual autonomy. This duality points to a hybrid form of family structure.

Recent theoretical work supports this view. Wurm (2024) argues that modernization does not simply weaken institutions but leads to their reconfiguration and coexistence. This perspective highlights the importance of understanding family change as a process of hybridization.

Despite these insights, regional empirical studies remain limited. In particular, intergenerational value change in culturally conservative regions such as Turkestan is underexplored. This study addresses this gap using both quantitative and qualitative data.

Methodology

This is a descriptive and analytical field study that aims to look at the effects of modernization on family values and the family institution among Kazakh families in the Turkestan Region.

The object of the study is the institution of the family in Kazakh society within the context of ongoing modernization processes. And the subject of the study is the transformation of family values, role structures, and intergenerational relations among Kazakh families in the Turkestan Region under the influence of modernization factors.

We used a mixed-methods approach that integrated the results of a quantitative survey with a series of qualitative in-depth interviews. The rationale for this design is that it can uncover not only value patterns that can be measured but also the lived meanings through which social change is interpreted by people (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

Research questions and hypotheses

Here are the research questions the study is focused on:

RQ1. What impact have changes associated with modernization had on value attitudes and family role configurations of Kazakh families in the Turkestan Region?

RQ2. Which aspects of family life are mostly faithful to the traditions, and which show the effects of modernization?

RQ3. To what extent do education, gender, age, and place of residence influence the transformation of family values?

RQ4. Is modernization mainly a process of value erosion, or is it selective adaptation and hybridization within the family institution?

Following the theoretical framework, the hypotheses outlined for testing are the following:

H1. A strong correlation exists between modernization levels and endorsement of modern family values.

H2. Age has a bearing on the fact that younger respondents would be more in favor of egalitarian decision-making, women's employment, and individual autonomy within the family than older respondents.

H3. Educationally better-achieved women would express their support for the equality of family roles more strongly than the ones who have had lesser educational achievements.

H4. Modern family values are on the rise without the complete displacement of solidarity, respect, and intergenerational cohesion that characterize traditional norms.

Conceptual and operational definitions

Modernization for this research is considered the extent to which families and individuals are embedded in modern socio-economic and cultural systems. The researchers used several markers to measure the construct:

(i) level of education

(ii) place of residence (urban/rural)

(iii) employment status

(iv) income level, and

(v) exposure to mass media and digital technologies.

Family values, on the other hand, refer to the normative orientations that, among other things, regulate authority, gender roles, marriage preferences, intergenerational relations, solidarity, and individual autonomy. Changing family values is measured by the following:

- (i) attitudes toward gender roles
- (ii) family decision-making patterns
- (iii) marriage preferences (individual choice versus family-guided choice)
- (iv) perceptions of intergenerational authority
- (v) importance attached to family solidarity and respect, and
- (vi) acceptance of individual autonomy within the family.

From the perspective of data analysis, variables such as education, place of residence, employment status, income, media exposure, age, and gender were considered independent, while attitudes toward gender roles, decision-making, marriage, authority, solidarity, and autonomy served as dependent ones.

Case selection:

The Turkestan Region was chosen as a very important case and notably representative for analysis for three reasons. First, historically, it has been the main place with the influence of strong family traditions, religions, and the role of morals from generation to generation. Second, the region has undergone such rapid urbanization and socio-economic changes that, in fact, it is hard to believe that these changes were not brought by external factors. Third, the simultaneous acquisition of education, migration systems, and digital communication has accompanied this urbanization and changes in the socio-economic structure.

Strong traditional norms and modernization pressures in the Turkestan Region have resulted in a continuous state of tensions between these two (family change, erosion, persistence, or hybridization). The case of the Turkestan region coincides with current research, showing that family modernization is usually a process of institutional reconfiguration in less direct and culturally embedded forms rather than a straightforward decline.

Population, sampling, and sample size justification:

The research focused on the Kazakh families residing in the Turkestan Region as the target population. The samples were identified by executing the stratified probability sampling method. At first, urban and rural areas were categorized according to their socio-economic traits, and later, households were picked randomly from each stratum.

Our target was to survey a total of 600 households.

In the end, the total number of valid surveys was N=584.

We decided on the target sample size of 600 respondents based on the standard principles of sample size estimation for large populations. For instance, if you use Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, the minimum sample size required is about 384 respondents. But a sample of 600 was deliberately chosen to enhance statistical reliability, minimize sampling error, and allow for gender, residence, and generation subgroup comparisons (Babbie, 2017). With 584 valid responses, this sample size corresponds to a margin of error of approximately 4% at the 95% confidence level.

The sample's demographic composition was fairly balanced, and so it was quite adequate for comparative analysis: 55.8% were female and 44.2% male; 54% lived in urban areas and 46% in rural settlements. These figures continue to support the representativeness of the sample for the regional level.

Data Collection

We used a well-structured questionnaire as the main tool for gathering quantitative data.

It comprised a set of 5-point Likert-scale items referring to the respondents' family values, marriage perceptions, gender roles, decision-making processes, intergenerational relations, and expectations of family life in the future.

The questionnaire items were originally based on research surrounding modernization, family change, and individualization (Goode, 1963; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Inglehart, 1997), and then they were adjusted to the cultural context of the Turkestan region.

The survey was conducted in the form of face-to-face interviews during the period January-April 2025.

To complement the quantitative data, 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted between June and August 2025. Quota balance was maintained in terms of age, gender, and place of residence. The interviews focused on participants' perceptions of family change, gender roles, and intergenerational relations. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent.

Data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 23.0. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and percentages) were used to summarize general trends. Correlation analysis examined relationships between modernization indicators and family values, while one-way ANOVA was applied to test generational differences. The internal consistency of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally, 1978).

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Interview transcripts were coded inductively, and recurring patterns were organized into themes such as value transformation, gender roles, family cohesion, and intergenerational dynamics. These themes were then integrated with the quantitative findings to provide a deeper interpretation of the modernization process at the household level.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings allowed for methodological triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of the results.

Ethical considerations

The research participation was entirely free. Beforehand, respondents were explained the intent of the survey and guaranteed that their personal information would remain confidential. The data was only harnessed for scientific purposes, and no personal information was shared. The Social Sciences Ethics Board of the respective university recognized the study ethically.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in the Methodology section. Overall, the sample is balanced in terms of gender, age, and place of residence and is broadly representative of the population structure of the Turkestan Region.

Quantitative results indicate that family values among Kazakh respondents exhibit a dual pattern. A large proportion of respondents (74.3%) strongly agreed that "the family is the basic unit of society," reflecting the persistence of traditional values. At the same time, 68.5% supported joint decision-making between spouses, and 81% considered love more important than economic conditions in marriage. However, 63.7% viewed divorce as a weakening of family values. These patterns are illustrated in Figure 1.

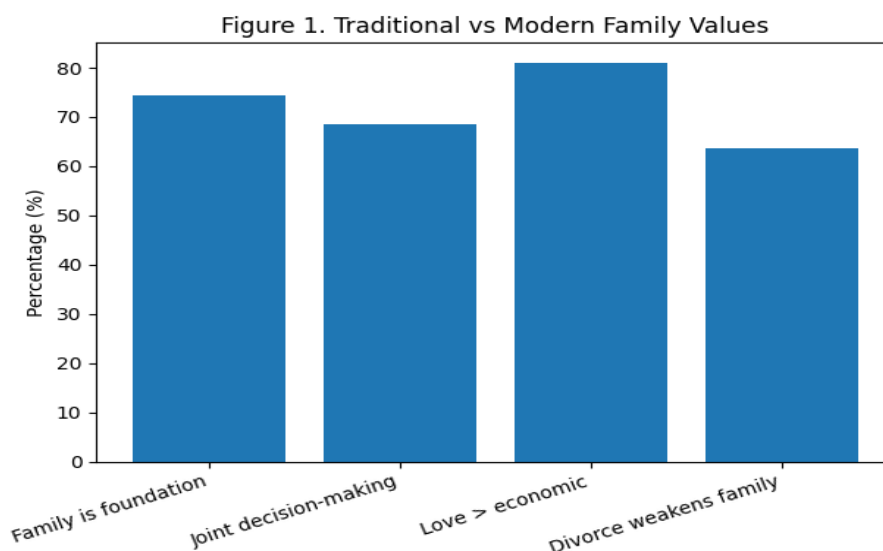


Figure 1. Dual Structure of Traditional and Modern Family Values

Note: Based on the authors' research

Gender differences reveal significant variation in attitudes toward traditional roles. Overall, 37.4% of respondents agreed that "a woman's primary role is to manage the household." This proportion was lower among women (28%) and higher among men (49%), with the difference being statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) (see Figure 2).

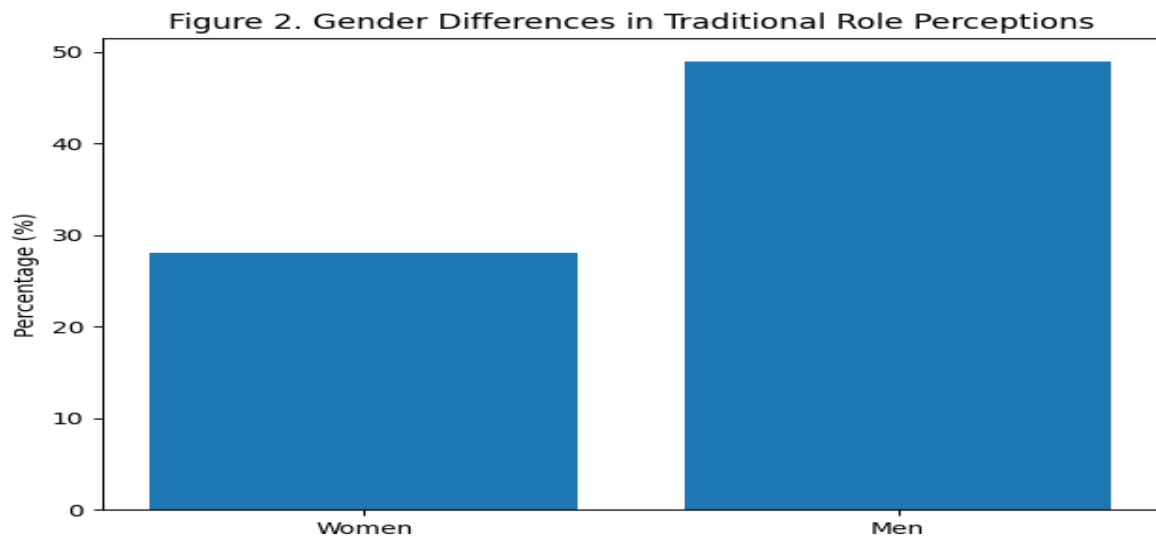


Figure 2. Gender Differences in Traditional Role Perceptions

Note: Drafted by authors based on the research data

Generational comparisons show clear differences in value orientations. Among respondents aged 18–30, 72% supported equal decision-making within the family, compared to 45% among respondents aged 50 and above. Similarly, acceptance of women’s employment was highest among younger respondents (88%), followed by middle-aged (67%) and older groups (43%) (Figure 3).

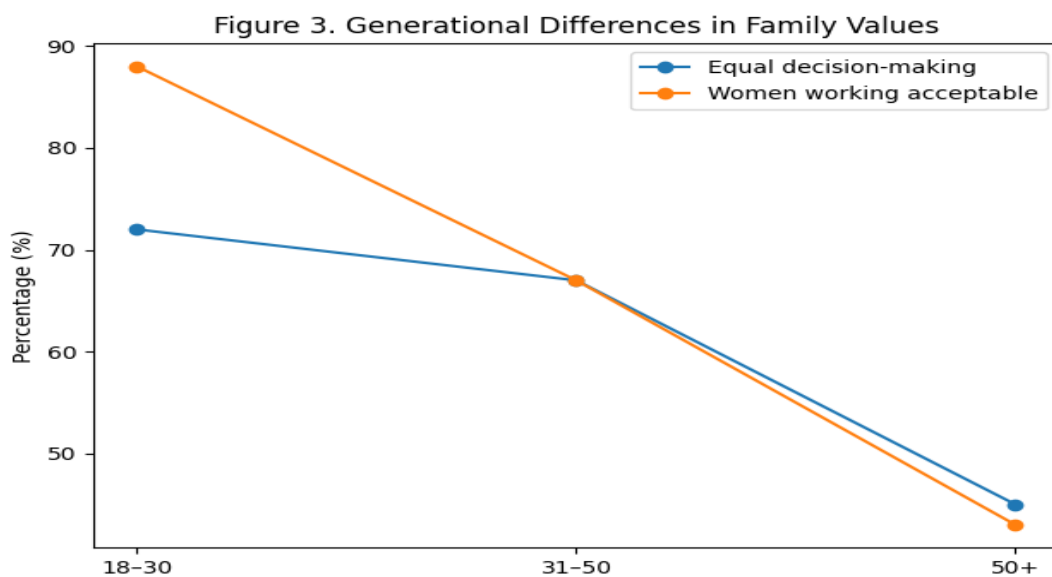


Figure 3. Generational Differences in Family Values

Note: Based on the authors’ research

Regression analysis indicates a strong positive relationship between women’s educational attainment and support for egalitarian family roles ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$). Among university-educated women, 82% supported equal responsibility within the family, while 57% of women with lower education levels expressed more traditional views (Figure 4).

Qualitative findings complement these results. Participants noted increased female agency and shared decision-making within the family. For example:

“In my mother’s time, women didn’t have much of a voice, but now girls are studying and making decisions together with their husbands.” (P12, age 28, Turkestan).

Future-oriented responses indicate that 52.4% of respondents expect the importance of family to increase, while 15.9% anticipate a rise in civil marriages and 12.8% expect an increase in single-parent families.

Generally, the results show that exposure to the modern world will not automatically dismantle family values. On the contrary, it will be the hybridization of these values, i.e., the existence of a mixture of old and new family values and new values that have not existed before. Family values such as respect and solidarity remain the core in Kazakhstan, but at the same time, egalitarian and individualistic value systems are spreading more and more widely. This change can be explained with Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (2002) trace of institutional individualization, whereby individuals develop autonomy of their personal sphere but do not completely get rid of traditional contexts.

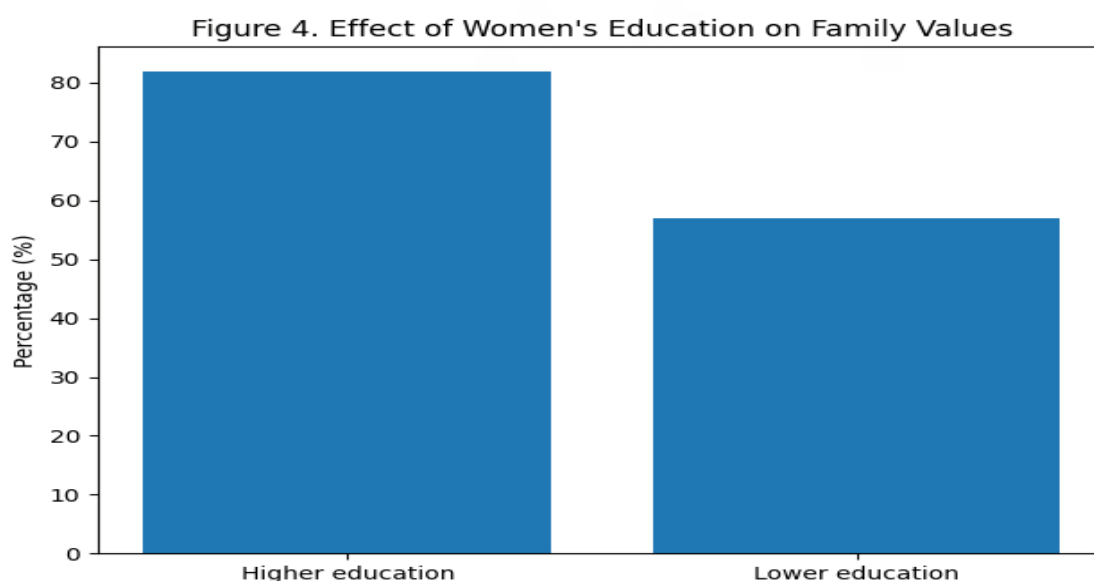


Figure 4. Women’s Education Influences Family Values

Note: Based on the authors’ research

In view of this, the alteration of family values is not of a “destruction” nature, but of a “conversion” one. Moreover, these changes offer relevant and valuable empirical data that could be used in the future for the development of social policy and intergenerational educational and cultural programs.

Discussion

The effect of modernization on family as a social institution has been the subject of a great deal of discussion in sociological literature, especially when examined through the lens of structural functionalism and individualization theories.

Leading theorists like Talcott Parsons and William J. Goode believed that industrialization and urbanization would cause the family to change from an extended family to a nuclear and functionally differentiated one. The results of this research partly support this view; nonetheless, they also indicate a more complicated and situation-specific change.

The findings from the Turkestan region show that family values are not only diminishing but also being changed into a double or mixed form. To illustrate, a very high percentage of people (74.3%) strongly agree with the statement that “family is the foundation of society,” which denotes the continual existence of solidarity traditions. On the other hand, the desire for equal decision-making (68.5%) and love and tenderness in marriage (81%) strongly

point to emerging modern, egalitarian values. This dual existence implies that modernity in the Kazakh setting does not give rise to the breakdown of institutions but rather values hybridization, going beyond the scope of the classical theory of modernization.

This pattern aligns with Ronald Inglehart's concept of the "silent revolution," which posits a shift from materialist to post-materialist values. The high prioritization of love and personal fulfillment over economic considerations in marriage directly supports this thesis. However, unlike Western societies, this shift in Kazakhstan appears to be gradual and selective. The continued perception of divorce as a negative phenomenon (63.7%) indicates that traditional moral frameworks remain influential. Therefore, the findings suggest not a complete value shift, but a layered transformation, where modern values are embedded within existing cultural norms.

The generational analysis provides further support for this interpretation. Younger respondents (18-30) show significantly higher support for gender equality (72% in decision-making; 88% acceptance of women's employment) compared to older cohorts. This confirms that modernization operates unevenly across generations, reinforcing Inglehart's argument about generational value change. At the same time, the persistence of traditional attitudes among older respondents highlights the intergenerational coexistence of value systems, rather than their replacement.

The results also strongly support Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim's concept of "institutionalized individualization." The increasing emphasis on personal choice, equality, and emotional satisfaction - particularly among younger and educated individuals - demonstrates the expansion of individual autonomy. However, this autonomy does not lead to the rejection of the family as an institution. On the contrary, more than half of the respondents (52.4%) believe that the importance of family will increase in the future. This indicates that individualization in the Kazakh context is embedded within, rather than opposed to, family structures.

Education emerges as a key driver of this transformation. The strong correlation between women's education and support for egalitarian family roles ($r = 0.61, p < 0.01$) confirms that modernization operates through structural factors such as access to education. Among highly educated women, support for equal responsibility within the family reaches 82%, whereas traditional views dominate among less educated groups. This finding is consistent with modernization theory's emphasis on education as a catalyst for value change, but it also highlights the gendered dimension of this process in Kazakhstan.

At the same time, qualitative findings deepen the interpretation of these statistical patterns. Interview data reveal that changes in women's roles are perceived not as a rupture with tradition but as a natural evolution. Participants emphasized increased agency and mutual decision-making while maintaining respect for elders and family unity. This reinforces the argument that modernization in Turkestan is experienced as adaptive continuity rather than cultural disruption.

Overall, the findings challenge the deterministic assumptions of classical modernization theory. Instead of leading to the erosion of traditional values, modernization in the Turkestan context produces a process of normative restructuring, in which traditional and modern elements coexist and interact. This supports the view that Central Asian societies follow a distinct modernization trajectory, shaped by historical, cultural, and religious contexts.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that modernization in Kazakhstan does not generate a crisis or disintegration of family values, but rather a process of selective adaptation and hybridization. The case of the Turkestan Region illustrates how traditional norms such as respect, solidarity, and family cohesion remain central, while modern values such as equality, individual autonomy, and emotional fulfillment become increasingly influential.

The coexistence of these value systems suggests that the Kazakh family is undergoing a process of structural and normative transformation, rather than decline. This dual structure reflects the capacity of Kazakh society to adapt to global modernization while preserving its cultural continuity.

From a policy perspective, these findings highlight the importance of balancing tradition and modernity. Programs that promote intergenerational dialogue, support women's education, and strengthen family counseling services can help manage this transformation constructively. At the same time, preserving cultural heritage in a flexible and adaptive manner remains essential for sustaining social cohesion.

In conclusion, the Turkestan case demonstrates that modernization in Central Asia follows a non-linear and culturally embedded path, where global influences are selectively integrated into local value systems. This contributes to the broader sociological understanding of modernization by showing that cultural continuity and social change are not mutually exclusive but can coexist within a dynamic and evolving social structure.

Author contributions

Baibakhov N.A. – Idea of the concept, conducting a survey and collecting factual material.

Yusupov K.E. – Acceptance of responsibility for all aspects of the work, the integrity of all parts of the article and its final version.

Baibolov M.B. – Formation of ideas; formulation of key goals.

Kelesbayev D.N. – Conducting research, analyzing and interpreting the data obtained.

Yertayeva B.B. – Collecting factual material, describing the study results, and preparing a list of references.

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Н.А. Байбахов¹, К.Е. Юсупов², М.Б. Байболов³, Д.Н. Келесбаев⁴, Б.Б. Ертаева⁵
^{1,2,3,4,5}Қожа Ахмет Ясауи атындағы Халықаралық қазақ-түрік университеті, Түркістан, Қазақстан

МОДЕРНИЗАЦИЯ ҮДЕРІСІНДЕГІ ОТБАСЫЛЫҚ ҚҰНДЫЛЫҚТАРДЫҢ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯСЫ: ТҮРКІСТАН ОБЛЫСЫНДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚ ОТБАСЫЛАРЫ МЫСАЛЫНДА

Аңдатпа. Бұл зерттеуде Түркістан облысындағы қазақ отбасыларының отбасылық құндылықтарына модернизация үрдісінің әсері қарастырылған. Экономикалық және технологиялық трансформациядан тыс модернизация әлеуметтік институттардың құрылымын және жеке тұлғалардың құндылықтар жүйесін түбегейлі өзгертеді. Осы тұрғыда зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты – модернизация үрдісінің дәстүрлі қазақ отбасы құндылықтарына әсерін анықтау. Зерттеудің теориялық негізі Талкотт Парсонстың құрылымдық-функционалдық көзқарасына, Алекс Инкелестің модернизация көрсеткіштеріне және заманауи даралау теорияларына негізделген. Зерттеу Түркістан облысында тұратын қазақ отбасылары арасында жүргізілген эмпирикалық далалық зерттеуге негізделген. Сандық деректер стратификацияланған іріктеу әдісі арқылы таңдалған 584 қатысушыдан жиналды, ал сапалы деректер 20 тереңдетілген сұхбатпен толықтырылды. Қорытындылар отбасылық құндылықтарда «дуальды құрылымның» пайда болғанын көрсетеді: бір жағынан отбасы бірлігі, сыйластық, ұрпақтар ынтымағы сияқты дәстүрлі құндылықтар сақталуда; екінші жағынан, жас ұрпақ арасында жеке бас бостандығына, гендерлік теңдікке және өзара шешім қабылдауға бейімділік ерекше байқалады. Әйелдердің білім деңгейі мен урбанизация факторлары заманауи отбасы концепциясының таралуында маңызды детерминанттар ретінде ерекшеленеді. Зерттеу барысында модернизацияның қазақ отбасындағы құндылықтардың тозуына емес, іріктеп бейімделу мен будандастыру үрдісіне әкелгені анықталды. Бұл нәтижелер Қазақстандағы отбасылық саясаттың дамуы және ұрпақтар арасындағы құндылықтардың тұрақтылығы туралы маңызды түсініктер береді.

Негізгі ұғымдар: модернизация, қазақ отбасы, отбасы құндылықтары, әлеуметтік трансформация, Түркістан облысы, ұрпақтар арасындағы айырмашылық.

Н.А. Байбахов¹, К.Е. Юсупов², М.Б. Байболов³, Д.Н. Келесбаев⁴, Б.Б. Ертаева⁵
^{1,2,3,4,5}Международный казахско-турецкий университет
имени Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, Туркестан, Казахстан

ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ СЕМЕЙНЫХ ЦЕННОСТЕЙ В ПРОЦЕССЕ МОДЕРНИЗАЦИИ: НА ПРИМЕРЕ КАЗАХСКИХ СЕМЕЙ ТУРКЕСТАНСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ

Аннотация. В данном исследовании рассматривается влияние процесса модернизации на трансформацию института семьи и семейных ценностей в казахском обществе на примере Туркестанского региона. Модернизация, помимо экономических и технологических изменений, оказывает существенное воздействие на структуру социальных институтов и ценностные системы общества, в частности на институт семьи. Целью исследования является выявление направлений трансформации традиционной казахской семьи под влиянием современных социальных процессов, а именно - сохранения ее ключевых ценностей и структур либо их изменения. Теоретическая основа работы опирается на структурно-функционалистский подход Талкотт Парсонс, концепцию модернизации Алекс Инкелес, а также современные теории индивидуализации. Эмпирическая база исследования сформирована на основе полевого обследования казахских семей, проживающих в Туркестанском регионе. Количественные данные были получены в результате опроса 584 респондентов, отобранных методом стратифицированной выборки, а качественные данные дополнены

20 глубинными интервью. Результаты исследования свидетельствуют о формировании гибридной (двойственной) модели института семьи. С одной стороны, сохраняются традиционные ценности, такие как семейная солидарность, уважение к старшим и межпоколенческая поддержка. С другой стороны, усиливаются современные тенденции, включая индивидуальную автономию, гендерное равенство и совместное принятие решений, что особенно характерно для молодежи. Установлено, что ключевыми факторами трансформации института семьи являются уровень образования женщин и процессы урбанизации. В целом, модернизация не приводит к разрушению традиционных семейных ценностей, а способствует их избирательной адаптации и формированию новых социальных практик. Полученные результаты имеют важное теоретическое и прикладное значение для понимания особенностей трансформации института семьи в постсоветских обществах и могут быть использованы при разработке семейной политики в Казахстане.

Ключевые слова: модернизация, казахская семья, семейные ценности, социальная трансформация, Туркестанская область, межпоколенческие различия.

Information about authors

Baibakhov N. A. – corresponding author, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Department of International Relations, Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Turkestan, Kazakhstan

Yusupov K. Y. – master, Senior Lecturer, Department of International Relations, Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Turkestan, Kazakhstan

Baibolov M. B. – PhD, Senior Lecturer, Department of Journalism, Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Turkestan, Kazakhstan

Kelesbayev D. N. – PhD, Professor, Department of Management and Tourism, Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Turkestan, Kazakhstan

Yertayeva B. B. – master, Senior Researcher, Scientific Research Institute of Turkology, Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Turkestan, Kazakhstan

Авторлар туралы мәлімет

Байбахов Н. А. – хат-хабар авторы, PhD, Халықаралық қатынастар кафедрасының аға оқытушысы, Қожа Ахмет Ясауи атындағы Халықаралық қазақ-түрік университеті, Түркістан, Қазақстан

Юсупов К. Е. – магистр, Халықаралық қатынастар кафедрасының аға оқытушысы, Қожа Ахмет Ясауи атындағы Халықаралық қазақ-түрік университеті, Түркістан, Қазақстан

Байболов М. Б. – PhD, Журналистика кафедрасының аға оқытушысы, Қожа Ахмет Ясауи атындағы Халықаралық қазақ-түрік университеті, Түркістан, Қазақстан

Келесбаев Д. Н. – PhD, Менеджмент және туризм кафедрасының профессоры, Қожа Ахмет Ясауи атындағы Халықаралық қазақ-түрік университеті, Түркістан, Қазақстан

Ертаева Б. Б. – магистр, Түркология ғылыми-зерттеу институтының аға ғылыми қызметкері, Қожа Ахмет Ясауи атындағы Халықаралық қазақ-түрік университеті, Түркістан, Қазақстан

Сведения об авторах

Байбахов Н. А. – автор для корреспонденции, доктор PhD, старший преподаватель кафедры международных отношений, Международный казахско-турецкий университет имени Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, Туркестан, Казахстан

Юсупов К. Е. – магистр, старший преподаватель кафедры международных отношений, Международный казахско-турецкий университет имени Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, Туркестан, Казахстан

Байболов М. Б. – PhD, старший преподаватель кафедры журналистики, Международный казахско-турецкий университет имени Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, Туркестан, Казахстан

Келесбаев Д. Н. – PhD, профессор кафедры менеджмента и туризма, Международный казахско-турецкий университет имени Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, Туркестан, Казахстан

Ертаева Б. Б. – магистр, старший научный сотрудник научно-исследовательского института тюркологии, Международный казахско-турецкий университет имени Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, Туркестан, Казахстан