

Dating Norms in the Society of Kazakhstan

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Abstract: This study explores the interaction between these norms and dating patterns among young adults in Kazakhstan. It is done through qualitative methods to demonstrate the ways in which traditional and modern gender norms impact dating gender norms, behaviors and experiences, offering perspectives on the changing landscape of Kazakhstani dating culture, the research demonstrates the complex interactions associated with changing traditional practices coexisting with increasing modern gender norms. Through an analysis of these delicate interactions, the research improves our awareness of gender roles and the dynamics of dating in a society that is transforming.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, dating norms, young adults, dating practices, gender norms, cultural traditions, modern influences, societal change.

Introduction

In a world that is changing quickly, cultural norms have a lasting impact on dating and relationship dynamics, particularly in nations that are going through major changes. This capstone thesis explores the complex network of dating customs among Kazakhstani young adults. My main goal is to comprehend how gender norms, both historical and contemporary, influence dating practices, attitudes and encounters. By doing this, I want to understand the fundamental causes of the continued use of traditional gender roles in a society that is undergoing fast social and cultural transformation.

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 make up the majority of my study sample, with an emphasis on heterosexual cisgender males and women. This decision was made on purpose since these people make up a sizable section of the population and because dating experiences have a major influence on how they perceive the world and behave. I used qualitative research techniques, which are appropriate for gathering rich, narrative data, such as semi-structured interviews, to fully capture their ideas. To examine how traditional and modern gender norms interact and affect dating standards in Kazakh culture, I employ a conceptual framework based on feminist and sociocultural theories.

Because it enables a detailed knowledge of the experiences and viewpoints of my target demographic, the qualitative method was selected. Furthermore, the feminist and sociocultural theories offer a strong framework for examining the interactions between individual agency and society expectations in the dating situation. These theories are especially pertinent since they provide light on the complexity of both contemporary and traditional gender norms, which makes them suitable for addressing the study topics.

This study has significant academic, political and societal implications. Socially, discussions on cultural preservation and societal adaptation might be more informed when people are aware of the dating customs in Kazakh culture and how they relate to gender norms. Politically speaking, the results can guide programs and policies meant to promote social growth and gender equality. Academic study in the areas of sociology, gender studies and cultural studies would benefit greatly from this project's deeper knowledge of the interactions between culture, gender and dating.

It is impossible to exaggerate the research's current significance. It discusses a significant facet of societal development and how it affects people's lives. It adds to our understanding of how culture and tradition interact with changing gender standards in the modern world by examining dating customs in Kazakh society. The knowledge acquired will not only contribute to local conversations but also have international significance because gender dynamics and dating conventions are universal subjects. For academics, decision-makers and everyone else curious about how gender and culture interact in modern society, this study can be a useful resource.

Literature Review

Relevance of the Research

Kazakhstan's commitment to traditional gender roles, where men are assigned as major breadwinners and women as domestic caretakers, is highlighted by Khairullayeva et al.'s (2022) investigation. Intimate relationships are greatly influenced by this social structure, which places more financial and decision-making responsibility on males. Subsequent research by Kan (2023) explores this gender landscape in greater detail and reveals a division between the public and private sectors of life. While the public domain demonstrates significant progress toward gender

equality, the private sector adheres to customs that place women in a position of subordination. This paradox makes it more difficult for people to navigate love relationships, especially when traditional norms and contemporary gender ideals diverge.

Kan's research gives attention to how Kazakhstan's seeming modernity in terms of gender equality in the public domain contrasts strongly with the persistent traditional views in the private sector. This contradiction illustrates the complex interactions between modern and traditional gender perspectives and is essential to understanding dating dynamics. Combining the findings of Khairullayeva et al. and Kan presents a complex picture of dating in Kazakhstan that is unique by its strong traditional impact. The necessity for more research is highlighted by the enduring impact of conventional gender norms, particularly in light of dynamics seen in urban environments. To fully understand how romantic relationships are changing in Kazakhstani culture, research on the effects of social media and technology on dating behavior is also necessary.

By revealing the widespread influence of traditional gender norms on Kazakhstani family dynamics, Umbetaliyeva et al.'s (2016) study greatly improves the knowledge provided by Khairullayeva et al. (2022) and Kan (2023). This study contributes a critical dimension to our understanding of gender norms and dating behaviors in Kazakhstan. Umbetaliyeva et al. highlight the importance of the family unit in Kazakhstani society and how conventional gender norms enter this structure by focusing on familial interactions and intergenerational exchanges. The research makes it possible to investigate in further detail the long-lasting effects of these standards on young individuals who are entering adulthood and their dating attitudes and practices. Umbetaliyeva et al. (2016) emphasize that the family plays a crucial role in spreading of cultural norms, particularly with dating and relationships. It serves as a storage for upholding

and reinforcing pre-existing gender norms. This research clarifies the persistence of conventional gender norms in Kazakhstan, which highlights the need of understanding the family's contextual influence on views toward dating.

Young people negotiating the challenges of dating frequently struggle with a contradiction between tradition and modernity as a result of the enduring impact of family values. Their romantic relationships may become complex due to this internal conflict. Although previous research, such as that of Umbetaliyeva et al., offers insightful qualitative information, a more thorough qualitative methodology is necessary to accurately represent the variety of dating experiences that people in Kazakhstan have. Such qualitative study is able to differentiate between the interpersonal and emotional components by which people are directly impacted by traditional gender stereotypes.

The research by Lever et al. (2015) and De Meyer et al. (2017) add to the knowledge already available on gender roles and dating customs in Kazakhstan by offering a more comprehensive contextual understanding of the changing dynamics in the country. Although Khairullayeva et al. (2022) and Kan (2023) draw attention to the distinctive features of Kazakhstan's dating scene and the worldwide similarities in gender norms, Lever et al.'s observations about evolving financial duties go against the accepted norms. This raises questions about whether young adults in Kazakhstan are questioning gender norms in the same way. A significant contrast with the public sphere is provided by Kan's (2023) investigation of gender expectations, particularly in the private sector, which highlights the variety of impacts on dating dynamics. According to De Meyer et al. (2017), Lever et al.'s discoveries on changing dating dynamics raise concerns about how Kazakhstan's behaviors match with progressive public beliefs compared to the survival of conventional standards in private life.

Studies consisting of Sakalli-Ugurlu (2003) and Dunlap et al. (2019), which emphasize socioeconomic and cultural factors, provide depth to our knowledge of how dating dynamics are evolving. The distinctive viewpoint of Dunlap et al. about women in STEM fields is relevant to Kazakhstan, where dating choices are influenced by women's career choices. Understanding these connections to cultural and socioeconomic factors improves our understanding of gender norms in Kazakhstan's specific context. Nevertheless, more intersectional research is necessary to fully understand the complex interactions between many aspects of identity that influence dating behaviors in this situation.

Theoretical Framework

It is useful to incorporate Ann Swidler's idea of a "cultural toolkit" into the study's theoretical framework in order to enhance the examination of dating customs in Kazakhstan. According to Swidler's idea, culture offers a repertory of behaviors, aptitudes and styles from which people choose various components to build their action plans (Swidler, 1986). It can help to research how people maintain complicated romantic and social relationships in a setting as culturally varied as Kazakhstan. A diverse range of cultural influences, including indigenous nomadic customs, Soviet legacies and growing globalization influences, characterize Kazakh culture. Every one of these levels adds unique instruments to people's cultural toolboxes. For example, traditional Kazakh values place a strong emphasis on community solidarity and respect for elders, which may have an impact on expectations for family involvement in dating and marriage decisions.

In order to manage their romantic life, young adults in Kazakhstan can choose from these several cultural scripts. For instance, one could stick to traditional values by permitting family

members to have an opinion in the partner chosen or still embrace contemporary principles by promoting equality in the partnership. Numerous factors which includes education level, upbringing in an urban or rural area and exposure to wider global media, can greatly influence the selection and application of these cultural tools.

A basis for comprehending how social interactions create social phenomena in particular cultural contexts is provided by social constructionism. It presents the point that social interaction and knowledge exchange are continuous processes that shape reality and can differ greatly among societies and cultural contexts (Burr & Dick, 2017). In their study of social constructionism, Burr and Dick (2017) present the theory that gender norms are changing and dynamically shaped by historical and cultural contexts rather than being fixed. According to the theoretical viewpoint of social constructionism, a society's members continuously engage and negotiate with one another and shape multiple aspects of social reality. This viewpoint provides an understanding through which to examine the ways in which Kazakhstan, which is a nation balancing its global influences and Soviet heritage, combine to define dating standards. It promotes investigating the ways where modern and traditional components interact by influencing the flexibility of gender norms in Kazakhstan dating culture. Gender roles and dating conventions in Kazakhstan are not static. Rather, they are constantly formed and reshaped using interactions mediated by cultural tools. This may be better understood by applying social constructionism to the framework of the cultural toolkit. According to this theory, it becomes noticeable that young Kazakhs knowingly create the cultural scripts that surround their dating behaviors. As people adjust their identities and relationships in response to shifting societal norms and outside forces, these dynamic scripts are subject to change.

The growing role of women in Kazakhstani society is consistent with Gelling's (2013) focus on gender equality, power relations and the value of women's viewpoints. The progression of gender equality in Kazakhstan is evident in the evolving dating landscape, as women are progressively expressing their opinions and questioning conventional gender roles. When Gelling's observations are applied to Kazakhstan, they provide insight into the dating scene's empowerment of women and further our knowledge of gender dynamics. Feminist viewpoints, for example, could be applied to examine how dating practices in Kazakhstan are influenced by cultural standards of masculinity and femininity. Modern tools that promote gender equality and shared duties are contrasted with traditional ones that insist that males should be the main decision-makers and financial contributors. Feminist theory focuses on the ways in which people use these strategies to negotiate their power dynamics in romantic relationships by choosing to either meet or reject standard gender norms.

Eshetu's (2017) study of cultural relativism emphasizes the significance of understanding how societal norms and values affect moral standards. He draws attention to the significant influence that society norms and values have on moral standards by focusing on cultural relativism. This perspective enables a detailed investigation of how many cultural components impact dating conventions in Kazakhstan, a country with significant cultural influences. It becomes essential to comprehend the particular cultural settings that shape the moral foundation of dating behaviors. Applying cultural relativism to the study of dating customs involves an approach that actively interacts with the local environment. This involves gathering information using techniques that let people share their opinions and experiences without forcing them to adhere to established ideals. Instead of supposing, for example, that everyone aspires to the foreign ideals of romantic love, I should investigate the values expressed by young Kazakh

people and analyze them in the context of Kazakh culture. Through demonstrating the ways in which meanings and behaviors are socially produced within particular cultural contexts, cultural relativism contributes to strengthening the fundamental principles of social constructionism. Dating norms in Kazakhstan are created by a distinct combination of social interactions and cultural influences, as it highlights that what is seen as "normal" or "appropriate" in a certain culture might not apply to another.

Using these theories in combination requires developing qualitative research methods which can demonstrate the complex nature of choosing and using cultural tools. Interviews can be aimed at examining people's perceptions in romantic relationships. Possible studies include how participants describe their ideal dating practices, what traditional norms they value and how they handle conflicts between traditional and contemporary expectations.

Methodology

Thematic synthesis presented in James and Angela's (2018) work is a method for systematically analyzing and synthesizing qualitative research data. It involves multiple processes, some of them intersect, such as line-by-line coding, the construction of descriptive themes and the generation of analytical themes. This may involve grouping responses from interviews or surveys in which people express their expectations and experiences about gender norms in heterosexual dating in Kazakhstan. Beyond descriptive themes, thematic synthesis produces analytical themes. This is where the method can be useful for the study. I could construct on the descriptive themes, for example, cultural developments or generational variations as contributing factors to affecting gender norms. Thematic synthesis allows me to put

the study into a theoretical framework. In my case, it helps me to investigate how conventional gender norms are evolving.

Research Design

Research Sample, Recruitment and Feasibility

The literature review is based on general information and provides understanding of the complexities of dating customs and traditional gender norms in Kazakhstan and the situation in other countries. In this research, it is done in more detail in the conditions of Kazakhstan in order to understand personally from the participants what expectations they highlight and how they perceive them. Qualitative research techniques were applied, which are appropriate for gathering rich, narrative data, such as semi-structured interviews, to fully capture their ideas. Using this method is more effective, as it help to obtain more detailed information and can provide a more comprehensive picture for research about the situation of dating in Kazakhstan.

Participants were chosen from the two big cities of the country, Astana and Almaty, where dating is more extensive. This provides information that is more accurate than if focus will be only on small cities, where the information can be more localized, limiting my research. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 make up the majority of the study sample, with an emphasis on heterosexual cisgender males and women. This decision was made on purpose since these people make up a sizable section of the population and because dating experiences have a major influence on how they perceive the world and behave. 6 participants were selected. 3 of them are cisgender heterosexual men, the 3 are cisgender heterosexual women who have been dating actively recently. There are no restrictions on selection by ethnicity or race as long as the participants are citizens of Kazakhstan. Those interested can participate in the research on a

volunteer basis and can withdraw from the study at any time they wish. Snowball sampling was used in order to find participants for the research. For Almaty, I reached out to people in my network who could be interested and who might be able to recommend possible volunteers. Frequent updates have been given on the status of the study. Ensuring ethical concerns and preserving participant privacy and permission are crucial aspects of the procedure. Within the age group of my research, young adults, dating norms are popular topics. When people expressed their desire to participate in the research, we moved to Telegram, where, firstly, there were questions to see if they fit the criteria the research needed. Information about those who responded keeps confidential and will not be made public, regardless of whether they meet the criteria or not. Interviews can take place both online and offline. Before conducting an interview, written consent was obtained. For an offline interview, a location and time convenient for the participant was selected. I tried to find a comfortable and private place in order to ensure confidentiality. The online interview was held via Zoom. Audio recording was made with the consent of the participant. In Zoom, I made sure that the participant had hidden their name before starting the recording. Initially, I believed that turning on the camera was important for good quality interviews. Since this is necessary for better understanding between me and the respondent. However, some of the participants preferred a disabled camera as a more comfortable way to express themselves. According to respondents, they were able to think and speak out loud their answers to questions without pressure. As a result, all participants were notified of the recording, while participants with the camera turned on were additionally informed in advance that the video recording was deleted immediately after the interview and only the audio recording was retained after the participant's consent.

Notes during the interview were made in a Word document and are stored on my personal laptop, where only I, the researcher, have access to it. Word synchronization with my Microsoft account is disabled to ensure that all information is stored in one place. For each participant there is their own Word document, where I made the notes and did transcription with coding after the audio recording. Participants were signed as "Participant 1, Participant 2, etc. " and nicknames.

Data Analysis Plan and Procedures

I'll approach the methodical analysis of qualitative data by James and Angela. In order to identify trends and themes, interview transcripts were coded either open or line-by-line. The goal while creating descriptive themes was to extract the key points of the replies from the participants. Based on the themes found, the replies was divided into groups to start the coding process. Arranging the data was done in a methodical manner using manual techniques. The main goal while analyzing the coded data was to find patterns and links between and within individuals. It is to identify the similarities and contrasts that exist in Kazakhstani dating experiences, attitudes and expectations. By thoroughly examining reaction variances and contextual elements that impact dating standards during the process, this analysis provides a comprehensive summary that highlights the major conclusions, linkages and themes that my perspective has discovered.

Ethical considerations

There is a chance that confidentiality will be compromised by taking part in this research project, however significant efforts were taken to reduce this risk. It is important to point out that participants in this study are invited voluntarily and they are free to discontinue participation at

any time without suffering any consequences. Regardless of whether a volunteer satisfies the study's requirements, the information they provide is treated with the highest confidentiality and kept private. A written consent procedure was followed prior to conducting interviews which emphasized the voluntary nature of participation. In-depth details on the study's objectives, methods, possible dangers and expected advantages were provided to participants. Participants were fully aware that they are free to choose not to participate in the study at any time and that doing so will not have any negative consequences.

Participants are identified by tags (e.g., "Participant 1") or were replaced by nicknames in order to protect their privacy and anonymity. I can ensure that participation and personal details are kept confidential. Only data that is important for the study were presented, which includes age, gender orientation (being heterosexual) and whether they are citizens of Kazakhstan. These data are not unique and do not reveal the identity of the participants in the study. Notes during the interview were made in a Word document and were stored on my personal laptop, where only I have access to it. Everything is kept in my laptop. Audio recordings were made with the consent of the participant. Audio recordings of the interview are permitted to the researcher and research advisor. The transcripts of the audio files wouldn't be used for any personal reasons and can be deleted at the request of the participant in the case of his withdrawal from the study. After audio recordings were made, transcriptions with coding were done. The purpose of this methodical approach is to protect participant privacy and adhere to ethical research standards.

To sum up, in this study it was demonstrated how important it is to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality. Throughout the study process, the voluntary character of involvement is emphasized and every measure is taken to reduce the possibility of a confidentiality violation. To confirm the ethics of the research, I made a request to the

Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) and received an approval. The effort is based on ethical standards that guide research and emphasizes the value of respecting the people who participate in it and contribute to knowledge.

The capstone investigates the complex structure of dating traditions among young adults in Kazakhstan. This data analysis discusses how gender norms—both traditional and modern—affect dating behaviors, attitudes and interactions is my major objective by showing perspectives of the interview participants. I wanted to obtain an understanding of changing dynamics and how conventional gender roles persist in a society that is rapidly changing on both a social and cultural level. There were conducted eight interviews to get a variety of viewpoints which were divided the results into the sections.

Changing Dating Dynamics

Traditional ideas about what men and women should do are still prevalent in Kazakhstan. According to a Sarsembayeva public opinion survey, most participants associated women's duties more with taking care of their households and families than with participating in the political and economic arenas. It's significant to note that women were more likely than men (25%), with 39% holding this belief (ADB, 2018). The concept of a move away from conventional gender norms and toward more contemporary, equal relationships is one common subject. Because males are typically expected to start dates and handle finances during them, this conventional viewpoint has a big impact on dating practices. Nevertheless these established norms are starting to change due to the impact of contemporary gender norms, which has led to a complicated interaction between outdated practices and contemporary ideals. Of course, determination does not imply actuality:

“what I noticed... 50 to 50... there is no such thing in Kazakhstan yet, it seems to me that this will not happen now. Probably it is more, as they say, “my money is my money, your money is our money”... shift is not to 50 to 50 or would be 70 to 30 and it’s precisely in terms of responsibilities that delegation of tasks.”

This means that even if there is a change from traditional values to more modern ones, where there is a greater preponderance towards gender equality, the participants still do not feel that the division of responsibilities regarding the date can not be equal or only approaches it, at best. These long-standing conventions have been called into debate, as a result of growing urbanization, increasing educational attainment and female participation in the workforce. It is possible to better understand these changes more fully by using theoretical frameworks. A framework that fits with this description is social constructionism. It claims that social interactions and cultural norms shape gender roles rather than their being crucial or permanent. This viewpoint states that shifting society's opinions and principles are accountable for the changes in gender norms and relationships.

Participants point out that respect for one another and equal involvement are valued in today's gender norms. They place a strong emphasis on the necessity of shared accountability and decision-making to guarantee pleasant interpersonal dynamics. The participants talk on how dating etiquette has changed as a result of contemporary gender stereotypes. For instance, before the event, confirmation and contact are anticipated, along with a discussion of practical matters like transportation and dress code. Also an area in which contemporary rules are apparent is assertiveness in dating relationships. Particularly young women are taking greater control of their dating life and being more forthright from the start about what they need and want.

"It seems to me that now there are girls who can immediately express everything about themselves and can immediately show who they are to not waste time. If on the first date something is already wrong, they can remove this person from your life all at once"

This statement illustrates how, in contrast to more conventional dating methods when women would have been expected to be more restrained, there is an expanding respect for transparency and directness. Despite the fact that before this there was no lack of choice regarding a dating partner and, in principle, choosing a partner, there was still a norm in which a female was more limited in her open interest in finding a relationship. Regarding now, participants indicate a desire for honest communication on a date, with both parties demonstrating a sincere interest in one another and avoiding subjects like politics or marriage too soon.

Participants also admit how modern gender standards in dating affect financial matters. A major change that has taken place is the expectation of financial contributions on dates. Young adults in Kazakhstan are increasingly questioning the custom that males should always cover the expenses of dating. This change is especially noticeable among younger generations that support gender parity. The study's participants had conflicting opinions on this modification. "Well, it turns out about finance, they can be not agreed with women in advance," remarked a female participant. "If there is a man like this, they (women) understand they will pay for her at the same time." This phrase captures a transitional period in which males are still expected to pay or the discussion about financial contributions can also be opened up in other cases and becomes increasingly complex. Participants also point out that although there are still prevailing conventional norms, women are more seen as financially independent individuals who make

their own dating decisions. Men and women alike will have more autonomy and flexibility in making decisions as a result of this trend toward financial independence.

“Etiquette” Norms

During the interviews, very often when there were discussions regarding expectations before and during dates, the participants talked about the obligation of “etiquette”, which implied a very interesting point of view. The participants tried to hide their points regarding traditional gender norms by using the word "etiquette." It was believed that good dating etiquette demonstrated people's regard for comfort and norms, particularly related to gender, as well as their respect for cultural customs. Participants mentioned that good manners foster communication, respect and understanding between couples, all of which can enhance a successful dating experience. I observed that conventional dating norms, which they collectively refer to as etiquette norms, continue to dominate Kazakh dating society. These standards frequently involve acts of respect and politeness, particularly from men toward women. Paying for meals or activities, pulling out seats, opening doors and exhibiting other acts of chivalry are a few examples. "I expect that firstly they will feed me deliciously and well and also provide me with safety so that I feel comfortable and not worry about something happening," a female participant highlights the traditional role of the man as both provider and protector. "Also, how he will behave. Yes, for example during a date what are you waiting for let's say that the door is opened so that he won't be rude to the staff who will work with us.". This comment highlights the traditional etiquette standards that still hold valid, emphasizing the expectation that men will behave in a way that reassures the woman of her decision. “Etiquette” behaviors, in fact, are deeply embedded in conventional ideas of masculinity and femininity and go beyond simple politeness. Feminist theory questions the power systems that are reinforced by the traditional

gender roles that are frequently reflected in dating etiquette. Feminist analysis may highlight the ways in which Kazakh culture views etiquette as an expression of cultural values and respect and how these norms support gendered expectations and inequality. Certain norms such as men covering the cost of dates or opening doors as a sign of chivalry, can be interpreted as more than just being respectful. It can be practices that uphold men's responsibilities as guardians and providers which place women in submissive or dependent roles.

When it was discussed how men should take the initiative, one participant said:

"Well, I don't expect much, I guess or it's probably some kind of like my norm that ... initiative from a girl is not so necessary or I think it's preferable... but if it's really not there, then for me it's normal, probably."

This reflects a changing stage in gender expectations where established standards are being reevaluated but still have a lot of effect. It also shows a nuanced view where female initiative is valued but not necessary. This phrase from an interview participant is an important part for analysis, because it indicates the presence of certain traditional norms or the participants also indicate another situation when more active interest on the part of the female partner is added to the preferences. In accordance with the cultural toolkit theory, people in Kazakhstan actively choose from a variety of accessible cultural resources to manage their dating life rather than passively accepting established cultural scripts. A cultural norm that serves as a tool in the social interaction of dating is the assumption that men ought to initiate dates and make choices. It has its roots in traditional gender norms, where males are frequently viewed as relationship leaders or decision-makers.

So conventional gender norms significantly influence the expectations around dating manners. Etiquette rules can change based on a person's upbringing, cultural background and personal preferences. Participants stressed that although basic rules of etiquette are generally recognized in Kazakh society, people's perceptions and applications of these standards may vary based on their own experiences and ideals.

In summary, it can be concluded that "etiquette" is more than just a set of strict rules; it has the power to change societal norms. Despite its roots in traditional ideas about dating behavior, these standards also offer an opportunity to reach for those who find it difficult to adjust to the drastic shift toward more contemporary gender norms. That is, people can incorporate more contemporary viewpoints into classic "etiquette" rules. Considering that etiquette is not just clear rules to follow, it can also be concluded that for a society that is not ready for drastic changes and there may be resistance, it can relieve some of the strain on them to make decisions since "etiquette" takes on this obligation.

Navigating Gender Expectations

Interviews with participants provided an additional complicated picture of the ways in which contemporary and traditional gender norms interact and occasionally clash in the context of romantic relationships. The participants offered a variety of viewpoints that highlight the conflict between accepting contemporary gender standards and upholding traditional roles, mirroring larger shifts in society. The uncertainty that contemporary gender standards might bring into dating relationships was expressed by one participant:

"Under modern gender norms... boys mean guys have started to be more disrespectful towards women. They believe that they are on equal terms and can accordingly offend them in the same way as they conventionally make fun of each other on hard tons."

This statement reveals a misinterpretation of equality which associating fair treatment with tolerance for rudeness, which can lead to a decline in the quality of romantic relationships. The social constructionist lens may be used to understand this. This viewpoint enables us to recognize how newly defined definitions of gender equality might be misinterpreted in the context of interpersonal interactions. It also shows how gendered perceptions of social narratives about "equality" can lead to conflicts or affect interpersonal relationships.

Another respondent who struggled to differentiate between traditional and modern duties continued to expand on the uncertainty between the two:

"Well, traditional it's probably more when a girl is generally so quiet when she won't raise her eyes once again, somehow she won't even be able to say much if you invite her ... And more modern...this is how they say such full-fledged ones that is now... now I lost my thoughts... how would I describe traditional relationships and modern relationships..."

This response captures the ongoing negotiation and internal conflict people experience when trying to balance changing societal norms with their own expectations. Understanding this confusion as a reflection of the continuous process of social negotiation rather than as the result of people's inability to adapt can be made easier by social constructionism. People continuously modify their experiences and gender roles through interaction with new concepts, global influences and conventional norms.

There were participant who expressed their perspective on traditional compared to contemporary standards, echoing the desire for a balanced dating approach:

"Well, for me, traditional gender norms are probably, well, as it is directly said, gender roles based on tradition. This, for me, is, firstly, for some reason living with parents, this is possibly a woman's financial dependence on a man. A man, for example, is more financially responsible, more responsible for everyday life. So, for me, modern ones are probably when there is some kind of pure 50/50 deal, that is, each partner does their part equally and no one is dependent on anyone and everyone develops."

After conducting interviews with participants, I was able to understand that nevertheless everyone had a positive attitude towards modern gender norms developing in the country and they see this in the dating sphere. Women in particular support this, arguing that being closer to a more equal society allows for more freedom. However, what is surprising is that participants also agree that when it comes to dating dynamics, it also has the opposite effects, which is caused by the fact that with deeply ingrained traditional gender norms, there were clearly distinguishable roles for each gender. And participants prefer to follow roles that are already convenient for them, because there is life beyond dating and relationships. And their change does not work out in the best way for the participants. This implies that misunderstanding and different expectations between partners on dates may occur as a result of the blurring of established gender roles. It may not always be clear to people who should take the initiative when it comes to setting up and paying for dates, opening doors or making the first move toward physical contact when gender norms change. Genuine relationships might be damaged by this lack of clarity, which can cause awkwardness or misunderstandings during dating meetings. In order to avoid them, participants noted that actions like taking the initiative in dating were cited as part of

etiquette rather than in relation to gender roles. This is especially true when it comes to financial commitment while dating. However, it is worth noting that etiquette also has a basis in the form of patriarchal ideas.

Acceptance and Choice in Dating

In dating, according to participants, people may have contradictory expectations due to the need to live up to traditional cultural ideals and modern gender conventions. Women experience pressure to navigate cultural expectations of femininity, which is mostly connected to fitting into beauty standards and caring responsibilities while also asserting their individuality and financial liberty. Women's experiences balancing caregiving obligations and beauty standards with their desire for financial independence and uniqueness serve as an example of the complex ways in which gender norms are shaped by day-to-day experiences. A fuller understanding of how these expectations are actively understood and occasionally challenged by individuals rather than being imposed by culture is made possible by social constructionism.

Men may find it difficult to strike a balance between the conventions of chivalry and the contemporary ideas of equality, which can cause tension and concern about how to act on dates. Traditional gender standards have been strongly embedded in Kazakhstani culture for many centuries and the country has a rich cultural legacy. People used to traditional roles and expectations may oppose a quick shift to current gender standards. Particularly highlighting this were some participants who stated that they were raised in a conventional home and that's how they saw their future—in terms of dating as well as starting a family. Discussions about gender norms and dating typically presented a picture of acceptance and resistance. One participant discussed how dating customs are influenced by family traditions, "Traditions are something that

your parents introduce you to. Modern gender norms... Do they influence dating practice, that is how do you know it can be positive, negative or in general? " The question itself highlights the constant balancing act between long-standing traditions and the changing expectations brought forth by contemporary norms.

Nonetheless, my 18–25 year old participants do not exhibit resistance to more contemporary standards. These "mixed dynamics" illustrate how dating customs and gender norms are transforming in Kazakhstan culture, which is defined by an intricate interaction between modernity and tradition, generational shifts, specifically in gender norms. One individual mentioned the talks they had with their family when question: "But have you ever discussed dating and gender roles in Kazakhstan with friends or family members?" was asked. The answer was "...We sometimes discuss this with my brother about gender roles." These kinds of conversations show how open the younger generation is to redefining or talking about established notions about gender roles in the dating world.

Because many viewpoints are already starting to be accepted by Kazakhstani society, there are multiple perspectives and one does not preclude the existence of others. Conversely, every individual included experiences that contemporary standards have introduced the aspect of choice in choosing a partner and saying about desires, particularly for women. Despite the fact that there was a lack of options when it came to choosing a mate in the past and being free in their choice and interest, women were often more restricted in how publicly they could indicate their desire to date. Regarding the elder generation and the national expectations of society, this cannot be affirmed. My members do not include an older age category. This information was taken from the experience of communication between my participants and their parents or relatives regarding what their experience was with regards to dating and choosing a partner. This

comes with the explanation that the current perspective of young people can be adopted from the older generation.

Conclusion

Dating in Kazakhstan is changing and this provides an opportunity to look into broader societal changes about gender equality. Young adults who question and discuss traditional norms help progress society toward a more equal one or the research also shows that these changes are not smooth or widely accepted. But different groups experience different levels of acceptance and resistance depending on various factors. This study delicately examines the way modern and traditional gender norms influence dating behaviors among young adults in Kazakhstan. It illuminates the complex interaction that influences these individuals' experiences in dating. Moreover, reveals how these interconnected standards affect attitudes and actions through extensive interviews by providing insights into the changing social and cultural landscape. The results provide understanding of the challenges of attempting romantic relationships in the face of changing norms and providing interesting perspectives into Kazakhstan's complicated cultural identity. The significance of pursuing these topics further is demonstrated by this research, which additionally contributes to a larger conversation on gender, culture and modernity.

Further studies into these processes should continue with a specific emphasis on the ways in which various variables including urban vs rural environments, level of education and exposure to global media shapes people's attitudes and behaviors around dating and gender norms. This will help to create strategies to support more inclusive and equitable social practices and offer more understanding into the processes through which gender norms are changing in Kazakhstani society.

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