

**Exploring the Role and Intersection of Gender and Multilingualism in Shaping
Career Choice of Kazakhstani Undergraduate University Students**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Multilingual Education

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

May, 2025

Word count: 23031

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Acknowledgments

I want to thank my family: my father Oleg, my mother Gulnash, my little brother Daniyar, my little sister Damira, and my grandparents Khamza and Azhar, and Nurlan and Shura. Without them I would not have come so far. Love and miss all of them.

I would also like to express my gratitude to NUGSE for this purely wonderful experience I had during past two years. I will remember every professor, administrative staff, and my groupmates with special warmth.

Abstract

Exploring the Role and Intersection of Gender and Multilingualism in Shaping Career Choice of Kazakhstani Undergraduate University Students

Kazakhstan's trilingual policy and evolving gender dynamics provide a unique context for examining how linguistic and social identities shape career trajectories. Despite formal commitments to multilingualism and gender equality, existing literature tends to treat these dimensions in isolation, leaving a gap in understanding their intersection, particularly among youth. This study explores how gender and multilingualism influence first-year undergraduates' career choices in one Kazakhstani university. The central problem addressed is the lack of research on how students' multilingual repertoires and gender identities interact to affect their professional aspirations, especially during early career decision-making. The study aimed to investigate: (1) what role gender plays in shaping students' career choices, (2) how multilingual language repertoires shape these choices, and (3) how gender and multilingualism jointly influence career choices. Based on feminist theory (Butler, 1990), sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989), the study used a qualitative, instrumental case study. Ten first-year students (five male, five female) were purposively sampled and interviewed in Kazakh, Russian, or English. Data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The findings revealed nine key themes across the three research questions. Male students were encouraged to pursue STEM disciplines and leadership roles, while female students were directed to pursue caregiving or linguistically intensive, lower-status careers. Despite its uneven benefits, multilingualism, especially English proficiency, was greatly valued. Female students' multilingualism was undervalued in high-prestige sectors despite their high language learning involvement. In contrast, male multilingualism was associated with competence and upward mobility.

This demonstrates that language and gender reinforce one other through social structures, institutional practices, and internalized expectations. The research contributes to scholarly discussions in gender studies, multilingual education, and career development by offering a contextually grounded, intersectional analysis of how identity influences opportunity.

Keywords: gender, multilingualism, career choice, Kazakhstan, feminism, intersectionality

Андатпа

Қазақстандық Бакалавриат Студенттерінің Мамандық Таңдауын Қалыптастырудағы Гендер және Көптілділіктің Рөлі мен Өзара Байланысын Зерттеу

Қазақстанның үш тілді саясаты мен дамып келе жатқан гендерлік динамика тілдік және әлеуметтік бірегейліктің мансаптық траекторияларға қалай әсер ететінін зерттеу үшін бірегей контекст жасайды. Көптілділік пен гендерлік теңдікке қатысты ресми міндеттемелерге қарамастан, қолданыстағы әдебиеттерде бұл аспектілер оқшауланған түрде қарастырылады. Әсіресе жастар арасында, бұл олардың қарым-қатынасын түсінуде алшақтық қалдырады. Бұл зерттеуде гендерлік және көптілділік Қазақстандық университеттердің бірінің бірінші курс студенттерінің мамандық таңдауына қалай әсер ететіні зерттелді. Мен кездестірген басты мәселе-студенттердің көптілді лингвистикалық арсеналы мен гендерлік сәйкестігі олардың кәсіби ұмтылыстарына, әсіресе мансаптық шешім қабылдаудың алғашқы кезеңдерінде қалай әсер ететіні туралы зерттеулердің болмауы.

Зерттеудің мақсаты: (1) студенттердің мамандық таңдауында гендердің рөлі қандай екенін, (2) көптілді лингвистикалық арсенал осы таңдауға қалай әсер ететінін және (3) гендерлік және көптілділік бірге қосылып мамандық таңдауға қалай әсер ететінін анықтау. Феминистік теорияға (Батлер, 1990), Әлеуметтік-Мәдени Теорияға (Выготский, 1978) және Қиылысу теориясына (Креншоу, 1989) негізделген зерттеу нақты жағдайларға сапалы инструменталды талдауды қолданды. Бірінші курстың он студенті (бес ер адам және бес әйел) мақсатты түрде іріктеліп, қазақ, орыс немесе ағылшын тілдерінде сұхбат берді. Деректер Браун мен Кларктың (2006) әдістемесін қолдана отырып, тақырыптық түрде талданды.

Нәтижелер үш зерттеу сұрағында тоғыз негізгі тақырыпты анықтады. Ер студенттерге STEM пәндерін оқып, көшбасшылық функцияларды орындау ұсынылды, ал әйел студенттерге бала күтімі немесе мәртебесі төмен лингвистикалық қарқынды мамандықтар ұсынылды. Біркелкі емес артықшылықтарға қарамастан, көптілділік, әсіресе ағылшын тілін білу жоғары бағаланды. Беделді оқу орындарында әйел студенттердің көптілділігі олардың тіл үйренуге белсенді қатысқанына қарамастан бағаланбады. Ал ер студенттердің көптілділігі, керісінше, құзыреттілік пен мансаптық ұтқырлықпен байланысты болды.

Бұл, тіл мен гендердің бір-бірін әлеуметтік құрылымдар, институционалдық тәжірибелер және үйренген үміттер арқылы күшейтетінін көрсетеді. Бұл зерттеу гендерлік зерттеулер, көптілді білім беру және мансаптық өсу саласындағы ғылыми пікірталастарға ықпал етеді, сәйкестіктің мүмкіндіктерге қалай әсер ететінін контекстке негізделген, сектораралық талдауды ұсынады.

Түйінді сөздер: гендер, көптілділік, мамандық таңдау, Қазақстан, феминизм, қиылысушылық

Аннотация

Изучение Роли и Взаимосвязи Гендера и Многоязычия в Формировании Выбора Профессии Казахстанскими Студентами Бакалавриата

Трехязычная политика Казахстана и развивающаяся гендерная динамика создают уникальный контекст для изучения того, как языковая и социальная идентичность влияют на карьерные траектории. Несмотря на официальные обязательства в отношении многоязычия и гендерного равенства, в существующей литературе эти аспекты рассматриваются изолированно, что оставляет пробел в понимании их взаимосвязи, особенно среди молодежи. В этом исследовании исследуется, как гендер и многоязычие влияют на выбор профессии первокурсниками одного из казахстанских университетов. Основная проблема, с которой я столкнулась, заключается в отсутствии исследований о том, как многоязычный лингвистический арсенал студентов и гендерная идентичность взаимодействуют, влияя на их профессиональные устремления, особенно на ранних этапах принятия решений о карьере.

Целью исследования было выяснить: (1) какую роль играет гендер в выборе студентами профессии, (2) как многоязычный лингвистический арсенал влияет на этот выбор и (3) как гендер и многоязычие совместно влияют на выбор профессии. В исследовании, основанном на феминистской теории (Батлер, 1990), социокультурной теории (Выготский, 1978) и теории интерсекциональности (Креншоу, 1989), использовался качественный инструментальный анализ конкретных ситуаций. Десять студентов-первокурсников (пять мужчин и пять женщин) были целенаправленно отобраны и опрошены на казахском, русском или английском языках. Данные были проанализированы тематически с использованием методики Брауна и Кларка (2006). Полученные результаты выявили девять ключевых тем в трех исследовательских вопросах. Студентам-мужчинам было предложено изучать дисциплины STEM и

выполнять руководящие функции, в то время как студенткам-женщинам было предложено заниматься уходом за детьми или лингвистически интенсивными профессиями с более низким статусом. Несмотря на неравные преимущества, многоязычие, особенно знание английского, высоко ценилось. В престижных учебных заведениях многоязычие студенток недооценивалось, несмотря на их более активное участие в изучении языка. А многоязычие мужчин, напротив, ассоциировалось с компетентностью и карьерной мобильностью.

Это демонстрирует, что язык и гендер усиливают друг друга через социальные структуры, институциональные практики и усвоенные ожидания. Исследование способствует научным дискуссиям в области гендерных исследований, многоязычного образования и карьерного роста, предлагая контекстуально обоснованный, межсекторальный анализ того, как идентичность влияет на возможности.

Ключевые слова: гендер, многоязычие, выбор профессии, Казахстан, феминизм, интерсекциональность

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study investigates the intersection of gender and multilingualism in shaping the career choices made by undergraduate students in Kazakhstan, a multilingual, post-Soviet country that has experienced significant sociolinguistic and educational transformations. Globally, multilingualism is increasingly associated with greater employability, access to transnational labor markets, and improved cognitive flexibility (Bialystok, 2008; Dewaele & Li Wei, 2012). Simultaneously, gender continues to influence how individuals access and perceive opportunities, especially in countries where traditional beliefs affect perceptions of suitable professional tasks. In Kazakhstan, these dynamics intersect intricately as students maneuver through their multilingual competencies and gendered anticipations within an evolving information economy. This study aims to elucidate how these intersecting characteristics influence students' career choices.

Kazakhstan is officially recognized as a multilingual country. After Kazakhstan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the government implemented a trilingual policy that designates Kazakh as the official language, Russian as the medium for interethnic communication, and English as the language for international collaboration and global integration (Mikhailova et al., 2020). This strategy, in accordance with the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy (Стратегия “Казахстан-2050,” n.d.), has initiated comprehensive measures to enhance students' competency in all three languages from primary education through tertiary education.

In practice, multilingualism is not solely a governmental endeavor but a tangible experience for numerous young inhabitants of Kazakhstan, especially in urban areas. For example, Ahn and Smagulova (2020) reported that university students in Kazakhstan often switch among Kazakh, Russian, and English based on social context, audience, and goal.

Their multilingual linguistic repertoire—defined as the complete array of linguistic resources accessible to an individual—has evolved into both a cultural asset and a strategic resource for maneuvering through academic and professional chances (Blommaert & Backus, 2011).

Notwithstanding its advantages, the trilingual education approach imposes excessive demands on students. In particular, students from urban, well-resourced schools may attain high proficiency in all three languages, whereas those from rural or low-income areas may experience little exposure to English or advanced Kazakh education (Smagulova, 2008). Inequalities in multilingual language repertoires may exacerbate disparities in access to competitive careers, particularly in fields like global commerce, law, or diplomacy, where proficiency in English or Russian is frequently requisite (Priya et al., 2023). Recent international research indicates that multilingual ability is associated with expanded job options and more employment flexibility (Pietrzyk-Kowalec, 2023). However, only a few studies have investigated the interplay between linguistic abilities and gendered expectations in influencing employment choices, especially within the Central Asian environment.

In Kazakhstan, perceptions of language are closely linked to national identity, modernization, and social mobility. Kazakh is regarded as a symbol of national heritage and ethnic identity, Russian serves as a functional language for interethnic and bureaucratic communication, while English is viewed as a conduit to global opportunities and elite status (Karabassova, 2020). These symbolic links influence how students position themselves professionally, especially when selecting career pathways where particular languages denote cultural capital. Nonetheless, these decisions do not develop in isolation; they are frequently interpreted through gendered perspectives. For instance, female students may be directed towards “soft” professions such as education or translation,

which value multilingualism but hardly confer leadership opportunities, whereas male students may be guided towards technical fields where even minimal multilingual proficiency can elevate status and employability (Mendikulova & Mukhamadiyeva, 2019; Radke & Versloot, 2024).

Gender stereotypes in Kazakhstan persist in influencing students' educational and career paths. Despite national policies explicitly promoting gender equality, such as the Concept of Family and Gender Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030 (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2016, p. 5), which points out equal opportunities in education and employment, and international reports like the OECD's Gender Policy Delivery in Kazakhstan (2017, p. 42) that emphasize institutional commitments to eliminating barriers, deeply rooted attitudes regarding gender roles continue to endure. These attitudes, especially in household decision-making and professional expectations (Temirzakhkyzy et al., 2023), indicate a disparity between governmental objectives and society norms. Temirzakhkyzy et al. (2023) observe that, despite policy frameworks advocating for gender-neutral career advising, families frequently direct students towards traditionally gendered professions, highlighting the necessity for more robust enforcement of equality provisions specified in both documents. These standards frequently result in occupational segregation, with men predominating in fields such as engineering and economics, while women are disproportionately represented in social work, education, and linguistics. The advantages of multilingualism may be disproportionately allocated in this context. Studies indicate that women's linguistic competencies are frequently undervalued in male-dominated fields, whereas men attain greater acknowledgment for comparable capabilities, hence perpetuating systemic gender disparities (Butler, 1990; Calafato & Tang, 2019). Radke and Versloot (2024) demonstrate

how language and gender overlap in digital communication, reinforcing broader social hierarchies—a pattern presumably mirrored in professional situations.

The Kazakhstani situation exemplifies broader worldwide patterns in multilingual, post-Soviet, and postcolonial contexts. Research from Central Asia and Eastern Europe has shown that that linguistic capital is stratified and gendered, with access to prestigious occupations being influenced by language ideology and gender norms (Peshkova & Thibault, 2022). In multilingual cultures, the use of language repertoires by individuals is influenced not only by their proficiency but also by the social valuation of various languages and the entities that ascribe such value. Given the background, the present study focuses on the interplay between gender and multilingualism and their role on career choices of undergraduate students in a society striving to be both conventional and globally competitive.

Problem Statement

Although many studies have explored gendered career expectations and the advantages of multilingualism in cognitive and professional spheres, the intersection of these factors remains inadequately examined—especially concerning the career aspirations of undergraduate students in multilingual and post-Soviet settings like Kazakhstan.

Research indicates that multilingual individuals demonstrate improved cognitive flexibility and cross-cultural adaptability, characteristics that can facilitate a wider range of professional options (Dewaele & Li Wei, 2012; Gallardo-Echenique et al., 2021). Research on gender and professional development revealed that conventional norms frequently direct women towards caregiving or linguistically soft professions, while males are steered toward leadership or technical positions (Bloodhart et al., 2020; Temirzakhkyzy et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the majority of these studies predominantly concentrate on working professionals or investigate multilingualism and gender independently. For example,

Calafato and Tang (2019) investigated the impact of gendered language ideologies on occupational mobility in multilingual cultures, although they did not specifically analyze students' formative decision-making during their university years. There is insufficient empirical research examining how undergraduate students, especially those in the process of forming their professional identities, navigate the combined effects of multilingual language repertoires and gender norms in conceptualizing their future jobs.

This disparity is particularly significant in Kazakhstan, where, as already noted, the national trilingual education program seeks to develop fluency in Kazakh, Russian, and English to enhance global competitiveness. Access to these languages is inequitable, and their social connotations are distinctly stratified—Kazakh is associated with cultural identification, Russian with interethnic utility, and English with modernization and elite standing (Karabassova, 2020; Radke & Versloot, 2024; Smagulova, 2008;). When subjected to enduring gender norms that persistently shape university students' career paths, these linguistic processes can exacerbate inequities.

Although extensive research has investigated the distinct influence of gender on career aspirations (Bloodhart et al., 2020; Lazarides & Lauermann, 2019) and the cognitive, social, and economic advantages of multilingualism (Bialystok, 2008; Dewaele & Li Wei, 2012), only a few studies have analyzed the interplay between these factors in determining career choices. Even fewer have concentrated on undergraduate students, who are in the initial phases of developing their professional identities. Instead, previous studies have mostly focused on employed individuals or examines gender and multilingualism as separate factors, neglecting to explore how young adults understand and manage the convergence of these identities in their early career development (Calafato & Tang, 2019). The absence of cohesive explanation is particularly evident in post-Soviet, multilingual

cultures such as Kazakhstan, where language policy and gender ideology are experiencing substantial transformations.

This study therefore aims to address the insufficient research on the intersection of gender and multilingual language repertoires in influencing the career choices of Kazakhstani undergraduate students, who are navigating linguistic hierarchies and societal gender norms in a rapidly evolving economy. This is important because, without such understanding, educational institutions may neglect the intricate obstacles encountered by students, thereby resulting in equality policies that are misaligned with students' actual experiences. Accordingly, this study addresses this gap by contributing to discussions in multilingual education, gender studies, and career choice, in order to provide an empirically grounded, context-specific perspective on the intersection of language and gender in shaping career goals during a crucial formative period.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

As explained above, this study aims to investigate the role of gender and multilingualism—both separately and in combination—on the career decisions of undergraduate students in Kazakhstan. This study emphasizes how students conceptualized, chose, and justified their future career trajectories at an early stage. The study specifically examines the intersection of cultural, societal, and institutional gender norms with students' multilingual language repertoires as they make decisions regarding their future careers.

The study seeks to comprehend the perceived benefits and limitations of multilingualism for various genders within the trilingual education context of Kazakhstan. It attempts to clarify the interaction between students' gendered identities and multilingual repertoire within a social context influenced by tradition, transition, and globalization. This study investigates the dynamics of undergraduate students, who are actively shaping their

professional identities, so addressing a gap in the existing literature that frequently emphasizes in-service professionals or treats language and gender as distinct domains.

The study is structured around the following three research questions:

- RQ1: What role does gender play in shaping students' career choices in Kazakhstan?
- RQ2: How does Kazakhstani students' multilingual language repertoire shape their career choices?
- RQ3: How do gender and multilingualism intersect to shape the career aspirations of Kazakhstani students?

Significance of the Study

This study has the capacity to provide significant benefits to individuals and groups across many sectors, including students, educators, policymakers, and researchers. First, the participants in this study may derive direct benefits from engaging in self-reflection regarding the impact of gender and multilingualism on their career decision-making. This introspective technique may enhance their clarity concerning aspirations and offer a profound understanding of the societal and cultural influences driving their professional trajectories. Through the analysis of these effects, participants may cultivate an enhanced knowledge of their distinct problems and opportunities, potentially guiding their academic and professional aspirations.

The findings can also provide university educators and administrators with significant insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by multilingual and gender-diverse students. These insights may facilitate the development of extensive career counseling initiatives and support programs specifically designed to meet the unique needs of these students. By cultivating an environment that acknowledges and supports the

varied experiences of students, educational institutions can significantly contribute to advancing equity and inclusion.

Policymakers and educational leaders may also find the research findings essential in developing efforts to promote gender equality and linguistic diversity in higher education. Research-informed strategies could mitigate systemic barriers and provide an equitable academic and professional environment for all students. By examining the impact of gender and multilingualism on professional goals, policymakers could enact targeted policies to equalize opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

Finally, the study is significant for academic researchers, offering a clear framework for further investigation into the relationship between gender, multilingualism, and professional advancement. The findings may spur future research in many cultural and language contexts, enhancing global understanding of the intersection of these factors. Furthermore, this study may enhance the current literature by providing empirical findings about the specific context of Kazakhstan, a locale that has been inadequately addressed in previous studies. This approach may provide fresh insights on the influence of cultural and linguistic contexts on career progression, enhancing global discussions on multilingualism and gender equity.

Overall, this study aims to yield practical insights that can enhance educational practices and policies, thereby benefiting a diverse array of stakeholders. This encompasses students, who achieve enhanced self-awareness; educators, who can adopt more inclusive methodologies; legislators, who can rectify disparities; and researchers, who can expand upon its results to advance the discipline.

Thesis Outline

This thesis includes six interrelated chapters report this study examining the intersection of gender and multilingualism in shaping the career goals of undergraduate

students in Kazakhstan. Chapter 1 outlines the research problem, objectives, questions, and importance, positioning the study within the framework of Kazakhstan's trilingual education policy and conventional gender norms. Chapter 2 integrates international and domestic research, incorporating feminist theory (Butler, 1990), sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) to establish a comprehensive theoretical framework. Chapter 3 outlines the qualitative instrumental case study design, encompassing participant recruitment, semi-structured interviews, and ethical issues. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the interaction between gender norms and multilingualism to choose career, emphasizing both problems and potential within the context of the study's theoretical frameworks. Chapter 6 consolidates findings, examines their significance for theory, policy, and practice, and proposes paths for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter explores and integrates existing literature to establish the theoretical framework for this study, which investigates the role of gender and multilingualism on career choices among Kazakhstani undergraduate students. The literature review is informed by three research questions:

- RQ1: What role does gender play in shaping students' career choices in Kazakhstan?
- RQ2: How does Kazakhstani students' multilingual language repertoire shape their career choices?
- RQ3: How do gender and multilingualism intersect to shape career aspirations?

The literature review critically analyzes essential themes in three domains, including the role of gender on career decision-making, the role of multilingualism on career trajectories, and the intersection of these two variables. The analysis introduced in this chapter is supported by pertinent theoretical frameworks, using feminist theory (Butler, 1990), sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989).

The chapter is structured into three main sections that correspond to the research topics of the study. Firstly, it examines literature pertinent to gender and career selection, encompassing conventional gender norms, gender roles, and structural obstacles. Secondly, it examines multilingualism and its cognitive, social, and professional ramifications in influencing individuals' prospects and identities. Third, it examines the synergistic impacts of gender and multilingualism, highlighting how intersecting social categories lead to disparate employment outcomes. The concluding section of the chapter explains the study's theoretical frameworks, synthesizing the chosen theories with the research questions.

Understanding Gender in Educational, Sociocultural, and Professional Settings

This part addresses the first research question: “What role does gender play in shaping students’ career choices in Kazakhstan?” This section is organized under the following subsections: a) defining gender in sociocultural contexts, b) gender norms and stereotypes in professional advancement, c) gender equality, equity, and mainstreaming in education.

Defining Gender in Sociocultural Contexts

Gender is commonly perceived not as a static biological trait but as a socially constructed identity, influenced by cultural, institutional, and interpersonal expectations (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). The formation of gender is fluid and contingent upon context, varying across temporal, cultural, and institutional frameworks. In Kazakhstan, gender roles are profoundly shaped by traditional cultural beliefs and patriarchal norms that dictate the appropriateness of employment for women and men (Naizabayeva, et al., 2022). Understanding gender as a social construct is essential for studying career decision-making, since it reports that choices are influenced by societal influences, familial expectations, and institutional frameworks rather than occurring in isolation.

This structure affects individuals’ perceptions of their own strengths and ambitions, including in relation to careers. Gendered professional conceptions are frequently absorbed at an early age, with women urged to seek professions in education, social work, or healthcare, while men are likely to be directed towards leadership or STEM-related industries (Khamzina et al., 2020). These standards are likely to be perpetuated through formal education and informal interactions, including teacher expectations, media portrayals, and familial guidance (Kalilayeva, 2020).

Gender Norms and Stereotypes in Professional Advancement

Gender norms frequently shape cultural assumptions around what defines “suitable” occupations for women and men. In post-Soviet countries such as Kazakhstan, women are often directed towards professions associated with caregiving, whereas leadership and prestigious disciplines continue to be predominantly male-dominated (Lazarides & Lauermann, 2019). These stereotypes are frequently associated with essentialist beliefs that men possess greater analytical or forceful qualities, while women exhibit more nurturing or empathic traits (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992). Thus, gender affects both the perceived availability of options and individuals’ self-assessment of their competence regarding those options (Correll, 2001, 2004).

The internalized perception of competence, known as self-assessment bias, carries substantial ramifications. For example, Correll (2001) reported that despite comparable performance in STEM-related tasks, men are more inclined to perceive themselves as competent, whereas women often underestimate their ability. This issue perpetuates gender segregation in professional selections and career paths.

Gender Equality, Equity, and Mainstreaming in Education

Initiatives to advance gender equality in education and work have developed essential concepts such as gender equality, gender equity and gender mainstreaming. Gender equality seeks to provide equal access to opportunities, while gender equity highlights the acknowledgment of diverse needs and the provision of customized support to address historical disadvantages (UNESCO, 2015). In education, gender mainstreaming means the methodical integration of gender perspectives across all facets of policy, curriculum, and pedagogy (UNESCO, 2020). However, as researchers such as Stromquist (2007) argue, these initiatives can remain superficial unless supported by structural and

cultural transformations that confront the profoundly entrenched gender hierarchies within educational systems.

Despite existing implementation gaps, Kazakhstan has formalized commitments to gender equality in key policy documents. The Concept of Family and Gender Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030 (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2016, p. 5) explicitly mandates equal access to education and professional opportunities for all genders, with specific measures to eliminate discriminatory practices in educational institutions and workplaces. The OECD's Gender Policy Delivery in Kazakhstan (2017, p. 42) recognizes these initiatives while stressing the necessity to tackle enduring inequalities, especially in STEM disciplines and leadership positions, by focused institutional reforms. Temirzakhkyzy et al. (2023) demonstrated that educational textbooks and pedagogical methods perpetuate gender stereotypes, frequently depicting women involved in home duties and males in professional or leadership capacities.

Understanding Multilingualism in Educational and Professional Settings

This section examines the second research question: What role does gender play in shaping students' career choices in Kazakhstan? It is organized under the following subsections: a) defining multilingualism, b) multilingualism in educational contexts and identity development, c) cognitive and social advantages of multilingualism, d) multilingual contexts and educational equity.

Defining Multilingualism

Multilingualism refers to the ability of individuals or groups of people to communicate in two or more languages, exhibiting albeit with varying levels of competency (Cenoz, 2013). It includes both individual multilingualism, characterized by a person's ability to speak many languages, and societal multilingualism, defined by the coexistence of various linguistic communities within an area (Aronin & Singleton, 2012).

Multilingualism is a dynamic phenomenon shaped by social, cognitive, and educational variables, significantly influencing cultural identity, educational institutions, and worldwide communication (European Parliament, 2017).

The examination of multilingualism revealed both advantages, including improved cognitive flexibility and intercultural competency, and obstacles such as language preservation and policy formulation (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). Research has demonstrated that multilingualism transcends the mere aggregation of several language systems, encompassing intricate connections between languages within the cognitive and social realms (“The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Multi-Competence,” 2016). In modern sociolinguistics, multilingualism is often examined via a poststructuralist perspective, acknowledging the flexible, contextual, and situational characteristics of language usage (Blommaert, 2010; Link, 2012).

Multilingualism in Educational Contexts and Identity Development

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in creating the multilingual behaviors and identities of students. Educational institutions function as venues for language socialization, where learners discern the languages that are esteemed and the relationship between language use and power, opportunity, and prestige (Duff, 2007). In Kazakhstan, multilingualism serves as both a linguistic asset and a symbol of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Students exhibiting advanced skill in English, Russian, and Kazakh are frequently regarded as more capable and internationally minded, influencing their future prospects.

Research indicates that multilingualism is closely linked to the formation of identity. Burck (2011) and Takahashi (2011) assert that language use is crucial in the construction and negotiation of individuals’ gendered and social identities. More specifically, Kazakhstani students may need to reconcile cultural expectations tied to Kazakh and Russian with the aspirational global identity associated with English fluency.

Cognitive and Social Advantages of Multilingualism

Multilingualism is linked to several cognitive advantages, such as enhanced problem-solving abilities, high mental flexibility, and heightened metalinguistic awareness (Bialystok, 2008; Dewaele & Li Wei, 2012). These cognitive benefits are especially pertinent in the realms of education and career preparedness, since they improve learners' adaptability and critical thinking—attributes highly esteemed in competitive employment marketplaces (Oliveira et al., 2017).

Besides cognitive benefits, multilingualism provides social and emotional advantages, including improved empathy, heightened cultural sensitivity, and superior interpersonal communication abilities (Dewaele & Li Wei, 2012). These attributes are vital in varied and multicultural workplaces, enhancing the ability of multilingual individuals to collaborate across linguistic and cultural divides (Language Service Bureau, n.d.).

Furthermore, multilingual proficiency correlates with enhanced career mobility and employability in globalized labor markets (Latukha et al., 2016). The ability of students to leverage their multilingualism is significantly influenced by linguistic hierarchy and institutional acknowledgment. For instance, whereas English fluency is frequently associated with prestigious employment, Kazakh or any minority languages may not provide equivalent professional benefits (Radke & Versloot, 2024).

Multilingual Contexts and Educational Equity

Although multilingualism is regarded as an advantage, it exists within contexts of unequal power dynamics. Languages are not uniformly esteemed, and access to multilingual education is frequently differentiated by socioeconomic status, location, and ethnicity (Flores & García, 2017). For example, rural schools in Kazakhstan may be deficient in skilled English teachers and resources for trilingual education, resulting in inequitable multilingual outcomes (Temirzakhkyzy et al., 2023).

Additionally, certain students express feelings of linguistic insecurity or discrimination stemming from their accent, fluency proficiency, or cultural heritage. These discrepancies affect kids' self-esteem, educational access, and career paths (Lippi-Green, 2012; Motha, 2014). Thus, although multilingualism offers potential for fostering inclusion and opportunity, it may also perpetuate inequities if not executed with a focus on language justice and accessibility.

Intersection of Gender and Multilingualism

This section addresses the third research question: How do gender and multilingualism intersect to shape career choices of Kazakhstani students? It is organized under the following subsections: a) understanding the intersection between gender and language, b) gendered access to multilingual resources and professional opportunities, c) educational institutions as arenas of gendered multilingual engagement, d) gendered career aspirations in multilingual contexts.

Understanding the Intersection Between Gender and Language

The correlation between gender and language has historically been a focal point of sociolinguistic and pedagogical inquiry (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). Gender has historically been misconstrued as a binary biological reality (male/female), although modern research has revealed its considerable complexity. Academics such as Judith Butler (1990) argue that gender is a social performance—an active expression manifested through language, gestures, and cultural conventions, rather than an intrinsic identity. For instance, women are frequently expected to communicate in a courteous or deferential manner, whereas men are urged to assert dominance in discussions (Gafforov, 2024). These expectations are not innate; they are acquired and reinforced through public discourse. Institutions as educational establishments and businesses perpetuate these norms by penalizing individuals who diverge from them (e.g., branding aggressive women as

“bossy” while lauding men for same conduct). This viewpoint reflects gender as malleable, influenced by cultural factors rather than biological determinants.

Language is fundamental to this process. It is not simply a neutral instrument for communication but a potent system that shapes and challenges gendered identities (Sunderland, 2000). Everyday language—from educational materials to media—reinforces stereotypes (e.g., portraying women as emotional nurturers and men as logical leaders). These tendencies are not coincidental; they mirror and perpetuate societal power dynamics. In multilingual situations, the dynamics become very intricate. For example, Pavlenko and Piller (2008) demonstrated that immigrant women may develop novel linguistic habits in a second language to mitigate discrimination or secure economic possibilities. Their selections reveal the intersection of language and gender with race, class, and power.

The convergence of gender and multilingualism is especially pertinent for contexts such as Kazakhstan, where language usage carries with ethnolinguistic and gender-political implications. Takahashi (2011) argues that multilingual practices are influenced by gendered expectations, with women expected to exhibit greater politeness, compassion, and eloquence—attributes frequently associated with language skill. Conversely, men may be urged to concentrate on technical or leadership areas where language is supposedly of lesser importance.

Gendered Access to Multilingual Resources and Professional Opportunities

Access to multilingual education and the acknowledgment of linguistic capital are not devoid of gender bias. Studies conducted in Kazakhstan (Kassiyet et al., 2023; Temirzakhkyzy et al., 2023) indicate that female students frequently exhibit greater involvement in language acquisition and excel in multilingual academic programs. Nonetheless, this expertise does not consistently result in fair professional outcomes.

Women's linguistic competencies are frequently oriented towards occupations such as education, translation, or customer service, which are regarded as extensions of caring tasks (Burck, 2011; Pavlenko & Piller, 2008).

In contrast, males proficient in multiple languages are frequently regarded as well-suited for leadership or international positions in industry, government, or diplomacy (Radke & Versloot, 2024). This disparity indicates that although multilingualism is a significant advantage, its application and compensation are profoundly influenced by gender, hence perpetuating occupational segregation in the labor market.

Educational Institutions as Arenas of Gendered Multilingual Engagement

Educational institutions serve not just as centers of learning but also as venues for the reproduction of gendered and linguistic ideologies. Research by Sunderland (2000) and Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992) reflects how classroom interactions, textbook material, and teacher expectations frequently communicate implicit messages regarding gender-appropriate conduct, including linguistic usage. Sunderland's study of EFL textbooks showed that male characters were predominantly represented as surgeons and engineers, and articulating assertively (e.g., "Give me the scalpel!"), whereas feminine characters were characterized as nurses or homemakers, employing hedging expressions (e.g., "Maybe we should...?"). In Kazakhstan, educational materials and pedagogies also may embody gendered linguistic ideologies, depicting women in passive, supportive roles and men in active, decision-making positions (Kalilayeva, 2020; Mendikulova & Mukhamadiyeva, 2019).

Furthermore, access to higher level multilingual education may be segregated by gender. Boys may be directed into STEM disciplines with minimal language instruction, whilst girls are guided towards humanities and social sciences that prioritize

multilingualism, so orienting each gender towards distinct career paths (Lazarides & Lauermann, 2019).

Gendered Career Aspirations in Multilingual Contexts

The intersection of gender and multilingualism also affects students' professional aspirations and self-perceptions. A considerable number of female students perceive multilingualism as a fundamental asset while concurrently acknowledging systemic constraints regarding the valuation of these talents in the employment sector (Burck, 2011; Kassiyet et al., 2023). This frequently results in their selection of linguistically demanding occupations that are lower in status and remuneration.

Conversely, male students may not engage significantly in language acquisition unless it is viewed as essential for progression in prestigious occupations. Possessing bilingual skills increases the likelihood of being perceived as leaders or innovators, mirroring society expectations of masculinity and success (Grin, 2001).

To summarize, this section analyzed the intersection of gender and multilingualism in shaping students' identities, possibilities, and professional aspirations, specifically within the Kazakhstani environment. Using sociolinguistic and feminist literature, it shows that gender and language are socially produced and mutually reinforcing aspects of inequality (Butler, 1990; Pavlenko & Piller, 2008; Sunderland, 2000). Female students frequently exhibit robust multilingual proficiency and emotional investment in language acquisition; yet, their abilities are directed towards conventionally feminine and less esteemed careers, such as education and translation (Burck, 2011; Kassiyet et al., 2023). In contrast, male students, despite their lower engagement in language acquisition, are more frequently acknowledged as leaders or assigned to prestigious positions when proficient in many languages (Grin, 2001; Radke & Versloot, 2024). Educational institutions significantly contribute to the perpetuation of these tendencies via gendered curricula and

career counseling (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Mendikulova & Mukhamadiyeva, 2019). The section highlights that access to linguistic resources and the societal valuation of linguistic capital are influenced by gender, consequently shaping students' perceptions of their professional futures (Takahashi, 2011; Temirzakhkyzy et al., 2023). Using Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework, the analysis demonstrates that intersecting identities—such as gender, class, and linguistic background—exacerbate inequalities, necessitating educational and policy reforms that consider the systemic interactions of these factors rather than addressing them separately.

Theoretical Framework

This section explains the theoretical framework of the study. It synthesizes the principal theories that inform the examination of the interplay between gender and multilingualism in influencing the career decisions of Kazakhstani undergraduate students. The present study is grounded in three principal theories: feminist theory, sociocultural theory, and intersectionality theory. Collectively, these elements establish a comprehensive framework for understanding the impact of social institutions, cultural norms, and linguistic practices on students' professional ambitions.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory offers a critical perspective for analyzing the impact of systemic gendered structures on access, agency, and opportunities in educational and professional spheres. This concept argues that gender is not solely a biological or individual characteristic, but rather a social construct influenced by institutional norms, cultural expectations, and discursive practices (Tong, 2009). Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity is an important contribution in this field, asserting that gender is formed through the repetition of behaviors, expressions, and interactions that conform to cultural norms. Butler argues that gender should not be perceived as a static category;

instead, it is perpetually formed and reinforced by “stylized repetitions of acts” that possess social significance and sustain prevailing gender beliefs (Butler, 1990, p. 191).

This performative approach questions conventional feminist frameworks that assume a stable, universal concept of “women” as the focal point of feminism. Butler argues that this essentialism may exclude those who do not adhere to normal gender identities, such as queer individuals, non-binary individuals, and women of color (Butler, 1993). Her critique of identity politics caused considerable discourse, with certain scholars arguing that although her deconstruction of gender categories fosters tolerance, it may concurrently undermine the political cohesion essential for unified feminist activism (Alcoff, 2006; Hines, 2010). Assiter (1996) claims that dismissing the concept of “women” may undermine the efficacy of policy measures designed to combat gender inequality.

Nonetheless, Butler’s approach retains significant relevance in situations with strictly defined gender roles, since it allows scholars to examine how societal institutions like educational systems and labor markets normalize and perpetuate gendered expectations. In post-Soviet countries like Kazakhstan, where gendered labor division is deeply ingrained in cultural and institutional frameworks (OECD, 2017), feminist theory is particularly effective in analyzing the socialization of women into specific professional fields. Studies have indicated that educational environments frequently covertly perpetuate conventional gender norms via curriculum selections, educator expectations, and counseling procedures (Subrahmanian, 2005; UNESCO, 2019). These mechanisms facilitate the continual allocation of women to “feminine” professions, including education, healthcare, and administrative positions, whereas men are more frequently encouraged to pursue technical, managerial, or leadership careers (Bloodhart et al., 2020; Lazarides & Lauermann, 2019;).

Moreover, feminist theory critically examines the intersectionality of gender, class, race, and additional social factors. Crenshaw (1989) established the notion of intersectionality to highlight how intersecting systems of oppression can generate distinct obstacles for persons belonging to various oppressed groups. In educational and professional contexts, intersectional feminist approaches illustrate how gender norms intersect with language, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, influencing access to opportunities and self-perceptions of professional identity (Collins & Bilge, 2020). In multilingual societies, linguistic ideologies can exacerbate gendered expectations, affecting individuals' self-perception of their worth in the job market and shaping others' perceptions of their abilities (Piller & Pavlenko, 2007).

Despite its valuable conclusions, feminist theory has faced criticism for its Western-centric perspective. Academics argue that a significant portion of feminist theory, including Butler's contributions, is rooted in and primarily relevant to Euro-American contexts, potentially failing to encompass the lived experiences of women in diverse cultural and geopolitical environments (Mohanty, 2003; Hesse-Biber, 2014). Therefore, there have been demands for more localized and culturally attuned feminist methodologies that consider the historical, political, and linguistic particularities of non-Western contexts (Connell, 1987). Scholars examining gender in Central Asia and other post-Soviet areas have underscored the necessity of harmonizing global feminist ideas with local discourses and norms (Kandiyoti, 2007; Temirzakhkyzy et al., 2023).

Overall, feminist theory, especially Butler's (1990, 1993) notion of gender performativity, provides a solid foundation for examining the construction, internalization, and reproduction of gender norms within society. Despite its critiques prompting continuous reflection and modification, feminist theory persists as a fundamental instrument for examining the sociocultural and institutional frameworks that direct

individuals towards gender-normative educational and career paths. This study draws on feminist theory to analyze students' comments on career expectations, institutional prejudices, and gender-based self-perception. It aims to demonstrate that women's decisions are influenced not only by individual preferences but also by systemic limitations and societal narratives.

Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) conceptualizes learning and growth as inherently social processes, facilitated by language, instruments, and cultural conventions. From this viewpoint, language transcends mere communication; it serves as a cognitive and social instrument that influences identity and cognition (De Costa, 2007) and posits that individual development is rooted in social interactions, shaped by communal values and expectations.

This theory explains how students' complex linguistic practices and learning pathways are influenced by their social milieu in the context of multilingualism. For instance, female students may be urged to learn many languages based on gendered preconceptions regarding communication and caring responsibilities. Concurrently, male students may perceive language as a tactical instrument for progression in international commerce or politics, illustrating divergent societal expectations regarding the significance of language for each gender (Corbella et al., 2021).

Sociocultural theory is employed in this study to effectively examine the interconnections among language acquisition, gender norms, and professional choices. It facilitates the examination of how students assimilate societal messages regarding gender and language, and how this assimilation impacts their professional ambitions.

Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality, as articulated by Crenshaw (1989), offers a theory for understanding how many social identities—such as gender, language, race, and class—intersect to create distinct experiences of advantage or discrimination. Intersectionality transcends singular assessments (e.g., solely gender or solely language) to explain how these aspects collaboratively perpetuate inequality.

In multilingual and multicultural cultures such as Kazakhstan, intersectionality is essential. A multilingual Kazakhstani woman may encounter both gender-specific and language-related obstacles that a monolingual male student would not confront. For instance, although women may excel in linguistic proficiency, their abilities may not be acknowledged in prestigious, male-dominated industries. Intersectionality thus highlights the disparate impacts of policy, institutional access, and social capital on various groups, even within a singular educational system.

This theory is especially effective in revealing concealed patterns of exclusion, illustrating how women's multilingualism is restricted to supportive roles (e.g., teaching, translation), whereas men leverage analogous skills for leadership and advancement (Mohandas & Stephen, 2023).

Gaps and Rationale for the Current Study

This section breaks down the principal deficiencies discovered in the current literature and articulates the justification for conducting this investigation. Although there is an expanding corpus of study on gender and multilingualism in educational and career advancement, few studies investigate its intersection, especially within the setting of Kazakhstan. The following discourse is segmented into three subsections: a) limitations in the existing literature, b) factors contributing to the uniqueness of Kazakhstan's circumstances, c) this study's approach to bridging the gap.

Limitations in the Existing Literature

Although research on gender and multilingualism has been increasing in recent decades, the majority of the literature tends to examine these two dimensions independently, failing to sufficiently consider their intersectional influence on career choice (Pavlenko & Piller, 2008; Sunderland, 2000). Current research frequently highlights the impact of gender on educational pathways and the influence of multilingualism on cognitive and social results; however, there is a scarcity of studies that investigate how these factors interact to affect students' career choice, particularly in regions beyond the Global North.

Firstly, the literature predominantly focuses on Western educational systems, restricting its relevance to countries like Kazakhstan, where cultural, linguistic, and gender dynamics are intricately woven into post-Soviet, multiethnic, and multilingual traditions (Temirzakhkyzy et al., 2023). Secondly, many global studies have examined multilingualism through the lens of two primary languages (e.g., L1 and English), whereas in Kazakhstan, students frequently engage with three or more languages—Kazakh, Russian, and English—each associated with unique social identities and professional opportunities. Third, there is a lack of empirical research employing qualitative methodologies, such as in-depth interviews, to explain the lived experiences of students in their career decision-making processes concerning their gender and language identities. The existing literature predominantly focuses on quantitative analysis or policy frameworks, resulting in a deficiency in understanding the intricate perceptions and internal deliberations that influence career planning in multilingual and gendered contexts.

Factors Contributing to the Uniqueness of Kazakhstan's Context

Kazakhstan has a unique socio-cultural and linguistic environment influenced by its Soviet heritage, trilingual language policy, and frequent initiatives to advance gender

equality in a historically patriarchal society (Kalilayeva, 2020; Khamzina et al., 2020). The state's prioritization of Kazakh as the national language, the prevailing influence of Russian, and the increasing prominence of English have culminated in a complicated multilingual environment affecting job advancement.

Simultaneously, gender roles in Kazakhstan persist as profoundly traditional, with distinct societal expectations for women to engage in occupations within education, healthcare, or service sectors, whereas men are steered towards STEM, business, and leadership positions (Kassiyet et al., 2023; Udod, 2018). The tandem presence of modernization initiatives and persisting gender norms engenders a paradox: students may possess the linguistic capabilities to pursue global jobs, yet encounter cultural limitations associated with their gender.

Despite national policy advocating for both multilingualism (Legal Information System, 1997; The Ministry of Education and Science, 2010; Kazakhstan Unveils 100 Concrete Steps, 2015) and gender equality (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2016; Nazarbayev, 2016; OECD, 2017), the practical execution remains unpredictable. Institutional frameworks frequently fail to facilitate women's progression in prestigious multilingual careers, such as diplomacy or international business, despite policy-level advocacy (Mendikulova & Mukhamadiyeva, 2019). Kazakhstan serves as a pivotal location for analyzing the interplay between structural and identity-based elements that shape job choices.

This Study's Approach to Bridging the Gaps

This study explores inequalities by employing a qualitative, intersectional approach to investigate the combined effects of gender and multilingualism on career choices among Kazakhstani undergraduate students. This study integrates feminist theory, sociocultural theory, and intersectionality theory to examine the complex interplay of personal identity,

social expectations, and institutional norms, in contrast to previous research that isolates these factors.

It used semi-structured interviews with ten participants to offer nuanced insights into how students navigate language usage, career ambitions, and gender roles within Kazakhstan's distinct socio-political milieu. It examines undergraduate students in a multilingual university environment, providing a unique perspective into the impact of intersecting social identities on early career decisions in non-Western environments.

The study is likely to enhance the worldwide discourse on gendered multilingualism by providing specific insights from Central Asia, an area frequently overlooked in educational and sociolinguistic research. It is also likely to enhance the empirical foundation and provides practical implications for educators, policymakers, and career advisers seeking to promote fair and inclusive career development in multilingual cultures.

Conclusion

This chapter carefully analyzed current research on gender, multilingualism, and their intersection in influencing career decisions, particularly within the Kazakhstani setting. The investigation commenced with the definition and analysis of essential concepts, including gender roles, gender stereotypes, and gendered career trajectories, subsequently examining multilingualism as a sociocultural and cognitive asset, particularly in multilingual contexts. The review examined the interplay between gender and multilingualism in influencing uneven access to opportunities in school and work.

It then presented three theoretical frameworks, namely feminist theory, sociocultural theory, and intersectionality theory that collectively shape the research's analytical perspective. These ideas establish a conceptual basis for understanding how societal norms, linguistic practices, and identity converge to generate gendered results in

career paths. This combination is especially pertinent in Kazakhstan, where multilingual policy objectives coincide with enduring gender inequality in higher education and the labor market.

Overall, the chapter explained the theoretical framework established for this investigation. This framework provides a comprehensive model for examining the interplay between gendered norms and language repertoires in influencing the career goals of Kazakhstani undergraduate students. This literature review provided the justification for the study and highlighted significant gaps that the research intends to fill. This section established the theoretical foundation for the following chapters, specifically findings, and discussion, which will thoroughly examine the intersection between gender and multilingualism in career decision-making through student narratives. The next chapter will focus on the methodology used in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The thesis aims to explore the role of gender, multilingualism and their intersection in shaping career choices of first-year Kazakhstani university students. The goal of this chapter is to give a thorough description of the study's research design, data collection methods, analysis procedures and to describe the sampling method and strategies with provision of an overview of ethical considerations that were made to ensure the confidentiality of participants. These methodological choices aim to enable the study to address the three research questions introduced in Chapter 1:

- RQ1: What role does gender play in shaping students' career choices in Kazakhstan?
- RQ2: How does Kazakhstani students' multilingual language repertoire shape their career choices?
- RQ3: How do gender and multilingualism intersect to shape the career aspirations of Kazakhstani students?

This chapter explains the methods I selected to effectively address these research questions.

Research Approach and Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design using an instrumental case study approach to explore the role and intersection of gender and multilingualism in shaping career choices among first-year undergraduate students in Kazakhstan. A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because it seeks to understand participants' personal experiences and perceptions in-depth, which cannot be captured through numerical or statistical analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The qualitative paradigm aligned with constructivist epistemology, which posits that meaning is co-constructed through social interactions and context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach allowed for

a deep exploration of the subjective experiences and social realities of the participants in their educational and societal context.

Within qualitative paradigm there are various choices of research design. A qualitative case study was chosen because it provides a flexible yet structured way to examine complex social phenomena within its context (Yin, 2018). In this study, the design is particularly appropriate because it allows for a detailed examination of how gender identities and multilingual proficiencies of undergrad students interact within the specific sociocultural environment of Kazakhstan. The qualitative nature of a case study design enabled participants to share their perspectives and experiences in their own words, providing rich, nuanced data that would be inaccessible through quantitative methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Within case studies, there are various types (Yin, 2018). The instrumental case study research design was selected because it focuses on a specific case to provide insights into broader societal phenomena (Stake, 1995). The goal of this research was not to examine the individual students but to use them as a lens through which to understand the broader intersection of gender and multilingualism. This was crucial in understanding how larger social constructs—gender and multilingualism—interact in a localized context like Kazakhstan to influence individual career choices. An instrumental case study enabled the researcher to explore these complexities within a real-world setting, offering a contextual understanding of how gender and multilingualism intersect in shaping career trajectories (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Site

The research was conducted at an autonomous institution in central Kazakhstan and was chosen as the research site. This institution was chosen for two primary reasons: its linguistically varied student body and its relevance to the research topics of the study.

Despite English being the official medium of instruction at the university, students frequently conversed in Kazakh, Russian, and English in academic and social contexts. Student-led organizations and university-wide activities and signs exemplified this multilingual environment, frequently conducted or promoted in all three languages. This organic multilingualism established a complex sociolinguistic environment that strongly correlates with the study's emphasis on the intersection of students' multilingual language practices and gender identities in influencing career choices. The predominance of peer-to-peer multilingual interaction in an English-medium academic environment with local and international students was a distinctive opportunity to examine how students manage language and identity in a globalized educational context. These characteristics made the institution directly relevant to the study's goal of investigating how linguistic and gendered experiences in an organized multilingual context relate to students' professional objectives.

Research Sample Selection

According to Cohen et al. (2018), there are two primary approaches to sampling: probability sampling, also known as a random sample, and non-probability sampling, also known as a purposive sample or purposeful sample. This study used purposeful sampling, specifically criterion-based sampling alongside maximum variation sampling, to choose participants who met certain criteria relevant to the research focus. The primary eligibility requirements were 1) being a first-year undergraduate student, 2) identifying as male or female, and 3) exhibiting functional competency in three languages—Kazakh, Russian, and English. Participants self-reported their language competency at recruitment, which was then validated by their enrollment in English-medium instruction programs and their daily use of all three languages in academic and social settings. The sample sought to ensure diversity in gender, academic discipline, and linguistic background to encompass a broad spectrum of viewpoints on the interplay between gender and multilingualism in

influencing educational and employment decisions. This study examined first-year students' prospective career aspirations and their retrospective reflections on how their gender and multilingual repertoire influenced their decision to enroll in their current academic program, despite their prior selection of a field of study indicating some career orientation. This dual focus facilitated a more profound examination of the operation of these sociolinguistic elements at various phases of educational and professional decision-making.

The sample comprised 10 first-year undergraduate students: five male and five female. This sample size was appropriate for a qualitative case study because it let the researcher learn about each person's experience while keeping the data manageable for research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In qualitative research, smaller samples are appropriate when the goal is to get detailed, rich data that gives a lot of information about the issue being studied (Morse, 2000). This sample size was enough to reach data saturation, meaning no new themes or insights may come up from collecting more data (Guest et al., 2005).

Data Collection Instrument

The present study employed semi-structured interviews to gather data. Semi-structured interviews have three relevant characteristics that make them particularly appropriate for my study. First, this tool was selected because it makes possible to gather the rich, detailed data that is needed to answer the research questions. Second, this type of interview let the researcher ask a core set of questions while still being able to follow up on interesting or unexpected responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Third, semi-structured interviews allowed participants to express their feelings and experiences without major restrictions; while making sure the conversation remained on topic with the study's main ideas (Bryman, 2012). This data collection instrument is optimal for case study research

because participants could express their experiences in their own words, providing the researcher with rich qualitative data that they could use to find patterns and themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Field notes are important for qualitative research because they provide context and information about how people felt and thought that spoken language alone cannot convey (Emerson et al., 2011), but the researcher chose not to use them in the interviews with the study participants after pilot testing data collection tool with the supervisor. The researcher decided that the successful implementation of semi-structured interviews was sufficient. Pilot test enabled the researcher to effectively gather and evaluate data by modifying interview questions or probes prior to engaging with actual participants.

Before interviewing participants, the researcher conducted a pilot test of the mix of closed and open-ended interview questions with the supervisor to ensure the sensitivity and appropriateness of the research questions. The pilot interview provided insights into the interview process, including the efficacy of specific questions and the emergence of unexpected themes. Following the pilot test, the researcher reviewed additional questions besides the initial protocol of interview questions (Appendix C) and used it verbally when interviewing participants.

The interview questions were designed based on the study's research questions and theoretical framework and focus on three main themes. The first was language backgrounds and educational experiences of the participants to find out how well the participants speak Kazakh, Russian, and English, how they learned these languages, and how they see the role of being multilingual in their education and career goals. The second theme focused on gender experiences. In this section, participants were asked to think about how their gender affected their education and whether they have faced any challenges or benefits because of their gender while planning their education or career.

The third theme's questions dealt with the intersection of gender and multilingualism. The questions in this theme examined how the participants see how their gender and multilingual identities affect their career goals. For example, participants were asked if they think being a multilingual male or female has affected their career choices.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection for this study was intended to start at the beginning of November 2024 and ending in mid-December 2024. However, due to unexpected familial circumstances of the researcher, the actual data gathering began in mid-January 2025 and finished at the end of January 2025. There were several important steps in the process, such as recruiting potential participants, setting up interviews, conducting interviews, and making sure that ethics were followed at every step.

Once the criteria were set and ethical approval from NUGSE Ethics Committee was obtained for the study, an invitation message to recruit participants (Appendix B) was sent out in a three selected university Telegram chats that students usually use. The name of the university is kept anonymous for the ethical purposes. This method was chosen because it let students answer privately, which protects their privacy during all stages of the study. The recruitment letter contained details regarding the study's goals, methodologies, criteria, and the rights of participants. Additionally, the researcher's personal contact information, namely personal telephone number and Telegram username, was provided for communication purposes. Students who were interested were asked to contact the researcher personally to find out more and make sure they met the criteria for selection. This method ensured that participants could decide if they wanted to take part before they were officially recruited.

Once identified, eligible participants received comprehensive details about the research through an informed consent form (Appendix D). This form was sent to all

selected participants online via the Telegram private chat app prior to the interview date so that they could read and acquaint themselves with the informed consent form before agreeing or disagreeing to participate. The form provided in three languages (Kazakh, Russian, English). The participants chose the most convenient language to understand for the interview. The informed consent form also provided detailed information about the study's goals, objectives, and procedures for maintaining confidentiality. It also showed that participation is voluntary, and participants could withdraw without facing any adverse consequences. To facilitate participation, individuals were requested to sign the form online and send it to the researcher via our private chat.

After receiving participants' signed informed consent, they were asked to choose the interview date and format and then, were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. Depending on the participants' preferences, the interviews with all the participants were conducted in person and scheduled at their convenience. Interviews were held in booked in advance, quiet, restricted classrooms on campus to protect participants' privacy. As part of the consent process, participants' rights were also discussed verbally to ensure they fully understood the study's goals and their role in the research. To ensure that the participants could freely express themselves in the language they felt most comfortable with, the interviews were held in either Kazakh, or Russian, or English, or mixed languages, depending on their preference. The right for the choice of language use in the interview participation was appropriate, given the study's focus on multilingualism and how people speak and write in Kazakhstan, where many people switch between languages depending on the situation (Smagulova, 2008).

With the participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded, ensuring that the participants' words were captured correctly for analysis. Before starting each

interview, participants were told why they were being recorded and that they could ask for the recording to be paused or stopped at any time during the interview.

The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to approximately 1 hour. A semi-structured interview format was used, allowing the researcher to ask open-ended questions and get more in-depth answers when needed. The semi-structured interview format was flexible enough to let the conversation flow naturally, which helped interviewer, and each participant get to know each other and gave them the confidence to share freely (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For example, when participants expressed that their ability to speak more than one language affected career decisions, follow-up questions were asked to them if their language skills gave them specific career advantages or disadvantages.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis, a method commonly used in qualitative research to find, understand, and report patterns or themes in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Case studies work especially well with thematic analysis because it let the researcher do more than just describe the data. It also lets the researcher to explore the meaning behind the participants' experiences in more depth.

Data analysis procedures include the following steps: first, familiarization with the data, second, generating initial codes, third, searching for themes, fourth, reviewing themes, and last, producing the report. These steps that were used to analyze the data are described below:

Familiarization With the Data

Using audio recordings ensured that all the information was gathered, and no important details were missed. This let the researcher focus on building relationships and actively listening during the interviews (Poland, 2002). The first step in the analysis was to get to know the data very well. Transcribed audio tapes were the main data set used for

analysis. Audio tapes were transcribed and translated to English by Turboscribe website. The researcher read the transcripts and listened the audiotapes more than once. In qualitative research, getting to know the data lets the researcher fully immerse in the material needed to find patterns and themes (Riessman, 2008).

Generating Initial Codes

After getting to know the material, the next step was open coding, which involved labeling important parts of the text in a structured way. For this step, each transcript had to be read line by line, and parts of text that were relevant to the research questions had to be given descriptive labels (codes). During this stage, the researcher wrote down the frequently occurring codes in the participants' responses. These notes helped guide the next steps of developing themes. For example, if several participants mentioned that being able to speak more than one language made them feel better about their career choices, this was noted as a possible theme that could be explored further. Some examples of codes were as following: describing concepts (like "gender bias" or "career aspiration") or explaining ideas (like "multilingual advantage").

Iterative coding meant that as new codes came up, the researcher went back to earlier transcripts to make sure that all the relevant data were coded the same way. During this step, the researcher developed 78 tentative codes produced from the 10 interview transcripts to cover all the different experiences and points of view that the participants had shared. The codes were generated inductively, enabling themes to arise directly from the data instead than being forced by pre-existing theoretical frameworks. The codes identified common themes like parental expectations, language as an obstacle, STEM for boys, Kazakh as a symbol, and career aspirations versus reality.

Searching for Themes

During this step, the researcher looked over the codes in order to identify broad themes that showed the main ideas emerging from the data. Themes, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), are recurring patterns or topics that show something important about the data in relation to the research questions. The themes were chosen because they were related to the research questions and showed up frequently in the data. The process of finding themes was based on the theory of intersectionality, which says that different social identities, like gender and language, can affect how privileged or disadvantaged someone feels (Cho et al., 2013).

In the present study, following initial coding, the researcher organized linked codes into overarching categories based on reoccurring patterns in the participants' responses. For example, codes like parents' influence, gendered expectations, and discouragement in STEM were consolidated into the theme role of gender in career choices. Likewise, phrases such as language as asset, English opens doors, and Kazakh vs. Russian identity enhanced the subject career-based value and strategic advantage of multilingualism. In the present study, these themes were not predetermined but arose through iterative data analysis, closely correlating with the research questions.

Reviewing Themes

After the initial themes were found, they were examined to ensure that they appropriately reflected the data. This procedure entailed returning to the coded data extracts and determining whether the themes were coherent, unique, and rooted in the data. If a theme failed to capture the essence of the data or had a considerable overlap with another theme, it was redefined or combined with another theme. The initial themes gendered career perceptions and preference for women-dominated career were combined into a more encompassing theme titled STEM for men, humanities for women, which more

accurately reflected participants' discussions of gender stereotypes and their experiences of gender bias. Similarly, two interrelated themes, women's language skills confined to specific professions and men's multilingualism as a leadership asset, were synthesized into gendered usage of multilingual skills in the workplace. This iterative process resulted in seven definitive themes, each corresponding to a research question and organizing the presentation of findings in Chapter 4. Each concluding theme was distinctly articulated, internally coherent, and firmly anchored in participants' narratives, so guaranteeing a rigorous and significant analysis of the results.

Producing the Report

The final step in thematic analysis was to write up the results, connecting the themes to the study questions and the larger literature on gender and multilingualism. In the following chapters, these themes will be presented, accompanied by direct comments from participants, to demonstrate how gender and multilingualism interact to affect career choices in Kazakhstan.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was maintained throughout this research, adhering to the ethical norms established by the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee. The committee formally approved this study after a comprehensive ethics application process that outlined the research objectives, participant recruitment methods, data management processes, and possible risks. The researcher completed the CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) Human Subjects Research training, which equipped her with essential knowledge for conducting ethical research involving human participants, especially in educational contexts addressing potentially sensitive subjects like gender and identity.

Before data collection, ethical considerations emphasized informed consent, participant autonomy, and the mitigation of possible risks. Participants were reached via anonymous Telegram student channels by the researcher sending recruitment letters and responded voluntarily. After expressing interest, they received the consent form, articulated in comprehensible language in Kazakh, Russian, and English. As explained earlier, the consent form introduced them to the study's objective, the methods involved, the voluntary nature of participation, possible risks and advantages, and precautions established to preserve confidentiality and anonymity.

Participants were notified that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any moment without the necessity of providing justification or facing repercussions. They might have refused to respond to any inquiries that induced discomfort. Only individuals who signed the informed consent form were included into the study.

Throughout the data gathering process, ethical considerations were rigorously upheld to guarantee anonymity, confidentiality, and emotional security. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person within private university classrooms. To maintain anonymity, participants' actual names were excluded from transcription and data analysis. Every participant was allocated a pseudonym, which was used in all documentation, including transcripts, and direct quotations in the thesis.

Confidentiality was upheld by storing all interview recordings and transcripts on a password-protected, encrypted laptop exclusively available to the researcher, verifying that all backup files were encrypted and kept in a different location, explicitly discussing the significance of privacy and data protection with participants prior to the beginning of the interview.

To mitigate emotional risks, particularly when addressing sensitive subjects like gender discrimination or identity-related issues, the researcher employed a reflective and sympathetic interview approach. Participants were informed before and throughout the interview that they might omit any questions or stop the interview at any time. This method enabled participants to regulate their degree of disclosure and reduced emotional distress.

After the interviews, ethical procedures emphasized the secure handling, anonymization, and ethical reporting of data. Audio recordings were promptly transferred to a secure folder and subsequently destroyed from the recording devices as soon as transcripts were written. Transcripts were anonymized throughout the transcription process, and identifiable details as names were eliminated and replaced by pseudonyms. The data were evaluated by thematic coding, and direct quotations in the findings chapter were only attributed to pseudonyms.

All consent forms were stored independently from the data to guarantee that identities and responses could not be correlated. The final data collection report was meticulously crafted to uphold the dignity and integrity of participants, avoiding any representations that could mischaracterize or hurt individuals or groups.

Additionally, participants were provided the opportunity to obtain a summary of the findings, embodying the ethical principle of reciprocity, thereby enabling them to profit from the research outputs.

Overall, ethical considerations were considered throughout the research process, encompassing design, recruitment, data collection, analysis, and reporting. Specific actions were implemented to guarantee informed consent, reduce harm, and protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality, in complete accordance with the requirements of the NUGSE Ethics Committee and the criteria established in the CITI Human Subjects

Research training. These endeavors ensured that the study was executed responsibly, respectfully, and in accordance with the ethical standards of qualitative educational research.

Summary

This chapter explained and justified the methodological foundation of the study, which examines the interplay between gender and multilingualism in influencing the career decisions of first-year undergraduate students in Kazakhstan. A qualitative research approach was employed to investigate participants' life experiences and social realities comprehensively. An instrumental case study design was used, enabling the researcher to examine students at a large, English-medium institution in Kazakhstan to get insights into the broader societal factors affecting career choices.

The sample consisted of ten first-year students chosen via purposeful criterion-based sampling, ensuring maximum variety in gender, linguistic background, and academic specialization. Kazakh, Russian, and English functional multilingualism were prerequisites for participation. This diversity enabled the study to investigate the intricacies of how language and gender identity affect decision-making in career choice.

Data collection was executed using semi-structured interviews. This approach enabled the creation of nuanced, contextually relevant data that captured the intricacies of students' experiences. Interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred languages and adhered to ethical protocols, encompassing informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw or omit any inquiries.

Thematic analysis was employed to examine the data, using an inductive approach to code and formulate themes based on the participants' opinions. The procedure included familiarization, preliminary coding, theme development, and refinement. Particular

emphasis was placed on ensuring that the final themes were coherent, clear, and matched with the study's research goals.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of this qualitative study investigating the role of and interplay between gender and multilingualism in shaping the career choices of Kazakhstani undergraduate students. This study aimed to examine the impact of society gender norms and students' multilingual repertoire on their educational and career ambitions within the sociocultural and institutional context of Kazakhstan.

As explained in the previous chapters, the research was guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1: What role does gender play in shaping students' career choices in Kazakhstan?
- RQ2: How does Kazakhstani students' multilingual language repertoire shape their career choices?
- RQ3: How do gender and multilingualism intersect to shape career aspirations of Kazakhstani students?

As explained in Chapter 3, to address these inquiries, comprehensive semi-structured interviews were performed with 10 undergraduate students (five female and five male) from several academic disciplines. The data were thematically analyzed employing a qualitative coding methodology to discern principal themes and subthemes pertinent to the research questions.

This chapter is organized around three principal themes, each aligned with a specific research question. The first theme, role of gender in career choices, examines how gendered views, societal expectations, and discriminatory practices influence students' career choice. The second theme, role of multilingualism in career choices, examines the impact of language repertoire on students' professional paths and the influence of gender on language attitudes. The third theme, intersection of gender and multilingualism in

career aspirations, analyzes the impact of gender norms on access to prestigious multilingual professions. Each theme is further categorized into subthemes, supported by illustrative extracts from the participants' interviews. Together, these findings provide a sophisticated insight into the interplay between gender and multilingualism in shaping career decision-making among undergraduates in Kazakhstan.

RQ1: What Role Does Gender Play in Shaping Students' Career Choices in Kazakhstan?

This section presents the findings on how gender affects undergraduate students' perceptions of various careers, their experiences with societal expectations, and the obstacles they face in educational and professional settings, based on interviews with ten students. The data analysis revealed three principal subthemes within this overall category. The first subtheme, role of gender in career choices, refers to participants' associations of specific fields—especially STEM—with masculinity, while perceiving humanities and caring professions as more suitable for women. Students articulated ingrained opinions regarding jobs deemed appropriate for men versus women, revealing the impact of these perspectives on their ambitions and self-image.

The second subtheme, impact of parental and societal expectations on career choice, explains how students' professional trajectories are influenced by familial traditions and cultural standards. Most of the participants indicated that their professional choices were shaped by gendered domestic responsibilities, the occupations of family members, or cultural narratives regarding what is seen “respectable” or suitable for their gender.

The last subtheme, gender-based discrimination in career development, refers to students' recognition of inequitable possibilities in the workplace. Participants, particularly female students, articulated the necessity of exerting greater effort to attain recognition and

identified structural biases that preferentially benefit men in career progression and leadership roles.

Collectively, these subthemes offer an extensive perspective on the role of gender as a pivotal factor influencing the academic and career choices of Kazakhstani students. The next sections examine each subtheme thoroughly, using direct statements from participants to substantiate the findings.

Role of Gender in Career Choices

This subsection addresses the perceptions of undergraduate students in Kazakhstan regarding the gendered nature of specific careers, with certain professions deemed more appropriate for men and others for women. The findings indicate that most of the participants linked STEM disciplines with masculinity, frequently characterizing them as necessitating logic, strength, or leadership—attributes typically associated with masculine roles. Conversely, most of the participants often linked professions in education, humanities, or social services as more suitable for women, mirroring a societal perception of women’s nurturing, communicative, and emotional capabilities. Such attitudes frequently impacted participants’ career choices prior to their enrollment in university, as early encounters with gendered expectations from family, educational institutions, and media inform their understanding of what is deemed “suitable” for their gender.

These findings indicate that the female participants contemplating jobs in male-dominated sectors like IT, engineering, or business frequently encountered implicit discouragement or internalized skepticism stemming from expected gender bias or detrimental workplace climates. Simultaneously, male participants demonstrated higher confidence in pursuing technical occupations, attributing this to societal endorsement and financial incentives. This subsection describes these topics comprehensively, demonstrating how gendered career attitudes persist in shaping and constraining

professional trajectories for undergraduates in Kazakhstan. The findings are presented under the following subsections: a) STEM for men, humanities for women, b) STEM as a high-paying field, c) preference for women-dominated careers.

STEM for Men, Humanities for Women. The findings show that gendered career perceptions are prominent in Kazakhstani society and have a major impact on students' academic and professional decisions. Most of the participants reported that STEM is perceived as a male-dominated discipline, whereas humanities and social sciences are deemed more appropriate for women. This perception is influenced by generational influences and longstanding societal norms. Male participants demonstrated confidence in their study of STEM degrees, attributing this to the belief that these fields necessitate logical reasoning and analytical skills—attributes frequently traditionally linked to masculinity. For example, Dias stated: “Math and Physics are logical. That is the area in which males excel. I had always expected pursuing a career in engineering or information technology.” Similarly, Aidos remarked: “I believe STEM is more logical and more serious. I observe a shortage of girls in these classes. It predominantly involves us [boys].”

Conversely, some female participants reported that cultural prejudices and insufficient encouragement deterred them from entering STEM disciplines, steering them instead toward professions deemed more “feminine.” Anar stated: “In our school, boys consistently pursued physics, while we [girls] were expected to select literature or biology. I didn't take STEM seriously as it did not seem suitable for us [girls].” Zhuldyz expressed a similar sentiment, stating: “When I referenced engineering, people laughed and asked, ‘Why? You should be in languages; you're good at that’.”

Most of the female respondents expressed reluctance to pursue STEM careers because of their male-dominated nature. For example, Anna explained the role of societal perceptions in the perpetuation of this divide: “In the natural sciences, it seems to me that

men dominate, perhaps society has some kind of predisposition to the fact that men are simply naturally smarter than women.”

These contrasting perspectives reveal how gendered perceptions of competence and suitability in STEM contribute to occupational segregation, with males being affirmed in technical domains while females being steered towards caregiving or language-oriented professions. These trends reflect overarching societal standards that influence students’ self-perceptions and their academic and career choices.

STEM as a High-Paying Field. The financial appeal of STEM is found to be another influential factor in gendered career perceptions. Most of the participants observed that STEM occupations provide salaries that are higher than those in the social sciences. Whereas the male participants generally perceived this financial incentive as a motivating factor for pursuing a career in STEM, female participants expressed apprehensions regarding the work environment and gender biases in these fields. Male participants perceived STEM as a financially stable and esteemed domain. Zharas described the economic advantages of STEM the following way: “Usually, technical specialties have higher salaries, and, in general, in IT, the salary is very high, the checks are very high, compared to teachers or someone else.” Similarly, Dias stated: “STEM pays well, and there’s always a demand. It’s a stable path, especially for men.”

These viewpoints reflect how gendered assumptions shape personal preferences and interact with economic and societal expectations, ultimately affecting students’ access to and comfort in particular professional fields.

Female Preference for Women-Dominated Careers. STEM workplace environment further complicates these gendered choices. Female participants, despite recognizing the superior wages in STEM, articulated apprehensions regarding gender bias and workplace culture, which deterred them from pursuing careers in the sector. For

instance, Ayana shared: “Yes, engineering pays well, but I don’t want to work where I always have to prove I belong. It’s tiring to be in a male-dominated space all the time.”

Anna similarly stated: “Even if I were interested in IT, I’d be worried. Women are not taken seriously in those workplaces. You always have to do more just to be seen.”

Female participants pointed out that STEM professions are frequently perceived as unwelcoming to women, despite the financial benefits. Zhuldyz expressed her apprehensions regarding the work environment: “Perhaps, according to statistical information, this may not be true, but it seems to me that men often choose professions such as computer science, political science, economics because of high salaries. And, according to my observations, most of the time it is in these areas that men are very toxic ... due to the fact that such fields are toxic, it is difficult for women to get there, and it is difficult to feel accepted.”

Certain female participants reported actively selecting disciplines that are dominated by women such as languages and literature, education, or biology because of the perceptions of gendered pressure and discrimination. The relative comfort and sense of belonging in these professions were frequently cited as a reason. This is how Zhuldyz articulated her rationale for pursuing a career in a field where women constitute the majority: “I would prefer to work in a field dominated by women, where there is no such pressure from the male side, where everyone is not watching my every mistake.” Similarly, Anna explained: “I didn’t even consider going into something like IT because I wouldn’t feel comfortable being one of the few girls there.” According to Anna, the career choices for women in STEM are influenced by the early discouragement they experience in education including her own experience of “pushing herself away from it”:

My [female] friends who study physics and mathematics also say that they face such bias towards the fact that they are women. They often have difficulties, even

from peers: “Well, you’re a girl, why did you choose such a path?” So maybe I was afraid of that too, and somehow subconsciously pushed myself away from it in advance, or maybe even stopped developing these interests at school, so that I wouldn’t have to face such a difficult choice later. (Anna, I1)

These divergent viewpoints reflect the intersection of economic incentives and gendered views of inclusivity, resulting in male students leaning towards lucrative technological professions, whereas female students frequently prioritized workplace comfort and acceptance over financial remuneration.

Overall, the results indicate that gendered career perceptions in Kazakhstan are still deeply ingrained. STEM fields are widely perceived as more appropriate for males, while women are encouraged to pursue careers in education and social sciences and in traditionally “feminine” professions. Men are attracted to STEM due to its financial allure, while women frequently avoid it due to workplace gender biases and a lack of institutional support.

Impact of Parental and Societal Expectations on Career Choice

The data analysis revealed that the career choices of young individuals in Kazakhstan are significantly influenced by societal norms, gendered household roles, and familial influence. Most of the participants reported that children are frequently directed toward specific disciplines based on gendered expectations from a young age. For example, sons are encouraged to pursue technical and leadership-oriented careers, while daughters are directed toward socially accepted, often lower-paying, professions. These expectations are not restricted to familial dynamics; they are also reinforced by society, which influences how individuals view professional development and career opportunities.

This section presents the findings that reflect the ways in which students’ career decision-making processes are influenced by traditional gender roles, family values, and

elevated societal expectations. The results revealed that some participants are influenced by their parents' career preferences, while others defied societal expectations and pursued greater autonomy in their professional pursuits. The findings are presented under the following subsections: a) family influence on career choices, b) high societal expectations.

Family Influence on Career Choices. The significant influence of family members—particularly parents—on students' career decisions was a recurring theme in the interviews. The advice, expectations, or professional credentials of their parents had a direct impact on the career choices of many participants. For instance, Aina recounted how her parents' background in economics influenced her decision to pursue a similar career: “Both of my parents are economists. Since childhood, I have been surrounded by conversations about finances and market trends. My parents always told me that I should go into economics because it’s a stable and respected profession.”

Likewise, Bekzat disclosed how his father's engineering profession had influenced his own ambitions: “My dad is an engineer, and ever since I was little, I was told that engineering is a great profession. He always said that men should work in fields where they build, create, and innovate.”

The persistence of generational career paths is consistent with the findings of Temirzakhkyzy et al. (2023), who discovered that Kazakhstani students frequently inherit career choices from their families, particularly in sectors that are deemed “secure” or “prestigious” by their parents. This pattern was observed in both male and female participants, although women frequently encountered additional pressures to pursue careers that corresponded with conventional gender roles.

While most of the students reported adhering to their parents' directives, a few rejected them due to their interest in alternative professions and a desire to “make their own decisions.” For instance, Zhuldyz discussed the tension between personal aspirations

and parental expectations: “My parents always wanted me to be a doctor. But I never wanted that—I was always interested in international relations. It was hard to go against their expectations, but I knew I had to make my own decision.”

Her experience reflects a high trend of students questioning traditional career expectations, where males’ occupation is a “serious” job and females’ job is “being a housekeeper”—a change that may suggest a shift in the attitudes of younger generations toward career autonomy.

The findings also reveal that students’ career perceptions were also significantly influenced by traditional gender roles within families. Several participants observed that their understanding of gendered professional roles was influenced by domestic labor divisions, which reinforced the notion that certain professions are more appropriate for men or women. Anna considered the impact of her family’s structure on her career choices:

My father always had a “serious job”—something technical and important. My mother, on the other hand, was a housewife. Even though she was educated, she never worked in a professional field. That definitely influenced how I saw career options for men and women. (Anna, I1)

Similarly, Aidon observed that expectations from one’s household can be translated into professional expectations: “In many families, daughters are raised to be caretakers, so naturally, they are encouraged to go into teaching, nursing, or similar professions. Boys, on the other hand, are expected to pursue more ambitious careers.”

Overall, these findings are consistent with (Mendikulova & Mukhamadiyeva, 2019), who argue that household labor divisions serve as a model for career choices. It is expected that women will pursue caregiving professions, while males will be encouraged to pursue leadership roles.

High Societal Expectations. Some participants discussed how societal norms often discourage women from pursuing ambitious career paths by requiring them to reconcile their careers with traditional family responsibilities. Aidos, for example, elaborated on these contradictory societal expectations:

Women are told to get an education and build a career, but at the same time, they're reminded that their primary role is to be a good wife and mother. So even if a woman is successful in her field, she is still judged by how well she fulfills those roles. (Aidos, I10)

Ayana expressed her dissatisfaction with these unrealistic societal constraints, particularly those that pertain to women in positions of leadership: "It's like we're always expected to be "good girls" first, no matter what we achieve professionally. If a woman is ambitious, she is seen as too aggressive or too career focused."

She also shared the sentiment, as she recalled being discouraged from prioritizing her studies due to traditional gender expectations in her family orienting girls for marriage rather than for studies:

[family members say] don't study so much, you still need to date... They [family members] say I'm too involved in my studies. That a girl doesn't need it. That a girl needs to, roughly speaking, date some boy at university somehow and get married. (Ayana, I9)

These findings are indicative of the more extensive gendered societal pressures that exist in Kazakhstan, which is consistent with the research conducted by Pavlenko and Piller (2008). They argue that women are confronted with conflicting societal expectations that concurrently promote professional success and reinforce traditional gender roles.

Overall, the findings indicate that family and cultural expectations continue to influence Kazakhstani students' employment choices. Many students follow their parents'

job advice, especially if their families have strong professional traditions. However, other people wanted to violate these expectations and pursue their professional goals.

Traditional gender roles in households reinforce gender prejudices about careers. Men are encouraged to pursue technical and managerial occupations, while women are expected to work in caring and service, with family labor divisions serving as a model.

Besides the family, cultural conventions reinforce gendered career expectations, especially for women. Many women avoided difficult or leadership-oriented careers because they felt compelled to reconcile their careers with marriage and family. As deep-rooted societal expectations continue to impact job decision-making, young professionals need more opportunities to question gender conventions and encourage career autonomy.

Gender-Based Discrimination in Career Development

The findings revealed that gendered perceptions of career suitability and societal expectations significantly impact initial career choices. Participants' experiences revealed that gender-based discrimination persists in influencing professional development and advancement. Although almost none of the participants have working experience in their field, this subtheme examines the enduring disparities in the workplace, which were observed by female participants from what they heard from their extended female family members, namely around acknowledgment, demonstration of ability, and attainment of leadership roles. The findings showed that females often articulated the necessity to exert greater effort than their male peers to attain equivalent respect and opportunity, highlighting systemic hurdles ingrained in workplace cultures. Conversely, male participants were more likely to report receiving recognition and rewards for their accomplishments, irrespective of effort or circumstance.

Participants' narratives revealed that gender-based discrimination extends beyond explicit exclusion to encompass nuanced biases, such as disparate expectations, restricted

mentorship, and diminished visibility in professional environments. These findings corresponded with widespread apprehensions over systematic disparities in the Kazakhstani labor market, where women frequently must exhibit extraordinary performance to secure positions that males obtain with relative ease.

This section reported how gender-based discrimination affects women's career trajectories, confidence, motivation, and long-term objectives. The following extracts demonstrated how both male and female participants experienced and understood these injustices, providing a more profound insight into how gender persists as an obstacle to equitable career advancement. The findings were presented under the following subsections: a) "we [women] must constantly prove that we are capable," b) men receive more recognition and advantages.

"We [Women] Must Constantly Prove That We Are Capable." Some female participants' responses based on what they heard from their female relatives and acquaintances reveal that they were subjected to higher performance expectations than their male peers, and that they had to consistently demonstrate their competence to be taken seriously in professional settings. Anna expressed her dissatisfaction with these expectations:

If a man and a woman do the same job, the man will be praised for his success, but the woman will be asked if she's sure she can handle it. We [women] must constantly prove that we are capable. (Anna, I1)

Similarly, Anar described how women at work related to her major (Information Technologies) are frequently subjected to more stringent standards and are frequently assessed more harshly for their errors: "If a woman makes a mistake, it's seen as proof that women don't fit for the job. But if a man makes the same mistake, it's just a minor issue that can be overlooked."

These descriptions are consistent with the findings of Temirzakhkyzy et al. (2023), who highlight that women in male-dominated professions frequently encounter high scrutiny and pressure to outperform their male counterparts to achieve similar recognition.

Additionally, certain participants discussed the ways in which gender bias influences the employment and promotion processes, which impedes women's career advancement. Aina elaborated on the impact of gender-based assumptions on hiring decisions:

In job interviews, I noticed that if a man and a woman apply for the same position, the employer is more likely to assume that the man will be more committed, while the woman will eventually leave for family reasons. (Aina, I2)

These findings highlighted the ongoing assumption that women must surpass criteria to attain equivalent recognition and opportunity as their male colleagues, hence perpetuating inequitable conditions in job advancement.

Men Receive More Recognition and Advantages. Some male participants acknowledged that they would receive more professional recognition and career advantages in the future solely because of their gender, in contrast to the experiences of female participants. Ayana pointed out that male employees are granted more opportunities for leadership roles, even though women are equally qualified: "I see men getting promoted much faster than women, even when they have the same experience and skills. It's just assumed that men are better leaders."

Aidos disclosed that he has observed gender bias in professional environments, where male teammates were granted credit for initiatives that were primarily completed by female teammates: "There have been cases where women worked just as hard or even harder, but the credit went to the men on the team. It's like people just assume men are naturally more capable."

Research conducted by Pavlenko and Piller (2008) corroborates these experiences, as it asserts that men are more frequently assigned to visible leadership positions, which perpetuates gendered career hierarchies and restricts women's professional advancement.

In addition, Zharas reflected the impact of the preference for male employees on salary negotiations, as men frequently secure higher compensation for the same position: "Men are more confident in negotiating salaries. Employers seem to expect men to ask for more, while women are expected to accept whatever is offered." These findings support Mendikulova & Mukhamadiyeva, (2019), who claim that the frequent wage disparity between men and women is exacerbated by gender biases in salary negotiations.

Overall, the findings suggested that gender discrimination persists in Kazakhstan, constructing obstacles for women in promotion, employment, and workplace recognition. Several female participants reported that they will have to exert more effort than their male counterparts to earn respect in their future professions, while male participants acknowledged that men are frequently granted more opportunities and recognition.

Occupational inequalities are further exacerbated by the gender biases in salary negotiations and the preference for male employees in leadership positions. Frequently, women are required to demonstrate their competence and leadership potential, whereas males are assumed to possess these qualities. The ongoing necessity for structural changes in workplace policies and hiring practices to guarantee equal opportunities for professional development is revealed by these gendered patterns in career advancement.

Overall, the findings demonstrated that traditional gender norms, societal expectations, and systemic barriers have a profound impact on career choices of undergraduate students in Kazakhstan. Even though women nowadays are actively seeking careers in disciplines that are traditionally male dominated, they frequently encounter supplementary obstacles to career advancement and recognition. Gender-based

discrimination in the workplace continues to be a frequent challenge, affecting the capacity of women to secure promotions, receive equal remuneration, and establish professional credibility. Male participants acknowledged that men frequently receive more recognition for the same accomplishments, while most of the female participants described the necessity of exerting themselves more than their male counterparts to be taken seriously.

RQ2: How Does Kazakhstani Students' Multilingual Language Repertoire Shape Their Career Choices?

This section goes through the findings relevant to the second research question. This section examines how language knowledge, attitudes, and practices affect undergraduate students' career aspirations, opportunities, and perceived readiness for the labor market, based on interviews with ten students.

The data analysis identified three principal subthemes within this overarching theme. The first subtheme, career-based value and strategic advantage of multilingualism, reveals participants' acknowledgment of multilingualism as a pragmatic benefit in obtaining employment, particularly in international, academic, or client-facing roles. Students recognized that English, Russian, and Kazakh languages possess varying symbolic and material significance contingent upon the professional field.

The second subtheme, gendered perspectives on language learning, looks at the divergent experiences and interpretations of language's role in professional growth among female and male students. Female participants frequently characterized language acquisition as a pivotal instrument for empowerment and professional advancement, whereas certain male participants perceived language more instrumentally or as subordinate to technical proficiency.

The third subtheme, language, identity, and career alignment, looks at the impact of students' linguistic backgrounds on their identity formation and the professions they

pursue. Participants characterized multilingualism not merely as a skill but as a personal asset that influences confidence, sense of belonging, and career alignment.

Collectively, these subthemes clarify the intersection of multilingualism with students' career decision-making processes and the perception and valuation of language capital within the Kazakhstani setting. The following sections elaborate each subtheme, substantiated by quotations from participants.

Career-Based Value and Strategic Advantage of Multilingualism

This section presents the findings reflecting students' perceptions of multilingualism as providing a competitive advantage in the context of career advancement. Although a significant number of participants recognized the professional advantages of speaking multiple languages, others observed that certain languages, such as English, are more highly regarded than others.

Most of the participants highlighted the career advantages of multilingualism, asserting that proficiency in multiple languages grants access to higher-paying positions, international career opportunities, and professional networking advantages. Bekzat pointed out the importance of multilingualism in the spheres of international commerce and diplomacy the following way: "Speaking three or more languages gives you a huge advantage in global industries. In business, for example, you need to negotiate with different people, and knowing their language makes a big difference."

Similarly, Anna pointed out the importance of multilingual repertoire for career opportunities but hierarchically differentiated the value of languages: "English is seen as the language of business and success, while Kazakh and Russian are more about local communication. If you speak English fluently, you have more career options."

Aina also revealed the importance of English proficiency: “In almost every job application, English is a requirement. If you don’t speak English, you automatically lose many career opportunities.”

Although multilingualism is generally regarded as a positive asset, participants observed that its value is contingent upon the profession. For example, certain occupations such as law and commerce necessitate multilingual proficiency, while others like engineering and IT provide minimal benefits for language abilities. Ayana elaborated on the importance of language abilities in international law and diplomacy: “In fields like law, politics, or international relations, speaking multiple languages is essential. It helps you understand different legal systems and communicate effectively.”

However, several participants noted that the job market does not attribute equal significance to all languages, with multilingualism being esteemed more in certain occupations than others. Language knowledge was regarded as advantageous in domains like diplomacy, education, and international business, but considered generally inconsequential in more technical fields. Aibek, an engineering student, reflected this disparity: “In our field [engineering], we barely use English except for reading manuals or viewing tutorials ... I believe that proficiency in Kazakh or Russian also has not much help. It is more about skill and expertise that the language you speak.”

His response shows that, in specific STEM fields, technical proficiency is valued more than bilingual skills. This highlights the fact that although multilingualism is esteemed in certain job paths, it is often underestimated or overlooked in others, perpetuating occupational silos that shape students’ perceptions of the significance of language relation to their career aspirations. Similarly, Aidos, who is pursuing a degree in engineering, stated that language abilities are of secondary importance in technical occupations: “In engineering, technical knowledge is more important than language skills.

Knowing English can help with reading materials, but it's not a main requirement." These findings are consistent with Pavlenko & Piller (2008), who assert that the value of multilingualism is significantly influenced by industry demands, with certain disciplines prioritizing technical expertise over linguistic skills.

Overall, the findings suggest that multilingualism is widely recognized as a valuable career asset, particularly in the international, legal, and business sectors. Most of the participants acknowledged that the ability to communicate across cultures, high professional mobility, and improve job prospects are all facilitated by proficiency in multiple languages. However, they also observed that certain languages, such as English, have a greater economic value for career opportunities than others. Furthermore, the significance of multilingualism is dependent upon one's occupation. Although diplomacy, business, and international relations necessitate strong language skills, technical disciplines, such as engineering, prioritize technical proficiency.

Gendered Perspectives on Language Learning

The findings revealed that the motivation behind language acquisition, the languages that men and women prioritize, and the way in which language proficiency is employed in career planning are all influenced by social perceptions. A couple of participants mentioned that women cultivate robust communication abilities and are encouraged to pursue professions that prioritize language proficiency, such as public relations, translation, or education. In contrast, men may regard language acquisition as secondary to technical proficiency, with a preference for STEM disciplines or business careers that regard multilingualism as an additional benefit rather than an essential skill.

This section presents findings in which gendered expectations influence the methods by which students acquire and employ languages in their professional lives. The

findings are presented under the following subsections: a) women's stronger engagement with language learning, b) men's pragmatic approach to language learning.

Women's Stronger Engagement with Language Learning. Most of the female participants demonstrated a strong dedication to the acquisition of multiple languages, frequently considering linguistic abilities to be a prerequisite for their careers rather than an optional asset. Most of the participants characterized language acquisition as a way of enhancing their professional prospects, particularly in sectors such as international business, education, and social sciences.

The motivation for mastering multiple languages was well articulated by Anar: "I knew from an early age that I needed to know multiple languages if I wanted to work internationally. Language skills open doors, and as a woman, I feel like I need to be even more prepared."

Likewise, Ayana elaborated on the societal expectation that women possess strong communication skills as a feminine quality, which is why they are frequently expected to be linguistically proficient: "In Kazakhstan, people assume that women should be good at communication, and language learning is part of that. It's almost expected that girls will know multiple languages." These observations are consistent with the findings of Pavlenko & Piller (2008), who claim that women are more inclined to acquire a language as a result of social norms that link linguistic proficiency to female-coded abilities, including adaptability, communication, and empathy.

Men's Pragmatic Approach to Language Learning. In contrast to women, the findings for men reveal that they frequently perceived language acquisition as a secondary skill rather than a primary objective. Although a significant number of male participants recognized the advantages of multilingualism, they were less inclined to regard language proficiency as a prerequisite for their professional objectives. Aibek elaborated on this

viewpoint: “I know that speaking English is useful, but in my field, technical skills are more important. If I improve my engineering knowledge, that will get me further than learning another language.”

Bekzat also observed that men are frequently encouraged to concentrate on technical and leadership skills rather than communication-related abilities: “For men, leadership and problem-solving skills are prioritized. Knowing multiple languages is great, but it’s not the main thing employers look for when hiring male professionals.” These findings are consistent with Grin (2001), who pointed out that men are more inclined to regard language skills as supplementary rather than essential to their professional development, particularly in industries that prioritize technical proficiency.

Overall, the findings indicate that gender significantly influences attitudes toward language acquisition. Male participants were more inclined to regard language proficiency as a secondary asset, notably in technical and leadership-oriented professions, while female participants were more inclined to prioritize multilingualism, viewing it as an essential skill for career success.

These findings imply that societal expectations that associate communication skills with femininity are the driving force behind women’s stronger engagement with language learning. In contrast, the more pragmatic approach of men is consistent with occupational trends that prioritize technical skills in male-dominated fields. These gendered perspectives reveal the necessity of a more equitable approach to language education that fosters the recognition of multilingualism as a valuable career asset for both men and women.

Language, Identity, and Career Alignment

A frequent topic in students’ narratives was the complex interplay between their multilingual identities and their alignment, or absence of it, with their job objectives. This

subsection highlights that language is both a skill and a facet of personal and professional identity, influencing students' perceptions of their career trajectories. Participants expressed how their linguistic repertoires shaped their perceptions of future societal roles, notably with cultural affiliation, self-identity, and social acceptance.

Participants who indicated robust connections with one or more languages frequently saw languages as essential to their prospective jobs. For example, Anna stated, "Since childhood, I loved English, and I have consistently envisioned myself in a field associated with English... possibly working overseas." Zhuldyz stated, "I feel more confident when I speak in English. I transform into an alternate version of myself—more open-minded, more courageous." These assertions demonstrate the profound connection between language proficiency and students' self-identity and professional aspirations, especially in multilingual environments like Kazakhstan.

These findings corroborate Burck's (2011) study that language is fundamental to identity formation and frequently influences how multilingual individuals interact within social and professional contexts. Norton's (2000) study states that language learning involves not only the acquisition of communication skills but also the investment in a preferred identity. The congruence between students' linguistic identities and their envisioned professional trajectories reflects this study showing that language serves as both personal and symbolic capital that influences job choices.

However, not all participants saw a correlation between linguistic identity and career selection. Dias remarked, "I am proficient in English and have a basic understanding of German; however, I cannot envision their relevance in my future career. My primary focus is on IT, where language is less significant unless engaged in international projects." This gap indicates that for certain students, particularly male individuals in technical fields, multilingual identification may be secondary to job

aspirations, revealing gendered disparities in the integration of language into career planning.

Moreover, participants associated language use with cultural congruence and mobility. Most of the students perceived English as an entry point to international professional prospects, whereas Kazakh and Russian were characterized as symbols of local or regional identity. This aligns with the conclusions Pavlenko and Piller (2008), who claim that linguistic ideologies affect the perceived worth of languages across various social domains, including professional settings.

Overall, the combination of language and identity significantly influences the career aspirations and trajectories of Kazakhstani students. Multilingualism can enhance students' sense of opportunity and belonging, but its impact is influenced by gender norms, cultural ideologies, and disciplinary orientations.

RQ3: How do Gender and Multilingualism Intersect to Shape Career Choices of Kazakhstani Students?

This section reports the participants' perceptions of varied use of multilingualism by men and women in professional contexts, highlighting a gendered trend in the value and application of linguistic competencies. Although multilingualism is broadly acknowledged as a professional advantage, its actual benefits and incentives differ markedly by gender. Male participants frequently characterized their linguistic proficiency as a competitive advantage in leadership, particularly in domains such as business and international relations. Their proficiency in many languages was linked to authority, advancement, and self-assurance in international professional environments.

In contrast, female participants generally observed that their multilingualism, while equally or more advanced, was typically restricted to socially "acceptable" roles such as teaching, translation, or assistance duties. Although these professions necessitated

significant linguistic proficiency, they were infrequently associated with leadership or professional progression. Most of the women expressed dissatisfaction over the devaluation of their linguistic competencies in prestigious areas, as well as the constraints imposed by gender conventions that restricted their ability to use these skills beyond conventional spheres.

These findings demonstrate how linguistic capital is seen through gendered perspectives in the Kazakhstani labor market. Instead of providing equal opportunity, multilingualism is disproportionately leveraged—promoting the careers of men while frequently perpetuating professional segregation for women.

Gendered Usage of Multilingual Skills in the Workplace

While multilingualism is frequently perceived as a professional advantage, the extent to which it benefits individuals in the workforce is contingent upon gendered career expectations. Men have greater access to leadership positions in multilingual industries, while women who are proficient in multiple languages are frequently restricted to traditionally female-dominated professions, such as education, translation, and administrative roles. In addition, women in industries that are mainly male dominated may encounter difficulty in using their language abilities, as employers frequently prioritize technical proficiency over linguistic proficiency for leadership positions.

This section presents the findings regarding perceptions of the gendered barriers that affect multilingual professionals, focusing on the undervaluation of women's language skills in high-status professions and the greater likelihood of men capitalizing on multilingualism for career advancement.

Several female participants expressed that they felt constrained to occupations that were traditionally associated with men, despite their multilingual abilities. Zhuldyz

expressed her dissatisfaction with the fact that women's linguistic abilities are frequently overlooked in fields other than education and administration:

People assume that because I speak multiple languages, I should work in teaching or translation. But I want to work in business, and I see that men in the same field are valued more for their language skills than women. (Zhuldyz, I8)

Similarly, Anna explained how gendered career expectations serve as an impediment to women's pursuit of high-status, multilingual occupations: "If a woman is multilingual, she's expected to use her skills in support roles, like a secretary or assistant. But when a man speaks multiple languages, people see him as a future diplomat or international manager."

These findings are consistent with Temirzakhkyzy et al. (2023), who discovered that women's language abilities are frequently restricted to professions that are perceived as "feminine," thereby reinforcing occupational segregation in multilingual careers.

In contrast, male participants in my study indicated that their prospective careers in international business and leadership are improved by their multilingual repertoire. Dias explained that males can obtain managerial positions more easily than women due to their language skills: "Knowing multiple languages has been a huge advantage for me. In business, people respect men who can negotiate in different languages, while women are often overlooked."

Bekzat also recognized that multilingual men are more likely to be perceived as authoritative figures in international contexts, while women are frequently relegated to supporting roles: "In international companies, male employees with strong language skills are given leadership roles, while female employees with the same skills are assigned to administrative tasks", was the way Bekzat explained his view on this.

These findings are consistent with Pavlenko & Piller (2008), who maintain that multilingual males are frequently perceived as authoritative figures in professional settings, whereas multilingual women are expected to provide linguistic support rather than assume leadership roles.

Overall, the findings suggest that gender is a critical factor in determining the value of multilingualism in the workplace. Women's language abilities are frequently restricted to professions, such as education and translation, whereas males are more inclined to employ multilingualism as a means of career advancement in business and leadership. These gendered barriers impede women from completely using their linguistic capabilities, thereby reinforcing occupational segregation. The findings indicate that workplace policies and recruiting practices must be adjusted to more fairly acknowledge multilingualism as a professional asset for both genders.

Key Findings

This chapter reported the main findings that surfaced from interviews with ten Kazakhstani undergraduate students, examining the role of gender and multilingualism on their career choices and objectives. The data analysis revealed common experiences and gender-specific problems among participants. The findings are aligned with the following list of nine key findings:

Finding 1: Gendered career perceptions influence both male and female students' understanding of potential career choices. STEM fields are predominantly viewed as male-dominated, whereas teaching, social sciences, and language-oriented professions are regarded as more suitable for women. These impressions affected students' confidence and decisions, with female participants expressing internalized reservations and societal discouragement about the pursuit of technical areas.

Finding 2: Familial and societal expectations based on gender norms significantly

influence the career trajectories. A majority of students indicated that their career choices were influenced by the jobs of family members or societal messaging regarding gender-appropriate professions. Gendered family dynamics and the representation of parental roles perpetuated conventional expectations, particularly for female students.

Finding 3: Gender-based discrimination persists as an obstacle in job advancement.

Female students said that they must exert greater effort to gain recognition in male-dominated sectors, frequently facing institutional biases and inequitable possibilities for progression. Conversely, male participants received more validation and recognition, while possessing comparable qualifications.

Finding 4: Multilingualism is widely seen as a strategic advantage in professional environments. Participants recognized that skill in many languages, particularly English, Russian, and Kazakh, enhances career prospects in education, diplomacy, and international business. However, students saw that some languages were not equally esteemed in the employment market.

Finding 5: The acquisition and usage of language exhibit gender-based distinctions.

Female participants indicated heightened motivation and emotional investment in language learning, frequently associated with employment in communication and service sectors. Male participants perceived language with pragmatism, regarding it as a tool rather than a primary professional advantage.

Finding 6: Students perceive multilingualism as an asset to develop career-oriented identities, however this process is influenced by gender. Students said that language influences their self-perception and the perception of others in educational and professional settings. However, these identity-forming processes are mediated by gendered perceptions of language and cultural capital.

Finding 7: Women's multilingualism is frequently overlooked in high-status professions.

Despite their linguistic capabilities, female students indicated that being a woman directed into supportive or caregiving professions instead of leadership positions in international domains. Their multilingualism was frequently regarded as normative rather than extraordinary.

Finding 8: Male multilingualism is more frequently correlated with leadership and global competency. Male students reported being motivated to use their multilingual abilities in prestigious domains such as diplomacy and technology. Their linguistic skills were likely viewed as evidence of leadership, professionalism, and global competency.

Finding 9: Certain female students consciously challenge gender conventions by seeking multilingual occupations often designated for men. Several female participants exhibited agency by actively seeking careers in law, diplomacy, and international relations—fields historically dominated by males. The students characterized multilingualism as a conduit to empowerment, notwithstanding institutional and cultural obstacles.

Collectively, these findings provide a thorough insight into the interplay between gender and multilingualism in shaping career choices among students in Kazakhstan. The following chapter will analyze these findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical framework.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a structured report on the findings about the role of gender and multilingualism on career choices of Kazakhstani undergraduate students. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed that traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and structural barriers significantly influence career trajectories. Although multilingualism is typically regarded as a professional asset, its advantages are not uniformly available to all genders. Female participants, specifically, encountered systemic constraints that hinder their capacity to fully use their linguistic abilities. The findings reported in this chapter

reveal how the interplay of gender and language competency perpetuates occupational segregation and shapes Kazakhstani students' ideas of success, recognition, and belonging across different career areas.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter discusses the key findings of this study, which revealed the role of gender and multilingualism, and their intersection, in the career choices of undergraduate students in Kazakhstan. The research examined in-depth interview data from 10 multilingual participants to explore the impact of cultural norms, linguistic practices, and gendered expectations on students' academic paths and career ambitions.

The chapter begins by reiterating the study's objectives and methodology, highlighting the enhancement of the interview procedure via a pilot interview with the research supervisor to determine the cultural and ethical suitability of the questions (see Appendix B). The pilot study facilitated the refinement of many questions and guided the researcher's engagement with participants during the interviews.

The chapter is organized into three primary sections, each aligned with one of the research questions of the study. Within each section, the discussion is organized around three key findings that emerged from the data analysis. The findings are analyzed in conjunction with relevant literature and interpreted through these studies' theoretical framework, which includes feminist theory (Butler, 1990), sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989).

The chapter concludes by focusing on the intersection of these three theories and their contribution to the theoretical framework of the study, providing a multifaceted view of gender and multilingualism in career development.

RQ1: What role does gender play in shaping students' career choices in Kazakhstan?

This study's findings demonstrate that gender remains a critical and complex factor in influencing career choices among Kazakhstani undergraduate students. Based on participants' narratives, the research indicates that gendered career perspectives, parental and social expectations, and experiences of gender-based discrimination together shape

students' educational and professional paths. These findings resonate with extensive literature that reflects the role of gender as both a structural and societal influence in career development (Pavlenko & Piller, 2008; Sunderland, 2000; Takahashi, 2011).

Finding 1: Gendered Career Perceptions Influence Both Male and Female Students' Understanding of Potential Career Choices.

A prevalent and consistent theme across the interviews was the impression of specific professional domains as intrinsically “male” or “female.” STEM disciplines were mostly linked to men, whereas teaching, languages, and service-oriented professions were regarded as more appropriate for women which corresponds with Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity, wherein societal norms influence individual behaviors and ideas. This separation also reflects the findings of Charles and Bradley, 2009, who argues that gender biases ingrained in educational discourse frequently channel women into “soft” professions, hence perpetuating occupational segregation. Research by Sunderland (2000) and Pavlenko and Piller (2008) reflect how gendered discourses in educational institutions influence job goals, directing women towards nurturing roles and males into technical or leadership positions.

Internalized uncertainties over their positions in male-dominated fields, articulated by some female participants, in the present study, expressing sentiments like “STEM is not for me” and a deficiency in confidence to engage in engineering occupations correspond with the findings of Bloodhart et al. (2020), who discovered that even academically proficient women in STEM frequently regard themselves as less competent due to widespread gender prejudices. Similarly, Lazarides and Lauermann (2019) discovered that female students in STEM had diminished self-efficacy, which they attributed to cultural views rather than their actual performance. In Kazakhstan, these internalizations are notably strengthened by conventional societal standards, as evidenced by Khamzina et al.

(2020), who found that Kazakhstani students persist in linking leadership and prestigious professions with masculinity.

Furthermore, the present study's findings showing the participants believe STEM occupations are monetarily attractive and inherently appropriate for men, expressed mostly by some male participants, align with the Lazarides and Lauermanns (2019) study, who showed that societal perceptions regarding financial security and gender appropriateness frequently influence men's interest in STEM disciplines. This indicates that whereas women may prioritize social effect and stability, males are often urged to associate success with economic power and technical proficiency—a gendered assessment of job advantages also observed by Grin (2001).

This relationship perpetuates occupational segregation and highlights the necessity for gender-sensitive career advice in school settings. Feminist theory (Butler, 1990) explains the way established gender norms constrain women's professional prospects and perpetuate systemic disparities in career success. Gender awareness needs to be included into secondary and postsecondary education to eradicate early preconceptions concerning occupational suitability.

Finding 2: Familial and Societal Expectations Significantly Influence the Career Trajectories of Students in Accordance With Gender Norms.

The findings reveal that family significantly influenced the career trajectories of most of the participants. Half of the participants highlighted that their parents urged them to follow professional paths akin to those of relatives or to engage in “respectable” gender-appropriate occupations. This finding aligns with Leaper and Valin, 1996, who claim that familial structures are crucial in the socialization of gender roles. Kalilayeva's (2020) further reflects that Kazakhstani households frequently perpetuate typical gendered career trajectories across generations. It also corroborates with the findings by Naizabayeva et al.,

(2022), who points out that parental expectations frequently direct daughters into educational or linguistic careers, regarded as more secure and aligned with future maternal responsibilities. These factors exemplify a variant of “gender mainstreaming” within family environments (Takahashi, 2011), wherein social institutions direct youth towards culturally sanctioned gender roles.

The participants’ narratives also demonstrated how home role modeling gradually influenced their perceptions of appropriate careers. This reflects Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s (1992) research on gender socialization, wherein early exposure to gendered roles fosters internalized notions of suitable aspirations. Moreover, it supports a study by Kalilayeva (2020), which demonstrates how Kazakhstani textbooks perpetuate stereotypes of women as homemakers and men as providers. Temirzakhkyzy et al. (2023), further discovered that media representations in Kazakhstan perpetuate these norms by consistently depicting males in authoritative professional positions and women in caregiver or supportive roles.

Overall, for the purpose of bringing about a transformation in the conventional understandings of gender roles in the workforce, it is important that career education involve members of the family and the community.

Finding 3: Gender-Based Discrimination Persists as an Obstacle in Job Advancement.

The participants additionally pointed out gender-related obstacles in academic and professional advancement. A prevalent sentiment among female participants was the belief that they needed to demonstrate greater effort than their male counterparts to attain equivalent recognition. This finding corresponds with Correll’s (2001, 2004) hypothesis of self-assessment bias, wherein women absorb societal views of diminished competence, despite exhibiting equal or higher performance.

Furthermore, the findings indicating that, female participants are frequently disregarded for leadership positions or more lucrative prospects despite their competence and linguistic abilities substantiates the findings of Mendikulova and Mukhamadiyeva (2019) and Temirzakhkyzy et al. (2023) that gender inequality in Kazakhstan is both cultural and institutional, evident in discriminatory hiring practices, wage disparities, and insufficient representation in decision-making roles. They are also aligned with the findings of Crenshaw (1989), who observed that gendered disadvantages are frequently exacerbated by the intersection of additional identification variables, such as language or ethnicity. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) also argue that language, as a vehicle for gendered norms, further perpetuates inequality within institutional settings.

Notably, certain male participants in the present study also recognized these gender differences by stating that male peers were frequently presumed to possess greater inherent competence in technology, a prejudice that unwittingly advantaged them. This self-awareness corroborates Radke and Versloot's (2024) findings that young males in multilingual societies may get advantages from both linguistic and gender privilege in their pursuit of important occupations.

These findings further can be explained by Butler's (1990) theory by demonstrating how institutions enact gender norms through behaviors such as gendered appraisal, exclusion, and reward systems. Despite women meeting or surpassing qualifications, societal norms of professionalism frequently make it difficult for them to gain their legitimacy in leadership or technical positions.

Summary of Key Discussion Points for RQ1

The findings demonstrate that, in Kazakhstan, gender significantly influences students' career choices through societal expectations, educational frameworks, and institutional practices. Notwithstanding high awareness among young people, conventional

gender norms continue to exert significant influence over the professions considered appropriate for men and women. Women are predominantly directed towards language-intensive, caregiving professions, whereas men prevail in STEM and leadership pathways. These trends reflect global findings (Burck, 2011; Pavlenko & Piller, 2008) but are more deeply entrenched in the Kazakhstani setting by frequent cultural norms and inadequate institutional transformation.

The following sections will examine how multilingualism, both independently and in conjunction with gender, affects professional aspirations and perceived prospects among Kazakhstani students.

RQ2: How does Kazakhstani Students' Multilingual Language Repertoire Shape Their Career Choices?

The findings on this research question indicate that multilingualism is commonly regarded as a beneficial asset among Kazakhstani students, frequently linked to enhanced employability, intercultural communication, and access to global possibilities. The influence of multilingual repertoire on job choices is complex and influenced by students' views on linguistic prestige, the practical benefits of many languages, and the effects of institutional and societal structures. These views correspond with recent research that defines multilingualism as both a cognitive advantage and a societal and economic asset (Calafato & Tang, 2019; Dewaele & Li Wei, 2012; Pavlenko & Piller, 2008).

Finding 4: Multilingualism is Commonly Seen as a Strategic Advantage in Professional Environments.

A prevalent thread in participants' comments was the conviction that proficiency in various languages, especially English, Russian, and Kazakh, enhances job opportunities. Most of the participants, both male and female, indicated that multilingualism is regarded as essential in international business, diplomacy, and education. This finding aligns with

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which posits that language facilitates cognitive and social growth. It also corresponds with the conclusions of Calafato and Tang (2019), who argue that in globalized economies, linguistic proficiency is highly associated with concepts of cosmopolitanism and professional ability.

Multilingualism not only enhances communication but also serves as a sort of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) that broadens job opportunities. Participants regarded English as especially significant language because of its worldwide influence, whereas Russian was frequently associated with local mobility and social capital in Kazakhstan and the post-Soviet region. Kazakh, despite being the national language, was regarded by certain participants—particularly those from metropolitan areas—as less beneficial for prestigious career trajectories. This aligns with the conclusions of Radke and Versloot (2024), who argue that language hierarchies persist in shaping career trajectories in multilingual societies, frequently favoring global and dominant regional languages at the expense of local languages.

Additionally, most of the participants associated multilingualism with cognitive and social benefits, including adaptability, empathy, and problem-solving—qualities regarded as advantageous in collaborative and client-oriented jobs. This corroborates Dewaele and Li Wei's (2012) claim that multilingual people frequently exhibit enhanced cognitive empathy and communicative ability. It also aligns with Englert et al. (2024), who points out that multilingual people exhibit enhanced cognitive flexibility, enabling them to excel in intricate, multicultural settings.

However, certain participants, notably male students, perceived language proficiency as an advantage rather than an essential prerequisite for their selected technical disciplines. This perspective aligns with Grin's (2001) argument that the economic benefits of language differ by profession, with multilingualism being more esteemed in

service-oriented or international sectors compared to technical fields. This gap highlights the varied role of multilingualism across fields and professions, influenced by labor market requirements and gendered expectations.

Finding 5: The Acquisition and Usage of Language Exhibit Gender-Based Distinctions.

This finding indicated that language acquisition for the needs of career perspectives is frequently influenced by gender. Female participants demonstrated more favorable attitudes towards language acquisition and reported expending higher effort in achieving multilingual competency. Some of them connected their language learning experiences to their objectives in teaching, public service, and international NGOs—professions where communication and empathy are paramount. This aligns with the research by Burck (2011) and Takahashi (2011), who argue that language acquisition is frequently influenced by gendered identity construction, with women expected to cultivate relational and communicative competencies.

In contrast, male students tended to perceive language as a pragmatic instrument, pertinent solely when associated with professional objectives. This finding aligns with Pavlenko and Piller (2008), who observe that men and women are socialized distinctively regarding language, with women frequently shouldering the emotional labor of communication in both personal and professional settings. In Kazakhstan, these expectations may be bolstered by educational curricula and classroom discussions, which promote humanities and language studies olympiads and contests for female students (Kalilayeva, 2020). The findings corroborate Sunderland's (2000) study by demonstrating that classroom discourse frequently promotes gendered norms. Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) explains that these attitudes are not inherent but rather socially created and assimilated through interaction.

Naizabayeva, et al. (2022) noted that although multilingualism is officially endorsed as a neutral and globally attainable objective, its practical execution disproportionately benefits urban, middle-class students with more access to English and Russian resources. Consequently, multilingualism serves as a signifier of educational privilege while also intersecting with gender, geographical background, and social class.

Finding 6: Students Use Multilingualism to Develop Career-Oriented Identities, However This Process is Influenced by Gender.

A major finding is the correlation that the students establish between language usage, identity, and career alignment. Most of the participants, particularly those identifying as multilingual Kazakhs, indicated that their capacity to alternate between languages enabled them to traverse various cultural realms. Burck (2011) and Radke and Versloot (2024) point out the interconnection between language use and identity formation, especially in multilingual cultures. Burck's (2011) research on multilingual identity, specifically linguistic fluidity serves as a mechanism for navigating intricate social realities. As discussed in Chapter 2, Vygotsky's' sociocultural theory (1978) offers a framework for understanding how individuals use language to align themselves with preferred professional domains. However, gender norms influence this process, favoring specific identity expressions over others. Most of the participants in my study observed that they felt "more her/himself" while using Russian or English in academic contexts, indicating that language serves not merely as an asset but as a medium of self-expression linked to aspirations and a sense of belonging.

Nonetheless, not all multilingual identities receive equal acknowledgment or compensation in the labor market. Temirzakhkyzy et al. (2023) and Mendikulova and Mukhamadiyeva (2019) discovered that in Kazakhstan, proficiency in English is frequently linked to prestige and social advancement, whereas competence in Kazakh,

despite its political significance, may not confer equivalent professional benefits. This prompts inquiries on language ideologies—the ideals and assumptions associated with various languages—and their influence on job decisions.

This finding has two implications. Students' employment choices are impacted not just by their language proficiency but also by the perceived commercial worth of those languages. The symbolic capital of multilingualism is disproportionately allocated, benefiting individuals with access to prestigious languages and educational establishments. Pavlenko (2011) argue that language policy and practice require careful scrutiny to prevent multilingualism from becoming a further dimension of inequality. Career advising services, for example, should integrate identity-building programs that address both linguistic and gendered self-concepts.

Summary of Key Discussion Points for RQ2

The findings responding to the second RQ suggest that students perceive multilingualism as a strategic asset for professional progression, especially in areas requiring cross-cultural communication. The findings on advantages of multilingualism are inconsistent, influenced by beliefs of linguistic value, gender norms, and accessibility to language education. Female participants were found to be more inclined to regard multilingualism as integral to their professional aspirations, whereas males frequently perceive it as a supplementary advantage. These patterns exacerbate wider social differences and indicate that language policy and career guidance in Kazakhstan must consider not only the advancement of trilingualism but also the gendered and socioeconomic factors influencing its results.

RQ3: How do Gender and Multilingualism Intersect to Shape Career Aspirations of Kazakhstani Students?

The third research question sought to investigate the intersection between gender and multilingualism in influencing students' career choices, specifically how this intersection generates distinct benefits or disadvantages for various groups. The findings on this issue indicate that although multilingualism is typically regarded as advantageous, its significance and influence are profoundly influenced by gender norms, occupational standards, and social hierarchies. Multilingual proficiency as an ability is frequently underestimated for female students in prestigious industries, although it is more commonly regarded as a leadership asset for male students. This validates the recent research that considers the confluence of gender and language as a critical dimension of inequality in education and employment (Burck, 2011; Crenshaw, 1989; Pavlenko & Piller, 2008).

Finding 7: Women's Multilingualism is Frequently Overlooked in High-Status Professions.

Participants' accounts distinctly indicated that women, despite frequently exhibiting robust multilingual abilities, face systematic and institutional obstacles when attempting to use these skills in competitive professional domains. According to several female students, women are seldom motivated to seek leadership positions or career opportunities in international commerce and diplomacy despite proficiency in three or more languages. These domains were viewed as male-dominated, with multilingualism regarded as a requisite talent for women in auxiliary positions (e.g., teaching, translation), rather than as a criterion for leadership.

This dynamic aligns with Sunderland's (2000) findings, which argue that educational and professional systems frequently perpetuate gendered expectations, even while advocating supposedly neutral qualities such as language fluency. In Kazakhstan,

where trilingualism is a national policy, this disparity is especially pronounced as noted by Mendikulova and Mukhamadiyeva (2019), women are more likely to be proficient in Kazakh, Russian, and English, yet are less likely to attain high-status positions that necessitate those languages.

The participants remarked that women tend to be directed towards “supportive” occupations despite demonstrating great linguistic proficiency. This finding directly reflects Crenshaw’s (1989) intersectionality theory, wherein intersecting identities generate distinct forms of disadvantage. Kassiyet et al. (2023) reflect how this intersection manifests in Kazakhstan, where women are urged to use language in service roles rather than in leadership positions. Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) explains these patterns by pointing out the interplay between gender and language, which results in compounded disadvantages. Some female participants observed that women in multilingual professions frequently face greater demands to demonstrate their ability than males or are compelled to accept less salaries despite possessing superior qualifications. This corresponds with Pavlenko and Blackledge’s (2004) examination of linguistic capital, indicating that language resources are not uniformly esteemed across genders, despite equivalent proficiency levels.

Furthermore, according to some male participants, multilingualism is frequently regarded as a hallmark of adaptation and leadership in their career domains. When sharing the experiences of their acquaintances, they substantiate the finding of Radke and Versloot (2024), indicating that multilingualism, when exhibited by men, enhances impressions of global ability and professionalism, yet when manifested by women, it is frequently regarded as expected, a commonplace.

These findings imply that national education policies should facilitate women’s access to multilingual leadership roles via mentorship and specialized programs.

Finding 8: Male Multilingualism is More Frequently Correlated With Leadership and Global Competency.

This study reveals that women’s multilingual abilities are predominantly restricted to conventional “feminine” professions, particularly in teaching, education, and social services. Most of the female participants pointed out that their career choices were influenced by their gender and linguistic competencies, although this combination directed them towards professions with diminished social and economic prestige. Temirzakhkyzy et al. (2023) observe that this reflects national job trends in Kazakhstan, where women are underrepresented in diplomatic, technological, and executive roles despite their high academic achievements and bilingual capabilities.

This systemic marginalization was evident in the reported absence of institutional support mechanisms. A majority of female participants noted the lack of mentoring options or career assistance promoting women’s use of multilingualism in prestigious professions. This data reflects Mendikulova and Mukhamadiyeva’s (2019) claim that although Kazakhstan advocates for multilingualism in theory, its policies are deficient in measures to address the gender disparity in multilingual professions.

These deficits are intensified by gendered working dynamics. Naizabayeva et al. (2022) claim that hiring practices in Kazakhstan frequently prefer male candidates for positions necessitating public speaking or international travel—domains where multilingualism is crucial—due to prejudices associating males with authority and women with domestic roles. This bias was reflected in both male and female participants’ accounts.

The findings also show that symbolic capital linked to multilingualism varies by gender. According to Bourdieu’s (1991) theory of linguistic capital, language proficiency translates into tangible capital only when it is socially acknowledged and institutionally

esteemed. Male students reported being urged to use language abilities in esteemed fields, so strengthening prevailing gender hierarchies; While for women, the same abilities may perpetuate notions of subservience or caregiving. This corroborates the findings of Pavlenko and Piller (2008), which demonstrate that linguistic capital is perceived differently according to gender. Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) explains how male privilege facilitates the advancement of linguistic competencies, but women's skills often remain obscured or devalued.

These findings imply that employers need to undergo training on the equitable acknowledgment of competencies, regardless of gender.

Finding 9: Certain Female Students Consciously Challenge Gender Conventions by Seeking Multilingual Occupations Often Designated For Men.

Notwithstanding the systemic barriers, most of the female participants showed agency in defying conventional expectations. For example, certain female participants showed interest in engaging in diplomacy, legal affairs, and international endeavors, leveraging multilingualism as a means of empowerment. These accounts of resistance resonate within post structural feminist frameworks (Piller & Pavlenko, 2007), which consider identity as not static but rather negotiated.

Burck's (2011) assertion was that multilingual women might use their linguistic abilities as instruments for identity formation and empowerment, therefore, this resistance signifies the rise of new identities among Kazakhstani women—educated, multilingual, and globally minded—who endeavor to confront the gendered constraints placed on their professional trajectories (Piller & Pavlenko, 2008; Takahashi, 2011). However, their success frequently hinges on access to supportive institutions, mentors, and networks—elements that are disproportionately allocated across gender and class divisions. This

suggests that support structures should be established to promote agency and resilience in young women pursuing careers in multilingual fields traditionally dominated by men.

Summary of Key Discussion Points for RQ3

The findings for RQ3 show that the intersection of gender and multilingualism in Kazakhstan generates intricate and frequently inequitable career trajectories. Although multilingualism is officially endorsed and actively sought by students of all genders, its tangible advantages are not uniformly experienced. For men, multilingualism facilitates entry into esteemed, internationally oriented careers; for women, it often solidifies career paths in lower-wage, caring roles. These relationships are influenced by ingrained societal norms, institutional prejudices, and gendered work demands.

Nonetheless, certain female participants are actively opposing these positions, leveraging their linguistic skills to contest vocational limitations. Their narratives highlight the limitations and the transformational possibilities of multilingualism within a gendered society. Rectifying these inequities necessitates the promotion of multilingual education alongside a critique of the social structures that influence its worth ensuring that multilingualism serves as an instrument of empowerment for all, rather than for a select few.

Conclusion

The discussion of findings points out that gender significantly influences students' direction toward socially approved career trajectories, frequently restricting women's access to male-dominated and higher-paying fields such as STEM. Simultaneously, multilingualism is broadly seen as a professional advantage, however its worth is inequitably allocated across gender distinctions. Male students frequently leverage their multilingualism in leadership roles, but female students are often steered towards caregiving or supportive positions, despite possessing equal or superior linguistic abilities.

The findings indicate that gendered societal expectations, familial influence, and institutional obstacles substantially impact the use and acknowledgment of language skills in professional advancement. Nonetheless, certain female participants showed resistance by selecting career trajectories that challenge conventional stereotypes, revealing the possibility of agency within restrictive frameworks.

Collectively, these insights offer a profound understanding of the interplay between gender and multilingualism in influencing students' career choices in Kazakhstan. The implications of these observations are elaborated upon in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the key findings from the study on the role of and intersection between gender and multilingualism in shaping the career choices of undergraduate students in Kazakhstan. This study, framed by feminist theory (Butler, 1990), sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989), and analyzed through the intersectional feminist framework (IFF) (CRIAW, 2006), sought to understand the intricate experiences of ten multilingual students—five male and five female—attending a university in Kazakhstan. This analysis was guided by three research questions concerning the role of gender, multilingualism, and their intersection on undergraduate students' career choices.

Main Conclusions of the Study and Further Implications

This study identified nine key findings, each corresponding to the three research questions. The findings were comprehensive and well-contextualized, revealing the lasting impacts of gender norms, institutional factors, and the significance of multilingualism in professional advancement. The study's methodology, based on comprehensive semi-structured interviews and thorough thematic analysis, allowed the researcher to derive significant and contextually relevant conclusions that align with both local and worldwide discussions on equity, identity, and educational access.

Conclusion 1: Gender Significantly Influences The Shape of Students' Career Choices and Aspirations.

The findings indicate that conventional gender norms and professional stereotypes are profoundly ingrained in students' views on job appropriateness. Female students were often guided—by both internalized convictions and external pressures—toward “feminine” disciplines such as education, social services, and languages, whereas male students exhibited assurance in pursuing STEM and prestigious careers. This gendered separation is

perpetuated by familial expectations, cultural role modeling, and structural obstacles in school and the job market. Notwithstanding their academic proficiency, female participants indicated that they must exert greater effort to achieve acknowledgement in male dominated disciplines. These observations highlight the necessity for gender sensitive career advice and institutional transformation in educational and employment systems to eradicate enduring disparities in employment.

Conclusion 2: Multilingualism is Acknowledged as a Professional Advantage; Yet Its Significance and Usage are Influenced by Gendered Expectations.

Participants widely saw multilingualism as an asset for academic achievement, intercultural communication, and opportunities in global jobs. However, its perceived usefulness differed by gender. Female students invested emotionally and profoundly in language acquisition; nonetheless, their competencies were frequently directed towards lower-status or supportive professions. Conversely, male students perceived language pragmatically, reporting it as a leadership advantage in esteemed domains. The observed patterns indicate that the institutional and cultural appreciation of linguistic capital is not devoid of gender bias, necessitating that language policy in education must be supplemented with equitable narratives on the beneficiaries of multilingualism and the mechanisms involved.

Conclusion 3: The Intersection of Gender and Multilingualism Creates Compounded Inequalities, While Also Providing Sites For Resistance and Transformation.

The intersection of gender and multilingualism yields intricate and multifaceted experiences. Women's multilingualism is often undervalued in prestigious professional domains, whereas men's multilingualism is perceived as enhancing leadership and global competence. The research also revealed that female students demonstrated agency by using their linguistic skills to navigate and contest gendered norms, especially in law,

diplomacy, and international business. These students challenged the cultural narrative that restrict women to linguistically nurturing roles and instead framed their multilingualism as a means of empowerment. This finding reveals the need for intersectional frameworks in policy and practice that recognize both institutional limitations and the possibilities for individual agency within those restrictions.

Collectively, these three conclusions indicate that each research question was thoroughly examined, uncovering frequent difficulties and revolutionary opportunities. The consequences encompass educational practice, career advising, and institutional transformation, highlighting the necessity for inclusive game works that allow all students, irrespective of gender or linguistic background, to attain equal professional prospects.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Notwithstanding the study's contributions, specific limitations should be recognized. First, the sample size, sufficient for comprehensive qualitative analysis, constrained generalizability. Second, all participants originated from a one multilingual urban university. Hence, they may fail to represent the experiences of students in rural areas or monolingual institutions. Third, the study primarily concentrated on students' opinions and aspirations, rather than on long-term employment prospects. Future longitudinal research can examine the evolution of these gendered and linguistic dynamics across various career stages.

Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest a lot of possibilities for more investigation and application. Regarding application, there are three main recommendations. First, educational institutions in Kazakhstan and similar multilingual environments are recommended to provide gender-sensitive career guidance, actively confront gender stereotypes in curriculum and pedagogy, and ensure that language skills are equally

promoted across genders as valuable job assets. Second, policies should be established to address the marginalization of women's multilingual contributions in prestigious careers, and mentorship initiatives should focus on aiding young women in attaining leadership positions within multilingual contexts. Third, higher education and labor ministries are encouraged to collaborate at the policy level to integrate gender and language equity into career development frameworks. Teacher training and academic advice are encouraged to incorporate an understanding of how intersectional identities influence possibilities and obstacles for students. Employers are encouraged to be made aware of the unconscious gender prejudices that influence impressions of competence and leadership, especially in international, multilingual fields such as diplomacy, global business, and academia.

Personal Reflection

This research journey has proven the efficacy of qualitative inquiry in revealing the lived experiences of students who navigate intricate and intersecting networks of privilege and exclusion. As a multilingual female researcher, I discovered that most of the participants' narratives resonated with aspects of my own experience, highlighting the emotional significance and ethical obligation of accurately and sensitively reflecting their perspectives. This thesis, although scholarly in intent, also advocates for more inclusive, equitable, and responsive educational institutions that acknowledge the complete humanity and potential of every learner.

The synthesis of feminist theory, sociocultural theory, and intersectionality theory in this study established a multifaceted theoretical framework crucial for examining the interconnected systems affecting students' career paths. Feminist theory explained the gendered power dynamics embedded in family, education, and employment; sociocultural theory clarified the social mediation of language, identity, and cognition; and intersectionality theory provided a framework for understanding the complex experiences

of students at the intersection of gender and multilingualism. The theoretical perspectives were integrated using the intersectional feminist framework, a visual and conceptual instrument that allowed me to explain and justify the interconnections among gender norms, linguistic practices, and career accessibility. This intersectional paradigm enhanced the study's analytical depth and provides a reproducible framework for future research in other multilingual, post-Soviet, or gender-stratified contexts.

This thesis enhances the fields of multilingual education, gender studies, and career development by explaining how intersecting identities influence students' views of opportunity and belonging. The findings indicate that significant transformation in Kazakhstani higher education needs to go beyond the promotion of language acquisition or gender equity in isolation. It needs to face the systemic frameworks that influence students' decisions at the intersection of their identities, linguistic capabilities, and societal expectations. This study prioritized students' perspectives and employed an intersectional framework, providing insights that might enhance both academic discourse and transformational initiatives in educational policy and practice.

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Appendix A: AI Declaration Form



Thesis Title: Exploring the Role and Intersection of Gender and Multilingualism in Shaping Career Choice of Kazakhstani Undergraduate University Students

Declaration of the Use of Generative AI

I hereby declare that I have read and understood NUGSE's policy concerning appropriate use of generative AI tools and composed this work independently (please check one):

- ☒ with the use of generative artificial intelligence tools, or
☐ without the use of generative artificial intelligence tools.

(If you have used generative AI tools, please complete the rest of this form.)

During the preparation of this proposal/thesis, I used ChatGPT, Deepseek, Perplexity, Turboscribe, Grammarly [NAME of TOOL] to brainstorm the thesis topic, table of content and titles for paragraphs, proofreading, language support, paraphrasing, formatting, organizing references, what literature around my thesis to look for and to transcribe and translate interview's audiotapes [REASON].

I also declare that I

- ☒ am aware of the capabilities and limitations of generative AI tool(s),
☒ have verified that the content generated by AI systems and adopted by me is factually correct,
☒ am aware that as the author of this thesis I bear full responsibility for the statements and assertions made in it,
☒ have submitted complete and accurate information about my use of generative AI tools in this work, and
☒ acknowledge that there may be disciplinary consequences if I have breached NU Student Code of Conduct or not followed NUGSE's guidelines regarding appropriate AI use.

Name: Dana Chuteneva
 Date: 29.05.2025

Signature:

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Dear students,

If you:

- enroll as a first-year university student at *name of the university*,
- are proficient in Kazakh, Russian, English,
- are 18 years old or older.
- are interested in taking part in a study that will examine the role of gender, multilingualism, and the intersection of the two on shaping the career choices made by first-year university students in Kazakhstan, I would love to have you interviewed for this study.

Your involvement would be very appreciated and could help illuminate how gender, language, and career choices interact in Kazakhstani context.

Your involvement in the study is entirely voluntary and will remain confidential.

If you fit the requirements and would like to contribute to this significant study, please email me at dana.chuteneva@nu.edu.kz or @dcdevoue (in Telegram) to confirm your participation or learn more.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to assist with my study. I appreciate your response!

Due respect,

Dana Chuteneva,

Master of Arts in Multilingual Education, Graduate School of Education

Қосымша В: Ғылыми-Зерттеу Жұмысқа Қатысуға Шақыру

Құрметті студенттер,

Егер сіз:

- университеттің атауы университетінің бірінші курс студенті болсаңыз,
- қазақ, орыс, ағылшын тілдерін білсеңіз,
- 18 жастан асқан болсаңыз,
- Қазақстандағы жоғары оқу орындарының бірінші курс студенттері жасаған мансаптық таңдауды қалыптастырудағы гендерлік, көптілділік және екеуінің қиылысуының рөлін зерттейтін зерттеуге қатысуға қызығушылық танытқан болсаңыз, мен сізден жеке сұхбат алғанымды қалаймын.

Сіздің қатысуыңыз өте жоғары бағаланады және гендерлік, тілдік және мансаптық таңдаудың Қазақстандық контекстте өзара әрекеттесуін көрсетуге көмектеседі.

Сіздің зерттеуге қатысуыңыз толығымен ерікті және құпиялы болып табылады.

Егер сіз талаптарға сай болсаңыз, және осы маңызды зерттеуге өз үлесіңізді қосқыңыз келсе, немесе зерттеу бойынша көбірек білгіңіз келсе, маған электрондық пошта арқылы dana.chuteneva@nu.edu.kz немесе @dcdevoue (Telegram-да) хат жіберуіңізді сұраймын.

Менің зерттеуіме көмектесу үшін осы мүмкіндікті қарастырғаныңыз үшін рахмет.

Мен сіздің жауабыңызды бағалаймын!

Құрметпен,

Дана Чутенева,

Көптілді Білім Беру магистрі, Жоғары Білім Беру Мектебі

Приложение В: Приглашение принять участие в научном исследовании.

Дорогие студенты,

Если:

- вы студент первого курса в *название университета*,
- вы знаете казахский, русский, английский языки,
- вам 18 лет или больше,
- вы заинтересованы в участии в исследовании, в ходе которого будет изучаться роль гендера, многоязычия и их взаимосвязь в формировании выбора профессии студентами- первокурсниками университетов Казахстана, я бы хотела взять интервью у вас.

Я буду очень признательна за ваше участие, которое поможет прояснить, как гендер, язык и выбор профессии взаимодействуют в Казахстанских условиях.

Ваше участие в исследовании является полностью добровольным и останется конфиденциальным.

Если вы соответствуете требованиям и хотели бы внести свой вклад в это важное исследование, пожалуйста, напишите мне по адресу почты dana.chuteneva@nu.edu.kz или @dcdevoue (в Telegram), чтобы подтвердить свое участие или узнать больше.

Спасибо, за рассмотрение возможности помочь в моем исследовании. Я ценю ваш отклик!

С уважением,

Дана Чутенева,

Магистр в Области Многоязычного Образования, Высшая Школа Образования

Appendix C: Protocol of Interview Questions

General Background Information

1. Can you introduce yourself: your age, major, languages you speak?
2. What would you say about your time learning and using different languages at university and in your daily life?

Multilingualism and Career Choice

3. Has knowing multiple languages influenced your decision to study in your current program? If yes, then how?
4. Do you think that being able to speak many languages has helped you decide what kind of career you want? If so, could you explain how?
5. How important do you think is it for you to use multiple languages when thinking about your future career?

Gender and Career Choice

6. Do you think there are certain careers more commonly chosen by men or women in Kazakhstan?
7. How has this influenced your own thinking about what careers you might pursue?
8. Have gender expectations from family, friends, or society influenced your thoughts about which careers are suitable for you?

Closing Questions

9. Is there anything else you would like to add about how gender or multilingualism has influenced your thoughts on choosing a career?
10. How have your first-year university experiences shaped your career goals?

Қосымша С: Сұхбат Сұрақтарының Хаттамасы

Жалпы мәлімет

1. Өзіңізді таныстырып өтесіз бе: жасыңыз, оқу бағдарламаңыз, сөйлейтін тілдеріңіз?
2. Университетте және күнделікті өмірде бірнеше тілдерді қолдану мен үйрену уақытыңыз туралы не айтар едіңіз?

Көптілді және мамандық таңдау

3. Бірнеше тілді білу сіздің қазіргі бағдарламаңызда оқуға шешім қабылдауыңызға әсер етті ме? Егер иә болса, онда қалай?
4. Көптеген тілдерде сөйлей білу сізге қандай мансапты қалайтыныңызды шешуге көмектесті деп ойлайсыз ба? Егер иә болса, онда қалай?
5. Сіздің мансабыңыз туралы ойлағанда біріншіден тілді қолдану сіз үшін қаншалықты маңызды деп ойлайсыз?

Гендер және мансап таңдау

6. Сіздің ойыңызша, Қазақстанда ерлер немесе әйелдер жиі таңдайтын белгілі бір мансаптар бар ма?
7. Бұл сіздің қандай мансапқа ұмтыла алатыныңыз туралы өз ойларыңызға қалай әсер етті?
8. Отбасыңыздан, достарыңыздан немесе қоғамнан гендерлік күтулер сізге қандай мансап сәйкес келетіні туралы ойларыңызға әсер етті ме?

Қорытынды сұрақтар

9. Гендерлік немесе көптілділік сіздің мансап таңдау туралы ойларыңызға қалай ісер еткені туралы тағы бір нәрсе қосқыңыз келе ме?
10. Университеттің бірінші курсындағы тәжірибеңіз мансаптық мақсаттарыңызға қалай әсер етті?

Приложение С: Протокол вопросов для интервью

Общая справочная информация

1. Не могли бы вы представиться: ваш возраст, специальность, языки, которыми вы владеете?
2. Что бы вы сказали о том, как вы изучали и использовали разные языки в университете и в повседневной жизни?

Многоязычие и выбор профессии

3. Повлияло ли знание нескольких языков на ваше решение учиться по текущей программе? Если да, то как?
4. Считаете ли вы, что знание нескольких языков помогло вам определиться с выбором профессии, которую вы хотите получить? Если да, то не могли бы вы объяснить, как?
5. Как вы думаете, насколько важно для вас использовать несколько языков, когда вы думаете о своей будущей карьере?

Пол и выбор профессии

6. Как вы думаете, какую профессию в Казахстане чаще выбирают мужчины или женщины?
7. Как это повлияло на ваши собственные представления о том, какой профессией вы могли бы заняться?
8. Повлияли ли гендерные ожидания семьи, друзей или общества на ваши представления о том, какая профессия вам подходит?

Заключительные вопросы

9. Есть ли что-нибудь еще, что вы хотели бы добавить о том, как гендер или многоязычие повлияли на ваши мысли о выборе профессии?

10. Как опыт, полученный вами на первом курсе университета, повлиял на ваши карьерные цели?

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

Exploring the Role and Intersection of Gender and Multilingualism in Shaping Career Choice of Kazakhstani Undergraduate University Students

DESCRIPTION: I am requesting you as a first-year student in a Kazakhstani university to partake in a research study examining the role of gender and multilingualism on your career choices. Your involvement will help me understand how gender, language, and career choices intersect. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed for roughly 60 minutes in one of a three languages (Kazakh, Russian, English) that is easy for you to understand and speak. With your permission, I will audio-record the interviews and/or taking notes. The interview questions will be related to potential impact of your gender and multilingual capabilities on your career decisions. Your responses will remain confidential, and you can refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any point. Your anonymized data may be used in future publications and presentations. The data will be securely stored on a password-protected device, only I will have exclusive access. We will store the data for a maximum of two years for potential future research while ensuring confidentiality and non-identifiability.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: The interview is expected to last approximately 60 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are minimal risks in this research. You may have slight difficulty when addressing personal experiences pertaining to gender norms or career choices. You have the option to omit any questions that cause you discomfort. There is no personal or academic benefit to you by participating in this research. However, your responses will enhance the understanding of the impact of gender and multilingualism on career choices, perhaps informing future educational and governmental decisions in Kazakhstan. Participants could benefit from reflecting on their career decision-making process and examining the impact of characteristics such as gender and multilingualism on

their career pathways. Engaging in this process of self-reflection could assist individuals in gaining clarity regarding their objectives and understanding the broader societal and cultural forces that influence their job decisions. By signing this document, you confirm that you have understood the information presented above and consent to partake in this study. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any moment.

PARTICIPANT’S RIGHTS: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can withdraw from the research at any time without negative consequences, and you may decline to respond to any particular question during the interview. If you choose to withdraw, all data submitted until that moment will be omitted from the final analysis and securely destroyed. By signing this document, you confirm that you have understood the information presented above and consent to partake in this study.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master’s Thesis Supervisor for this student work, (Sulushash Kerimkulova, skerimkulova@nu.edu.kz, +7 775 999 9167)

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the GSE Research IREC subcommittee at gse.irec@nu.edu.kz.

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;

- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

Қосымша Д: Зерттеу Жұмысы Келісімінің Ақпараттық Формасы

Қазақстандық Бакалавриат Студенттердің Мансаптық Таңдауын

Қалыптастырудағы Гендерлік және Көптілділіктің Рөлі мен Қиылысуын Зерттеу

СИПАТТАМА: Мен Сізден Қазақстан университетінің бірінші курс студенті ретінде мансап таңдауыңыздағы гендерлік және көптілділіктің рөлін зерттейтін ғылыми зерттеуге қатысуыңызды сұраймын. Сіздің қатысуыңыз маған гендерлік, тілдік және мансаптық таңдаудың қалай қиылысатынын түсінуге көмектеседі. Егер сіз осы зерттеуге қатысуға келіссеңіз, сіз түсінуге және сөйлеуге оңай үш тілдің (қазақ, орыс, ағылшын) бірінде шамамен 60 минут сұхбаттасасыз. Сіздің рұқсатыңызбен мен сұхбаттарды және/немесе жазбаларды аудиожазбаға түсіремін. Сұхбат сұрақтары сіздің гендерлік және көптілді мүмкіндіктеріңіздің мансаптық шешімдеріңізге ықтимал әсеріне байланысты болады. Сіздің жауаптарыңыз құпия болып қалады және сіз кез келген уақытта кез келген сұрақтарға жауап беруден бас тарта аласыз немесе сұхбатты тоқтата аласыз. Сіздің анонимді деректеріңіз болашақ жарияланымдар мен презентацияларда пайдаланылуы мүмкін. Деректер құпия сөзбен қорғалған құрылғыда қауіпсіз сақталады, тек мен эксклюзивті қол жеткізе аламын. Біз деректерді құпиялылық пен анықталмауды қамтамасыз ете отырып, болашақ әлеуетті зерттеулер үшін ең көбі екі жыл бойы сақтаймыз.

ҚАТЫСУ УАҚЫТЫ: Сұхбат шамамен 60 минутқа созылады.

ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖҰМЫСЫНА ҚАТЫСУДЫҢ ҚАУІПТЕРІ МЕН

АРТЫҚШЫЛЫҚТАРЫ: Бұл зерттеуде ең аз тәуекелдер бар. Гендерлік нормаларға немесе мансап таңдауына қатысты жеке тәжірибелеріңізді шешуде сізде аздап қиындықтар туындауы мүмкін. Сізге ыңғайсыздық тудыратын кез келген сұрақтарды өткізіп жіберуге мүмкіндігіңіз бар. Бұл зерттеуге қатысудың сізге жеке немесе академиялық пайдасы жоқ. Дегенмен, сіздің жауаптарыңыз гендерлік және

көптілділіктің мансап таңдауына әсерін түсінуді жақсартады, Мүмкін Қазақстандағы болашақ білім беру және үкіметтік шешімдер туралы хабардар етеді.

Қатысушыларға мансаптық шешім қабылдау процесі туралы ой жүгірту және гендерлік және көптілділік сияқты сипаттамалардың мансап жолдарына әсерін зерттеу пайдалы болуы мүмкін. Бұл өзін-өзі көрсету процесіне қатысу жеке тұлғаларға өз мақсаттары туралы түсінікті болуға және олардың жұмыс шешімдеріне әсер ететін кеңірек қоғамдық және мәдени күштерді түсінуге көмектесуі мүмкін. Осы құжатқа қол қою арқылы сіз жоғарыда келтірілген ақпаратты түсінгеніңізді және осы зерттеуге қатысуға келісім бергеніңізді растайсыз. Сіздің қатысуыңыз ерікті және сіз кез келген уақытта бас тарта аласыз.

ҚАТЫСУШЫНЫҢ ҚҰҚЫҚТАРЫ: Бұл зерттеуге қатысу толығымен ерікті. Сіз кез- келген уақытта жағымсыз салдарсыз зерттеуден бас тарта аласыз және сұхбат барысында кез-келген нақты сұраққа жауап беруден бас тартуыңыз мүмкін. Егер сіз зерттеуден бас тарта алуды шешсеңіз, осы уақытқа дейін ұсынылған барлық деректер түпкілікті талдаудан алынып тасталады және толықты түрде жойылады. Осы құжатқа қол қою арқылы сіз жоғарыда келтірілген ақпаратты түсінгеніңізді және осы зерттеуге қатысуға келісім бергеніңізді растайсыз.

БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТЫ:

Сұрақтарыңыз: Егер сізде осы зерттеуге, оның процедураларына, қауіптері мен артықшылықтарына қатысты сұрақтарыңыз, алаңдаушылықтарыңыз немесе шағымдарыңыз болса, Осы студенттік жұмыс Үшін Магистрлік Диссертацияның Жетекшісіне хабарласыңыз, (Сұлушаш Керимкулова, skerimkulova@nu.edu.kz, +7 775 999 9167)

ДЕРБЕС БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТТАРЫ: Егер берілген зерттеу жұмысының жүргізілуімен қанағаттанбасаңыз немесе сұрақтарыңыз бен шағымдарыңыз болса,

Назарбаев Университеті Жоғары Білім беру мектебінің Зерттеу Комитетімен көрсетілген байланыс құралдары арқылы хабарласуыңызға болады: электрондық поштамен gse.irec@nu.edu.kz.

Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға келісіміңізді берсеңіз, берілген формаға қол қоюыңызды сұраймыз.

- Мен берілген формамен мұқият таныстым;
- Маған зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты мен оның процедурасы жайында толық ақпарат берілді;
- Жинақталған ақпарат пен құпия мәліметтерге тек зерттеушінің өзіне қолжетімді және мәлім болатынын толық түсінемін;
- Мен кез келген уақытта ешқандай түсініктемесіз зерттеу жұмысына қатысудан бас тартуыма болатынын түсінемін;
- Мен жоғарыда аталып өткен ақпаратты саналы түрде қабылдап, осы зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға өз келісімімді беремін.

Қолы: _____ Күні: _____

Осы қол қойылған және күні көрсетілген келісім нысанының қосымша көшірмесі сізге сақтауға арналған.

Приложение Д: Форма Информированного Согласия

Исследование Роли и Взаимосвязи Гендера и Многоязычия в Формировании

Выбора Профессии Казахстанскими Студентами Бакалавриата

ОПИСАНИЕ: Я прошу вас, как студента первого курса одного из казахстанских университетов, принять участие в исследовании, посвященном изучению роли гендера и многоязычия в выборе профессии. Ваше участие поможет мне понять, как пересекаются гендер, язык и выбор профессии. Если вы согласитесь принять участие в этом исследовании, с вами проведут собеседование продолжительностью примерно 60 минут на одном из трех языков (казахском, русском, английском), на котором вам легко понимать и на которых вы говорите. С вашего разрешения, я буду вести аудиозапись интервью и/или делать заметки. Вопросы на собеседовании будут касаться потенциального влияния вашего пола и владения иностранными языками на ваши карьерные решения. Ваши ответы останутся конфиденциальными, и вы можете отказаться отвечать на любые вопросы или прекратить собеседование в любой момент. Ваши анонимные данные могут быть использованы в будущих публикациях и презентациях. Данные будут надежно храниться на устройстве, защищенном паролем, и только у меня будет эксклюзивный доступ. Мы будем хранить данные не более двух лет для возможных будущих исследований, обеспечивая при этом конфиденциальность и неразглашаемость.

ВРЕМЯ УЧАСТИЯ: Ваше интервью продлится около 60 минут.

РИСКИ И ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА: Риски в этом исследовании минимальны. У вас могут возникнуть небольшие трудности при обсуждении личного опыта, связанного с гендерными нормами или выбором профессии. У вас есть возможность не отвечать на любые вопросы, которые вызывают у вас дискомфорт. Участие в этом исследовании не принесет вам никакой личной или академической выгоды. Однако ваши ответы

помогут лучше понять влияние гендерных факторов и многоязычия на выбор профессии, что, возможно, послужит основой для принятия будущих решений в области образования и государственного управления в Казахстане. Участникам было бы полезно рефлексировать о процессе принятия решений о своей карьере и изучить влияние таких характеристик, как пол и многоязычие, на их карьерное решение. Участие в этом процессе саморефлексии может помочь людям прояснить свои цели и понять более широкие социальные и культурные факторы, которые влияют на их решения о работе. Подписывая этот документ, вы подтверждаете, что ознакомились с информацией, представленной выше, и даете согласие на участие в этом исследовании. Ваше участие является добровольным, и вы можете отказаться от него в любой момент.

ПРАВА УЧАСТНИКОВ: Участие в данном исследовании является полностью добровольным. Вы можете отказаться от участия в исследовании в любое время без каких-либо негативных последствий и можете отказаться отвечать на любой конкретный вопрос во время собеседования. Если вы решите отказаться от участия, все данные, предоставленные до этого момента, будут исключены из окончательного анализа и надежно уничтожены. Подписывая этот документ, вы подтверждаете, что ознакомились с информацией, представленной выше, и даете согласие на участие в этом исследовании.

КОНТАКТНАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ:

Вопросы: Если у вас есть какие-либо вопросы, опасения или жалобы по поводу данного исследования, его процедур, рисков и преимуществ, свяжитесь с научным руководителем магистерской работы (Сулушаш Керимкулова, skerimkulova@nu.edu.kz, +7 775 999 9167).

Независимые контакты: Если вы не удовлетворены тем, как проводится это исследование, или если у вас есть какие-либо опасения, жалобы или общие вопросы об исследовании или ваших правах как участника, пожалуйста, свяжитесь с подкомитетом GSE по исследованиям IREC по адресу gse.irec@nu.edu.kz. Пожалуйста, подпишите данную форму, если Вы согласны участвовать в исследовании.

- Я внимательно изучил(а) представленную информацию;
- Мне предоставили полную информацию о целях и процедуре исследования;
- Я понимаю, как будут использованы собранные данные, и что доступ к любой конфиденциальной информации будет иметь только исследователь;
- Я понимаю, что вправе в любой момент отказаться от участия в данном исследовании без объяснения причин;
- С полным осознанием всего вышеизложенного я согласен принять участие в исследовании по собственной воле.

Подпись: _____ Дата: _____

Вы можете сохранить дополнительную копию этой подписанной и датированной формы согласия.

Appendix F: Data Analysis – Transcript

[Interviewer]

Ok, here we go. Hello again. I want to mention that your name and no personal information will be written on the transcript for anonymity. So, right away I want to ask you to tell us a little about yourself: your major, the languages you speak.

[Participant]

Okay, I'll tell you the full information.

My name is *participant's name*, I am a first-year student, I am 18 years old. I am currently studying for a declared SSH, but in the future I plan to focus on sociology.

[Interviewer]

Okay, I understand.

[Participant]

Languages. My native language is Russian, I also speak English and Kazakh at a good level.

[Interviewer]

Great. What languages do you use most often at university?

[Participant]

At the university, all three, honestly. To varying degrees, of course, education itself takes place in English, so it is necessary here at a good level, so I often use it, I often communicate with both friends and professors in this language. At home I mostly use Russian. At university, depending on the circumstances, I can use Russian, English, and Kazakh, depending on who is asking. Well, it also depends on the context, what exactly is being asked, who is asking.

[Interviewer]

Got it. And in everyday life, which language do you prefer?

[Participant]

In everyday life, I communicate in Russian.

[Interviewer]

Okay. And regarding your profession, can you tell us a little about your story, how you chose it and how you came to enroll in *name of university* specifically at SSH [School of Sciences and Humanities]?

[Participant]

Well, I'll tell you a little bit about the background, so that the motives for why I came here, why sociology in particular. I have a multicultural background, as I call it, because my mother is Kazakh, and my father is half Belarusian, half Tatar. And that's why in my childhood it was always such a conflict for me, how should I identify myself in society, somehow cling to a certain group of people, because you constantly come to one grandmother, they court you with Kazakh traditions, then you come to another grandmother, she cultivates some Tatar principles in you. And that's why it was very difficult for me to orient myself in where I am in general, what my place is in society, not only in terms of ethnicity, some kind of linguistic process, it's also about self-awareness.

...

And so, because of this internal conflict, I thought that this was a very interesting area of research, in which I could realize myself later. And then the road led me to NU. I also thought for a long time between a major [specialty], because I still decided on the humanities for myself, that is, some physics, astrophysics, whatever else they have, it's not for me at all.

And from the humanities I had to choose sociology, because it somehow does not limit me in the choice of my specialty later, that is, I can then go into literally any area of everything that is connected with society. I really like this flexibility in this.

[Interviewer]

Excellent. I am also from a multicultural family, Kazakh plus Russian, and we lived with my grandparents on my mother's side. And we had all the Kazakh traditions, culture, all that stuff, but we went to Oskemen, and it turns out there were religious images [ikony] there, everyone spoke Russian, well, in different ways. And I also couldn't understand when they asked me, yes, and who are you, how do you identify yourself? I think, I don't know, a mix of both, kind of unique, unique in some way.

But you mentioned scientific, these STEM subjects, "astrophysics, that's not for me," why do you think so? Maybe someone once told you this at school, or maybe you were unproductive in some subjects, also, again, when you left for school.

[Participant]

Well, I think we'll touch on the topic of gender, gender socialization, especially how it affects women, a little later. I've had this problem forever, because as long as you can remember, you've always been told that there's some kind of segregation, that men are into technical specialties, something complicated, serious, while women are into something simple, which usually implies a humanitarian direction. I don't agree with that, of course, but it's precisely from this point of view that everyone stereotypically thinks that if you're a woman, you should do something simple, which is considered so in society.

And I also remember all the time, well, maybe not even my parents, but older generations, grandmothers, grandfathers, they always say, for some reason they had such a prejudice, if you go to study at university, go to a specialty where you will find yourself a husband.

Both laugh

[Participant]

This also amazed me. And that is why this fact, that I could not understand in any way, whether it was my real desire to go to study sociology, to realize myself in the humanitarian sphere, and not in the technical one, or whether it was this imposed desire that I should sit somewhere in the subcortex, that I should be someone simpler, that is why I went there.

But I also studied all this for a long time, then tried to push aside these stereotypes, try myself in other subjects. Well, and then in the end I came to the conclusion that this flexibility for me, which I want to provide, is precisely sociology. And regarding technical specialties, well, not even me, even if you ask friends who are studying physics, mathematics, they also say that they encounter such bias in relation to the fact that they are women, they often have difficulties, well, even from their peers: “Well, you are a girl, why did you choose this path for yourself?” So perhaps I was also afraid of this and somehow subconsciously pushed myself away from it in advance, it is also possible that I even stopped developing these interests for myself at school, so as not to face such a difficult choice later.

[Interviewer]

Very interesting. Thank you very much.

And in general, now, speaking about gender and about choosing a career, in general, you touched on a very important topic about some stereotypes about women and about men. Have you noticed any moments in your life or maybe your friends have any specific examples where it was clearly understood that for men there is a certain profession, and for women, some other one?

[Participant]

Well, yes, it has always been like that. Well, I don't know, I myself am from a very typical patriarchal family, where the father is the main breadwinner, the mother is a

housewife, and there are two angels, their children. Well, that's the ideal family from the point of view of patriarchal society.

And I don't know, a child also looks at the family, begins to arrange a lot, to understand in general what is happening. And a picture of the world is drawn that dad is someone serious, for example, he necessarily works in finance. Most often it is finance, IT, maybe there is something there, engineering is also more often chosen.

And for women such a fate has always been prepared. You are a secretary, I don't know, most often, there was also a very common accountant. A housewife, too, as they considered, such very, not even a profession, just a life path.

It's okay, if this is a woman's real choice, if she wanted it, but if, let's say, it was an ultimatum given by her husband or parents, then, I don't know, it always left me confused.

Then, I always remember, it was like this: for example, my grandfather was a doctor, and my grandmother was a nurse by education. There is also a bit of a hierarchy.

...