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Exploring Gender Studies Resources in Kazakhstani Academic Libraries: collection Development in a Post-Soviet State

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the availability of gender studies resources in academic libraries across Kazakhstan, addressing a gap in the literature on gender education within the country's higher education institutions. The research aims to assess the presence, scope, and relevance of gender-related materials in university library collections, with a particular focus on collection development in a Post-Soviet state. A comprehensive, multi-method approach is employed, including an analysis of university websites to identify gender studies programs, a review of online public access catalogs (OPACs) to evaluate resource availability, and an assessment of the depth and suitability of these materials for gender education. The study focuses on five Kazakhstani universities known for supporting gender-related studies. The findings provide critical insights into the current state of gender education resources, offering a foundation for further discussions on academic library collection development in the region.

KEYWORDS

Academic libraries; collection development; gender programs; gender studies resources; Kazakh libraries; post-Soviet libraries

Introduction

Gender studies play a crucial role in fostering social development by promoting equal opportunities and challenging long-standing stereotypes. Recognizing the importance of gender equality, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 calls for empowering women and girls worldwide, emphasizing that gender equality is not just a fundamental human right but also essential for building a more just and sustainable society. Education is a key driver of this progress, and gender studies as an academic field helps shape critical discussions, challenge biases, and promote inclusivity. However, access to gender-related academic resources

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remains uneven, especially in regions where such materials have historically been limited.

In Kazakhstan, gender education carries particular significance due to the country's distinct sociocultural landscape. Examining gender issues within a post-Soviet context allows for a more nuanced understanding of how educational programs can be adapted to reflect local cultural realities while also addressing persistent gender biases. Promoting gender education in Kazakhstan is crucial for fostering an academic environment where students and researchers can engage with gender-related topics without restriction. Although gender education became an established academic discipline in the West during the latter half of the twentieth century, it was only introduced in Kazakhstan after the country gained independence. Like other post-Soviet states, Kazakhstan inherited a structured and centrally controlled education system from the Soviet Union—one that, while formally endorsing gender equality, largely avoided open discourse on gender as a social construct (Kuzhabekova 2025). This historical legacy shaped the early development of gender studies in Kazakhstan, influencing not only academic curricula but also research priorities. Over time, universities have integrated gender studies into their programs, expanding the field and broadening its academic scope, often with the support of dedicated research centers.

Academic libraries play a vital role in advancing gender studies by providing access to relevant resources, supporting research, and facilitating discussions on gender issues. Beyond serving as repositories of information, libraries act as safe and inclusive spaces where students and scholars can explore gender-related topics without external constraints (Anasi, Ukangwa, and Fagbe 2018; Yap and Kamilova 2020). However, during the Soviet era, academic libraries operated under strict censorship policies, which directly influenced the selection, organization, and accessibility of materials. Robert (1973) highlights how Soviet censorship mechanisms included both pre-publication restrictions and post-publication suppression, effectively shaping public discourse and limiting access to certain areas of knowledge. This restrictive environment has had lasting effects on library collection development policies, many of which still reflect outdated models that fail to prioritize gender-related resources (Ashwin 2000; Stelmakh 2001). As a result, the availability of gender studies materials in Kazakhstani academic libraries remains limited, and the process of integrating diverse perspectives into library collections faces numerous challenges.

In response to these issues, the article aims to conduct a thorough assessment of university library catalogs in Kazakhstan, focusing on the availability and diversity of gender studies resources within academic institutions. It will also examine the barriers that prevent or restrict the

development of gender-related collections. The main question being explored is how the scope of gender-related collections and gender research studies is evolving in terms of availability and format within Kazakh academic libraries. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the challenges these libraries face in building comprehensive collections of gender research materials.

The research will assess the availability of gender-related materials by exploring the academic library's collections through keyword searches to locate materials specifically addressing gender-related topics.

This article presents a pioneering study in the field of gender education by examining the online public access catalogs of Kazakhstani universities, a perspective not previously explored. Against the backdrop of the post-Soviet era, where societal transformations have influenced educational paradigms, this research offers a unique insight into the availability and accessibility of gender education materials within Kazakhstan. By analyzing these catalogs, the study not only contributes to gender studies scholarship but also serves as a practical guide for researchers and educators interested in exploring gender education resources specific to the Kazakhstani context. The findings are particularly relevant for policymakers and curriculum developers, providing crucial insights into how educational institutions can enhance gender equality initiatives through improved resource allocation and curriculum development. Moving forward, this research sets the stage for future investigations, including comparative analyses with other post-Soviet nations and addressing gaps in gender education literature pertinent to Kazakhstan's evolving educational landscape.

Literature review

The First All-Russian Congress on Library Science confirmed that most soviet university libraries were one of the most backward industries and became the “cemetaries of books” (Vladimirov 1964). Gender studies is not just a recent trend, but has evolved from women's studies and feminist theories, integrating with activism to address issues of social inequality in the cultural, economic, political, and social spheres (Woodward and Woodward 2015). As gender studies has developed and gained institutional recognition (Khotkina 2020), libraries have adapted by expanding their collections to include a more diverse range of resources on gender topics. Until the late 1970s and 1980s, gender research and gender studies were predominantly absent from social science disciplines in the Soviet era, which primarily focused on statistics, econometrics, and similar analytical methods rather than social, cultural, and political measures (Kataeva et al. 2023). The gender studies literature is growing worldwide, but some regions, including post-Soviet Central Asian countries, are underrepresented

(Durrani et al. 2022). Interest in publications and research in post-Soviet countries is growing steadily, but there is still a noticeable lack of knowledge about gender representation in post-Soviet research and publications (Kataeva et al. 2023). After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, women scientists pioneered the development of gender studies as a new field of social science knowledge (Kataeva et al. 2023).

Political and economic changes in post-Soviet society have created new information needs of people in many areas and the need for more and better books (Knutson 2007). The irony is that libraries could freely acquire books, but there is no money to buy them (Knutson 2007). Although librarianship today faces numerous ongoing challenges, some of the major challenges include “the erosion of bibliographic control, the disappearance of established suppliers, inadequate purchasing budgets, and ineffective exchange programs” (Galbo 2020).

As one of the central tools of research and teaching, libraries provide access to information in an organized way to the university community and beyond (Searing et al. 1992). Krolak (2006) also confirms that libraries and librarians globally are transitioning from traditional book guardians to active facilitators of information and lifelong learning, prioritizing user service, needs assessment, and solution-oriented communication. Libraries and institutions play a pivotal role in promoting gender equality and empowering women, often underestimated in their contribution to national development, particularly through fostering social inclusion (Banji 2017). International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA 2024) states that libraries play a key role in improving media literacy in communities, which helps combat bias and encourages everyone to participate in content creation. This can be done in partnership with government agencies and other organizations. In addition, libraries can increase access to materials that promote gender equality and counter harmful stereotypes. Gender studies has emerged as a critical field in academia, shaped by global feminist movements and localized responses to socio-political contexts (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004). Aleksander (2013) argues that libraries with special collections in gender studies are not merely repositories of literature, but pivotal sources of feminist knowledge and innovative thinking that critically engage with the historical trajectory of women’s and gender studies, thereby influencing the operational strategies of gender libraries and archives. Gender and Women’s Studies has evolved from its origins in Women’s Studies to become an interdisciplinary field that critically examines the influence of gender identity and roles, exploring their profound impacts on individuals, societies, cultures, and historical narratives (Davis, Lorber, and Evans 2006; Kaplan and Grewal 2002). Durrani et al. (2022) asserts that school textbooks are a key tool for the implementation of the approved educational program. In the context of a

shortage of teaching aids, textbooks become an important guide for teachers in organizing the educational process in practice, often actually determining the content and course of classes.

In Kazakhstan, the development of gender education parallels international trends, influenced by both legislative frameworks and educational initiatives (Cleuziou and Direnberger 2016). It is also worth noting that in Kazakhstan the issue of access to public and state resources and services for women from remote and rural areas remains relevant (Buribayev and Khamzina 2019). As stated earlier there is no available literature analyzing the availability of gender studies-related materials in Kazakhstani University libraries. The academic study of gender is a new trending topic and started to be explored after the second wave of feminism in the 1960s globally (Pilcher and Whelehan 2016). In recent years Kazakhstan as a newly independent country, under the influence of socio-political phenomena, also began the development in the field of gender education by adopting a series of strategies and laws (Khairullayeva et al. 2022). Despite these advancements, the availability and adequacy of gender studies-related textbooks and resources in Kazakhstani university libraries remain under-explored. Comprehensive and accessible resources are crucial for cultivating a robust academic environment in gender studies (Greenblatt 2014). As Mukhanova et al. (2019) report “Among of the key achievements, there can be singled out two important laws: the Law «State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities of Men and Women», the Law «Prevention of Domestic Violence» from 2009, and the adoption of the National Strategy of Gender Equality for 2006–2016.” The Gender Equality Strategy for 2006–2016 developed and introduced by the Government of Kazakhstan states:

With the aim of introducing gender-sensitive approaches into the system of higher education, an educational and methodological course for students “Introduction to the Theory of Gender” was created. A scientific and research institute of social and gender studies was established within the Kazakh State Women’s Pedagogical Institute. The Institute created a study guide “Fundamentals of Gender Education” in the Kazakh and Russian languages for those university students who study pedagogical specialties, in addition to developing gender indicators for the entire education system. (Akorda, 2005, 23)

Even though the strategy aimed to introduce a gender component throughout all levels of education in Kazakhstan, yet there was no systemic approach to gender education, no inclusion of a gender component in educational standards, and no implementation of gender expertise for textbooks (OECD iLibrary 2017). As a result, a few Kazakhstani Universities incorporated gender-related courses and activities within different faculties, departments and research centers. Some are included in the curriculum as an optional subject (Akorda 2005). These facts will be used in this

article to analyze the materials available in the online public access electronic catalog of libraries of Kazakhstani universities.

Methodology

Selection of universities

The main factor determining the selection of universities to participate in this study is the availability of research centers related to gender studies. Currently, the Electronic Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan lists 106 universities (Figure 1) on the EGOV.kz (Public Services and Online Information 2023) website.

The researchers reviewed all 106 universities for the availability of gender-related programs, courses, and departments. However, it is more ideal to review Kazakhstani universities with gender-related research centers since they have specialized knowledge and dedicated resources. The analysis resulted in five research centers in alphabetic order:

- Al-Farabi Kazakh National University - Center of Gender Education

Center of Gender Education carries out multifaceted research activities including:

1. Conducting fundamental scientific research in the main scientific areas of the departments.

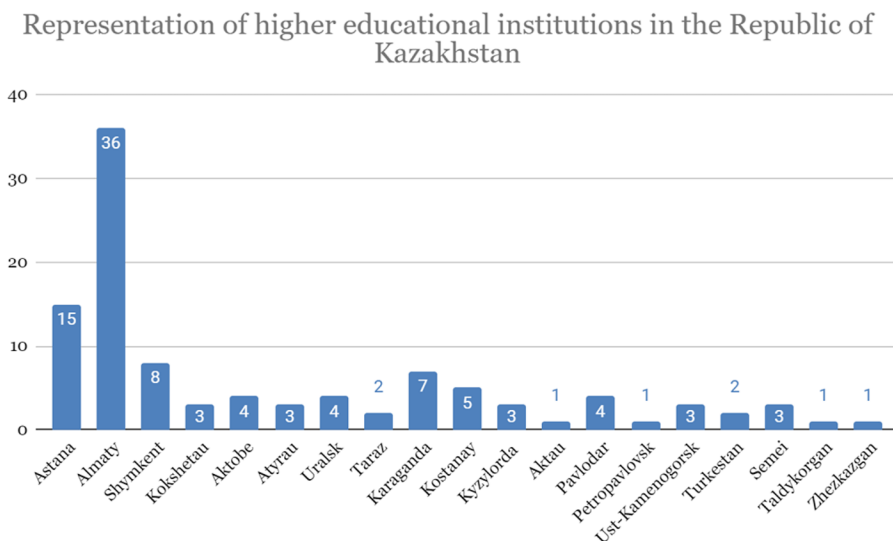


Figure 1. Representation of HEI in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

2. Scientific grants and projects of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Kazakhstan, international organizations and foundations.
3. Organization and holding of international, republican, and university conferences, seminars, round tables, etc.
4. Research work with students, undergraduates, and doctoral students. Organization and conduct of research practices at various stages of the educational process (Al-Farabi Kazakh National University n.d.).
5. Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University - Research Institute for Social and Gender Studies

The Research Institute has been operating since 2000 by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 913 of September 16, 2000.

Mission: Promoting gender and social equality through the implementation of multidisciplinary research projects and social initiatives Vision Developing the Institute as a leading center in Kazakhstan and Central Asia investigating social and gender issues.

Key directions: Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary social studies and gender studies.

- Narxoz University - Gender Economics Research Center

The Gender Economics Research Center (GERC) at Narxoz University was opened in the spring of 2018 with the financial and expert support of the Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan. The first and only center for research in gender economics in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Mission and vision are the promotion of economic well-being and equality for everyone. Narxoz research fellows conduct research, publish articles, and promote academic disciplines on gender economics in educational institutions in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

- Nazarbayev University - NU Consortium of Gender Scholars (GenCon) (2016–2021)

The Consortium of Gender Scholars (GenCon) - exists to bring together and support gender -scholars in Kazakhstan, and those who study the Central Asian context. GenCon's primary purpose is to generate research designed to make meaningful changes in various areas of society about gender equality and the advancement of women. GenCon is interdisciplinary and based at Nazarbayev University (Nazarbayev University Repository n.d.).

- S. Utebayev Atyrau Oil and Gas University - Women's Leadership in the Energy Industry.

The Executive MBA program “Women’s Leadership in the Energy Industry” course has been designed to prepare women to become highly professional, proficient managers and business partners who can develop successful strategies to achieve success in business and life. The program’s mission is the formation and development of a professional community of successful women who are ready to participate in solving significant social and economic problems within Kazakhstan’s energy industry (The Diplomatic Informer n.d.).

In total, five universities provide a variety of courses, programs, and research centers focusing on gender studies, indicating a collective effort to promote gender equality and understanding in academia. As a result, these five universities were specifically selected for data collection to conduct a thorough analysis of gender education initiatives across the country.

Locating gender-related materials using keywords

Researchers utilized the mind map tool within the Credo Reference database to identify keywords for searching materials in library catalogs. This resource facilitated the systematic identification of relevant keywords and concepts. Given the multilingual teaching environment prevalent in most Kazakhstani universities, researchers translated the keywords into three languages: Kazakh, English, and Russian. This aligns with the multilingual nature of Kazakhstan’s universities, where instruction and research are commonly conducted in these three languages.

As part of the search process, researchers reviewed the library catalogs of selected universities to explore the availability of gender-related resources in June 2024. To enable the search, discovery services were used to retrieve results from the library main page. By this time, records from Scopus were included. Three keywords—gender, feminism, and woman—were chosen for this purpose. Additionally, the search was performed in guest mode to ensure access to publicly available information without any special privileges. This approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of the availability of gender-related resources across the selected universities’ libraries.

It is important to note that access to the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) of the S. Utebayev Atyrau Oil and Gas University was not available for this study, limiting the assessment of their gender-related materials. This restriction may have influenced the comprehensiveness of the findings from this institution.

Table 1 clearly illustrates that gender-related materials are predominantly available in English across selected institutions. This trend likely reflects the widespread use of English in academic and scientific discourse, which results in a greater number of resources being cataloged in this language. On the other hand, the availability of materials in Kazakh is significantly

Table 1. Availability of gender-related resources in selected academic libraries.

University	Gender (English)	Жыныс (Zhynys) (Kazakh)	Gender Гендер (Russian)	Feminism (English)	Феминизм (Kazakh)	Feminism Феминизм (Russian)	Woman (English)	Woman Әйел (Kazakh)	Woman Женщина (Russian)
Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University Library catalog	2	4	13	0	0	0	0	18	0
Al-Farabi Kazakh National University Library catalog	32,227,754	9,074	131	2,299,081	2,523	2,523	194,693,893	458	436,543
Narxoz University Library catalog	10,985,760	86	3,225	842,225	521	521	23,516,782	338	7,957
Nazarbayev University Library catalog	1,428,104	28	0	166,867	9	9	2,582,638	2	38

lower, suggesting that gender studies are not as extensively developed or studied in this language. This difference in language availability may create challenges for scholars and students who are looking for gender-related research in Kazakh, potentially limiting their ability to access and engage with the field. The table also reveals a significant difference in search results among the institutions, with one university showing considerably fewer resources than the others. This discrepancy can largely be attributed to differences in the cataloging systems used by these institutions. Some institutions make use of advanced search tools like EBSCO Discovery Service and Primo Ex Libris, which pull data not only from the university's catalog but also from open sources. These tools offer a broader range of materials. In contrast, other institutions rely on more localized systems, such as IRBIS, which provide a narrower selection of materials. This difference in cataloging systems has a noticeable impact on the accessibility and comprehensiveness of gender-related resources across institutions.

Beyond cataloging system differences, it is also important to consider the nature of the retrieved materials. Although some of the resources may be openly accessible, many of the results from discovery services consist of proprietary content that is only available to institutional members through subscriptions and licensing agreements. As a result, while the search results show a high number of gender studies materials, many of these resources are not freely accessible to everyone, especially to those without institutional access.

Overall, these findings highlight crucial challenges in the representation and accessibility of gender studies in academic libraries. The dominance of English-language materials underscores the need for increased efforts to develop and integrate gender studies literature in Kazakh. Additionally, the variation in cataloging systems suggests the necessity of adopting more comprehensive search tools to ensure equitable access to gender-related resources across institutions. Addressing these issues will be essential in fostering a more inclusive and academically diverse environment for gender studies research.

Results

Aligned with the directives outlined in Order No. 913 dated September 16, 2000, by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the government has taken significant steps to advance gender equality through educational strategies. The implementation of the Strategy for Gender Equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006–2016 further underscores the importance of fostering gender-inclusive environments within educational institutions.

One notable initiative in this regard is the establishment of the Research Institute of “Social and Gender Research” at the Kazakh National Women’s Teacher Training University. This institute serves as a central hub for research and development in gender studies, contributing to academic discourse on gender-related issues and advancing scholarship in this field.

To assess the accessibility of gender education materials, researchers examined the recommended literature list provided by the Kazakh National Women’s Teacher Training University. This evaluation aimed to ensure methodological consistency and adherence to academic standards in gender education while providing insights into the availability and dissemination of gender education materials across university programs and departments dedicated to gender studies.

Recognizing the linguistic diversity of academic programs, particularly those taught in both Kazakh and Russian languages, the Kazakh National Women’s Teacher Training University recommends a broad selection of materials authored by prominent local scholars. These resources provide foundational knowledge and theoretical frameworks essential for understanding gender dynamics. However, due to the lack of an open public access catalog, researchers were unable to analyze the holdings of S. Utebayev Atyrau Oil and Gas University, resulting in the exclusion of data for this institution from the study.

Table 2 summarizes the availability of six recommended resources across selected university library collections:

The data highlights a significant gap in access to gender studies resources, with only the Kazakh National Women’s Teacher Training University providing comprehensive access to the recommended materials. This disparity underscores the urgent need to expand gender studies resources across academic libraries and ensure that essential texts are available to students and researchers across institutions.

To better understand this issue, researchers looked into the availability of gender studies books at the National Library of the Republic of

Table 2. Availability of recommended resources in selected academic libraries.

Resource title	Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University	Narxoz University	Nazarbayev University
Gender Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan: International Experience and National Model	Available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Gender Issues	Available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Bibliography of Doctoral and Master's Theses on Gender Issues of the Republic of Kazakhstan	Available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Origins of Female Leadership	Available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Gender Issues in Philosophical Science	Available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Gender, Gender Equality, Gender Stratification	Available	Not available	Not available	Not available

Kazakhstan (2025). Despite its responsibility to collect and preserve copies of all publications issued in the country, the National Library holds only two out of the six recommended books. This limited access reflects a broader challenge—key gender studies resources remain difficult to find even in major academic and national institutions.

Hoping to uncover more information, researchers also reached out to the Book Chamber of the Republic of Kazakhstan, an institution that has been collecting and archiving mandatory copies of printed materials since 1937. The Book Chamber plays a crucial role in preserving the country's intellectual and cultural heritage, making it a potentially valuable resource for academic materials, including those on gender studies (National State Book Chamber of the Republic of Kazakhstan n.d.). However, when asked whether it held copies of the six recommended gender studies books, the response was clear: none of them were in its collection.

This finding raises important questions about how gender studies resources are handled within national archiving and academic institutions. If key texts in this field are not being collected, preserved, or made accessible, what does that mean for students, educators, and researchers trying to engage with gender studies in Kazakhstan? The absence of these resources highlights a broader concern that must be addressed to prevent gender studies from being sidelined in both academic and national discussions.

The recommended materials for the program of the Kazakh National Women's Pedagogical University – Research Institute for Social and Gender Studies include several key publications that contribute to the study of gender issues in Kazakhstan (see Appendix).

Reviewing Kazakh authorship

G.G. Solovyeva, the author of the first book, is a well-established scholar in gender studies and political science. With extensive experience in both academia and practical work on gender issues, she has made significant contributions to the field. Solovyeva is an active participant in scientific conferences and regularly publishes her research in national and international journals, helping to shape gender policies and scholarship in Kazakhstan.

The authors of the monograph are experienced gender studies specialists who engage in academic and practical discussions at both national and international levels. Their work examines various aspects of gender issues and offers strategies for addressing them, playing a crucial role in advancing gender research in Kazakhstan.

Sisters A. and Z. Kodar are prominent figures in gender studies and vocal advocates for gender equality in Kazakhstan. Their work spans

multiple areas of gender research, and they have authored several publications on the subject. Their instructional manual on female leadership is one of many contributions aimed at strengthening gender education and awareness in the country.

Z.M. Kodar, in particular, has authored multiple books on gender-related topics, demonstrating her expertise in the field. Her works cover a broad spectrum, from philosophical discussions on gender to practical applications, enriching the understanding of gender dynamics in different contexts. As a respected scholar in gender studies and sociology, Kodar has extensive academic and practical experience, with a focus on gender equality and social policy. Through her research and publications, she continues to make a meaningful impact on gender studies in Kazakhstan.

Discussion

As highlighted in the literature review, gender studies are shaped by both global feminist movements and local socio-political contexts (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004). This perspective is echoed by Davis, Lorber, and Evans (2006) and Kaplan and Grewal (2002), who trace the evolution of Gender and Women's Studies from its roots in Women's Studies to a more expansive, interdisciplinary field. Additionally, Cleuziou and Direnberger (2016) point out that gender education in Kazakhstan follows global trends, influenced by national laws and educational initiatives. The impact of international contexts on gender education in Kazakhstan is significant, yet the study by Kataeva et al. (2023) underscores a pressing gap: despite growing interest in publications and research in post-Soviet countries, there is still a significant lack of understanding regarding the representation of gender in these contexts.

The findings of this study underscore the complex factors—such as availability, language, distribution, specialization, awareness, and budget constraints—that influence the presence or absence of gender studies books in university libraries' collections. The absence of these books in some university libraries can be attributed to the intersection of these factors, which often interact in ways that complicate library selection processes. Notably, the study reveals a concerning trend in the availability of gender-related materials in Kazakhstani universities. Despite recommendations made by institutions such as the Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University, key gender studies books are notably absent from their library collections. Surprisingly, even the National Academic Library does not house these essential works. This lack of access to diverse and comprehensive resources presents significant challenges for students, researchers, and educators seeking to engage with gender-related issues in Kazakhstan's academic landscape. These findings emphasize the need for concerted

efforts from both educational institutions and libraries to bridge these gaps and ensure equitable access to a wide range of gender-related materials. Such initiatives are critical for advancing gender education and fostering societal progress in Kazakhstan.

The absence of the six recommended gender studies books in the National Library and the Book Chamber of the Republic of Kazakhstan is even more striking when viewed against the backdrop of academic libraries. For instance, the Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University Library catalog holds a modest collection of gender studies materials, including 13 works in Russian on gender and 18 on the subject of "woman" in Kazakh. However, it lacks any works related to feminism, highlighting a significant gap in this vital area of study. In contrast, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University Library boasts an extensive collection, with over 32 million works in total. This includes 2,523 books on feminism in both Kazakh and Russian, as well as a considerable number of resources on gender in English, Kazakh, and Russian. This stark disparity underscores the variation in the availability of gender studies resources across institutions.

Narxoz University holds a catalog containing over 10 million works, including 3,225 materials in Kazakh on gender and 521 related to feminism in Kazakh and Russian. Though the number of resources related to "woman" is relatively small, with only 338 works in Russian, the catalog reflects a strong commitment to providing access to gender-related content. Meanwhile, the Nazarbayev University Library catalog holds over 1.4 million works, including just 9 books on feminism in both Kazakh and Russian and a handful of resources on the topic of "woman" in Kazakh and Russian. The relatively small number of gender studies materials available at Nazarbayev University further highlights the uneven distribution of gender-related academic resources across institutions.

These findings reveal a broader issue: while some universities in Kazakhstan, such as Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and Narxoz University, demonstrate a strong commitment to collecting gender studies resources, others—including Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University and Nazarbayev University—are lagging behind in their efforts to offer comprehensive access to this critical field. The absence of key gender studies books in national repositories and the inconsistencies across academic institutions suggest that gender studies materials are not being systematically or uniformly collected or preserved. This gap in collection practices calls for a greater alignment among national and academic institutions to ensure that essential gender studies texts are available to researchers, educators, and students across Kazakhstan. Such initiatives would not only advance gender education but also contribute to a more inclusive and informed academic environment.

Furthermore, the list of gender-related titles provided by Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University reveals an interesting linguistic and cultural focus. Of the six titles listed, three are in Russian and three are in Kazakh, with no titles available in English. This distribution suggests that gender studies literature in Kazakhstan is largely framed within the country's linguistic and cultural contexts, with a notable emphasis on Russian and Kazakh. The prevalence of Russian titles reflects the historical and ongoing academic connections between Kazakhstan and Russian-speaking communities, which continue to shape scholarly discourse and publication trends. Additionally, the inclusion of Kazakh titles highlights the significance of indigenous perspectives and research, illustrating Kazakhstan's commitment to promoting local languages and knowledge.

The absence of English titles in the list may reflect limited representation of Kazakhstan's gender studies literature in the global academic sphere, as well as a preference for publishing in local languages and Russian. However, this gap also presents an opportunity for greater international engagement and collaboration in exploring gender issues specific to Kazakhstan's context, which could enrich both local and global academic discussions on gender.

In examining the library catalogs of selected universities, the study uncovered several key trends. First, the majority of materials related to gender, feminism, and woman are predominantly available in English across most universities, which reflects the global prominence of English in academic and scientific communities. However, a notable discrepancy exists in the availability of materials in Kazakh compared to English and Russian. This gap suggests that the development and study of gender issues in Kazakhstan may be underrepresented in the national language, which presents a challenge to the inclusivity and accessibility of gender studies in the country's academic settings.

Moreover, institutional variance in catalog results was significant. Some institutions, like Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University, rely on local cataloging systems, which limit access to external resources. In contrast, universities using comprehensive systems such as EBSCO Discovery Service and Primo Ex Libris can access a much broader range of materials, reflecting the importance of sophisticated catalog systems in expanding the breadth of available gender-related resources.

These findings highlight the pivotal role of catalog systems, language considerations, and institutional priorities in shaping the accessibility and comprehensiveness of gender-related materials in academic libraries. The study calls for a more inclusive approach to gender studies in Kazakhstan, one that ensures equitable access to a diverse range of materials for all researchers and students.

Strategy for gender equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006–2016

Kazakhstan has developed the “Strategy for Gender Equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006–2016.” In this strategy, Chapter 4, titled “Teaching Gender: Legal and Gender Education,” discusses various aspects related to gender equality initiatives and educational efforts. Over the past decade, the Republic of Kazakhstan has actively pursued a strategy of gender equality, paying special attention to the formation of gender-sensitive public consciousness. One of the key directions of this strategy has been the utilization of powerful mechanisms such as education, culture, and mass media. Higher educational institutions played a significant role in this process, becoming centers for shaping gender culture and fostering positive attitudes toward equal representation of men and women in state authorities and management.

Considerable attention has also been devoted to disseminating information on gender equality through large-scale informational and educational campaigns. The media have been engaged in this process as well: gender education has been integrated into the professional training of future journalists, and enlightenment work has been conducted among information producers.

However, despite these measures, some aspects may have been overlooked. For example, it may have been worthwhile to pay more attention to attracting women to scientific and technical specialties in higher education institutions in order to expand gender representation in fields where women are traditionally underrepresented. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize the importance of actively involving libraries in gender equality campaigns. Libraries play a significant role in education and societal information support, housing a vast array of literature and resources that can be utilized for enlightening and educating a gender-sensitive audience. Programs focused on education and training through libraries can effectively convey key principles of gender equality to a wide audience. Events such as lectures, roundtable discussions, film screenings, or exhibitions can serve as powerful tools for shaping gender consciousness and supporting initiatives toward gender equality. Additionally, ensuring access to diverse informational resources in libraries, including literature and materials reflecting various aspects of gender issues and the experiences of women and men in different spheres of life, is crucial.

Moreover, the library serves as a “third place” - a space where people can gather, communicate, and exchange ideas outside of home and work. This makes it an attractive venue for organizing gender equality events, as it already serves as a hub of community life. Hosting discussion clubs, meetings with gender experts, and providing space for group work on

gender issues can all take place in the comfortable environment of the library, fostering active exchange of opinions and expanding knowledge on this important topic. Thus, the library becomes not only a source of information but also a center of social interaction, contributing to the formation of a tolerant and gender-sensitive society.

Limitations

While the study provides valuable insights into the landscape of gender-related programs, courses, departments, and research centers in Kazakhstan, several limitations should be acknowledged:

1. The study focused solely on universities in Kazakhstan, which may limit its generalizability to other countries or regions.
2. The analysis may have been constrained by language barriers, particularly in accessing and understanding information from university websites or official documents not available in English.
3. Definition of Gender-related Initiatives: The study's definition of gender-related initiatives may not have captured the full spectrum of activities and programs addressing gender issues within universities, potentially leading to underrepresentation or oversight of relevant initiatives.
4. The study's findings are based on the current state of gender-related initiatives at the time of data collection and may not reflect ongoing developments or changes over time.

Recommendations

- Strengthening National and Institutional Collaboration: The Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University could partner with the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan to share gender studies resources, ensuring preservation and broader accessibility of key academic materials. A similar model is employed by Eurasian National University, which collaborates with the National Archive of Kazakhstan to enhance historical and social research (L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University 2023).
- Expanding Gender Studies Collections: Al-Farabi Kazakh National University boasts a comprehensive collection of gender-related materials, including 2,523 items on feminism in Kazakh and Russian. Other universities could emulate this example by prioritizing the acquisition of key gender studies items focused on gender policy and feminism in Kazakhstan.

- **International Model:** Universities can collaborate with UNESCO and UN Women Kazakhstan to secure funding or book donations from global gender studies initiatives, such as the Global Gender Equality Learning Platform (UNESCO 2025).
- **Promoting Gender Studies in Local Languages:** Kazakh universities could launch translation initiatives for key gender studies texts, ensuring greater accessibility for Kazakh-speaking students and fostering inclusion within the academic community.
- **Leveraging advanced cataloging systems:** Universities like Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University could consider upgrading their cataloging systems to platforms such as EBSCO Discovery Service or Primo Ex Libris, following the example set by Nazarbayev University, which provides access to global digital libraries.
- **Enhancing awareness and providing specialized training for library staff on gender studies cataloging and acquisition to ensure more effective resource management and accessibility.**

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant gaps and inconsistencies in the availability and accessibility of gender studies materials in academic libraries and national repositories across Kazakhstan. While universities such as Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and Narxoz University demonstrate a strong commitment to collecting and making available a wide range of gender studies resources, institutions like Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University and Nazarbayev University are lagging behind, offering limited access to this critical field of study. Furthermore, the absence of key gender studies texts in national repositories, such as the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Book Chamber, exacerbates the fragmented approach to gender resource collection in the country.

The research reveals that the distribution of gender-related materials is uneven across institutions, with notable disparities in the availability of books covering feminism, gender issues, and women's studies. Language remains a critical factor influencing accessibility, with materials predominantly available in Kazakh and Russian, and limited offerings in English. This linguistic divide reflects Kazakhstan's historical and cultural influences but also points to a missed opportunity to integrate global perspectives into the local academic discourse on gender.

In addition to these challenges, structural issues such as limited budgets, outdated cataloging systems, and insufficient training for library staff further impede the accessibility of gender studies literature. While some institutions, such as Nazarbayev University, have adopted advanced digital

cataloging tools, others continue to rely on localized systems that restrict access to external resources. These findings underscore the need for a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to acquiring and cataloging gender studies materials across academic and national libraries.

To address these gaps, this study suggests several strategies, including fostering collaboration between universities and national libraries, securing targeted funding, translating essential texts into Kazakh, and enhancing the training of library staff. International organizations such as UNESCO, UN Women Kazakhstan, and IFLA can play a pivotal role in supporting these initiatives through funding and expertise.

Improving access to gender studies materials is not merely an academic necessity—it is vital for the advancement of gender-sensitive education and informed policymaking in Kazakhstan. By strengthening institutional frameworks, modernizing cataloging systems, and ensuring equitable access to gender studies resources, Kazakhstan can create a more inclusive and gender-aware academic environment. Such efforts will contribute not only to academic progress but also to broader societal transformations toward gender equality.

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Appendix

Recommended materials for the program of the Kazakh National Women's Pedagogical University – Research Institute for Social and Gender Studies:

1. Соловьева Г.Г. «Гендерная политика Республики Казахстан: международный опыт и национальная модель» – Алматы, 2008 г. – 248 с. – Russian language ["Gender policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan: international experience and national model"]
The book "Gender Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan: International Experience and National Model" by G.G. Solovyeva is a significant study dedicated to gender policy issues in Kazakhstan. It presents an analysis of international experience and its application in the context of the national development model. The author also addresses the historical, cultural, and social peculiarities of Kazakhstan that influence the formation of gender policy in the country (Solovyeva 2008).
2. Гендерологиялы мәселелер\Д.Н. Нөкетаева, Г.Н. Абдыалыкова, М.С. Бекбосынова, З.М. Қодар және т.б.\жымдымонография. Алматы, 2014. –226 б. – Kazakh language ["Gender issues"]
The book "Gender Issues" represents a significant contribution to the study of gender issues in Kazakhstan. This comprehensive monograph, written by a team of authors under the editorship of D.N. Noketaeva, G.N. Abdykalikova, M.S. Bekbosynova, Z.M. Kodar, and others, offers a broad overview of contemporary aspects of gender studies. The authors address important topics such as gender identity, the role of women in society and politics, issues of equality and justice, as well as gender-based violence and discrimination (Noketaeva et al. 2014).

3. Кодар З.М. Библиография докторских и кандидатских диссертаций по гендерной проблематике Республики Казахстан. – Алматы, 2013 г. – 26 с. – Russian language [“Bibliography of doctoral and master’s theses on gender issues of the Republic of Kazakhstan”]

The book “Bibliography of doctoral and candidate dissertations on gender issues in the Republic of Kazakhstan” by Z.M. Kodar is a valuable resource for researchers working in the field of gender studies and policy in Kazakhstan. This reference contains a review of doctoral and candidate dissertations defended in Kazakhstan, with a focus on gender issues (Kodar 2013).

4. Кодар А., Кодар З. Истоки женского лидерства. Учебное пособие. Алматы, 2014. –55 с. – Russian language [“Origins of Female Leadership”]

The book “Origins of Female Leadership,” authored by sisters A. and Z. Kodar, is an instructional manual dedicated to female leadership. This concise yet informative publication provides readers with an overview of key aspects of the history and contemporary trends in the development of female leadership. The authors explore the origins of female leadership across various spheres of life, ranging from historical examples to modern challenges and achievements (Kodar, Kodar, and Zamza 2014).

5. Қодар З.М. Философия ғылымындағы гендерлік мәселелер (Ерте заманнан бiнге дейiнгi). Жоғары оу орындарыны студенттерiне арналған оу ралы. - Семей: «Зияткер» ҚҚ РБО. 2017 жыл, - 54 бет. – Kazakh language [“Gender Issues in Philosophical Science (Prehistoric to Present)”]

The book “Gender Issues in the Philosophy of Science (From Ancient Times to the Present)” by Z.M. Kodar is a textbook intended for students of higher education institutions. It provides an overview of gender issues in the context of philosophy, spanning from ancient times to the present. The book explores key concepts and theories related to gender in philosophy, as well as historical and contemporary aspects of gender studies. (Kodar 2017a).

6. Кодар З. М. Гендер, гендерное равенство, гендерная стратификация. - Семей: «Зияткер» ҚҚ РБО. 2017 жыл, - 260 бет. – Russian language [“Gender, Gender Equality, Gender Stratification”]

The book “Gender, Gender Equality, Gender Stratification” by Z.M. Kodar is an extensive exploration of gender issues, gender equality, and gender stratification. It covers various aspects of gender dynamics, ranging from theoretical foundations to practical applications in modern society. Kodar analyzes the concepts of gender and gender equality, examining how they influence social structures and relationships. She also addresses gender stratification, investigating inequalities and discrimination based on gender in different spheres of life (Kodar 2017b).