Cultural Narratives of Daughters in Kazakh Proverbs: Evidence from Cultuling Analysis and Youth Attitude Survey

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Abstract This study examined how Kazakh proverbs reflect cultural values and norms regarding the education of daughters, a central aspect of Kazakh national identity, and explored youth attitudes toward gender-related proverbs. The research employed a mixed-methods design with three sequential phases: (1) qualitative content analysis of a proverb corpus using Pishghadam's Cultuling Analysis (CLA) to uncover overt and covert cultulings (culture in language) embedded in the proverbs; (2) a quantitative survey of 268 participants to investigate youth responses; and (3) integration and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative findings to provide a holistic understanding of the research objective. Results revealed that proverbs convey culturally significant traits and roles for daughters, including upholding tradition, strengthening family ties, and supporting social unity. Survey findings showed gender differences, with male respondents agreeing more with traditional norms and female respondents showing higher disagreement. These patterns highlight generational shifts and tensions, illustrating how cultural narratives continue to shape attitudes toward daughters' education in contemporary Kazakhstan.

Keywords: *Daughter education, National identity, Cultuling, Culture, Proverb*

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1. Introduction

Kazakh proverbs have long been used to transmit moral principles, social conventions, and cultural values from one generation to the next. Among these, the education of daughters has received special attention. In the Kazakh language, "*kyz*" denotes both daughter and girl; therefore, these terms are used interchangeably in this paper. According to proverbs like "*Kyz tarbiesi – el bolashagy*" (A nation's future begins with the upbringing of its daughters), "*Qazaqtyng kyzy – qazaqtai ulttyng ainasy*" (A Kazakh girl is the mirror of Kazakh nation), daughters' education benefits both the family and society at large (Igissinova et al., 2024; Matkan, 2016; Ramanova

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et al., 2024). In Kazakh society, women have traditionally been viewed as the ones who impart cultural values, teach children, and maintain moral standards (Kurmangali et al., 2025; Rezvushkina & Karipbayev, 2021; Zainulina, 2024). Scholarly work on the education of girls in Kazakhstan emphasizes the strong cultural and moral values that shape expectations surrounding them. Kazakhs have developed a distinct set of traditions and customs related to girls, which form their worldview, values, and collective identity. In his research, Abdimaulen (2021) analyses how these customs and traditions are represented and transmitted across generations through phraseological units and customary expressions, such as *"zhar-zhar"*, a song sung at weddings. Kuzembayeva (2024) explores the position of *"ul"* (son) and *"qyz"* (daughter) in the Kazakh family structure using an associative experiment. Her findings reveal different rankings of sons and daughters in the linguistic consciousness of Kazakh parents: sons are considered a great happiness as they are the successors of their fathers and heirs to the family home, whereas daughters are viewed as guests, who are cherished and valued for their beauty and charming, gentle behavior. An article by Abzhet (2021) examines a multitude of superstitions, beliefs, and legends surrounding the birth of daughters, as well as the rules that have been developed over time. The author points out that some of these rules are still followed, while others have been forgotten as they no longer align with contemporary social norms.

Many of Kazakh proverbs arose in a patriarchal nomadic society and reinforced strict expectations about daughters' behavior, marriage, and family roles. Amid rapid social, cultural, and economic transformation, Kazakhstani youth, particularly girls, increasingly question the alignment of prevailing messages with their personal experiences and values (Diykanbai & Ilgisheva, 2023; Sadvakassov, 2024). This creates a social tension between inherited cultural wisdom and contemporary attitudes. Overall, although the cultural significance of proverbs is well known, there is a scarcity of research on how traditional gender-related messages are perceived by contemporary youth.

To address this gap, this research seeks to explore how Kazakh gender-related proverbs are understood, accepted, or rejected by modern Kazakhstani youth. Specifically, the study aims to (1) identify the national and cultural meanings embedded in the proverbs about daughter education and (2) explore how contemporary Kazakhstani youth perceive and evaluate these traditional norms in the context of ongoing social transformation. To achieve these objectives, the study draws on Pishghadam's cultuling approach (CLA), which posits that language functions as a vessel for cultural transmission. This is because the cultural characteristics of a society are embedded in its language, and analyzing linguistic patterns, particularly through the identification of cultulings, can offer insights into the dominant cultural norms.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Proverbs as Carriers of National Identity

Far from being simple linguistic expressions, proverbs function as cultural "containers" that preserve and transmit the core principles that shape society across generations and carriers of national identity (Aciobanitei, 2012; Lauhakangas, 2007; Sahraee & Khayatan, 2019). Kazakh proverbs serve as a core repository of national identity, encapsulating the distinctive cultural specificity of the Kazakh people and reinforcing their collective wisdom, worldview, and value system (Abai Center, n.d.; Aldambergenova, 2018; Cobanoglu et al., 2023). They reflect how our ancestors adapted to the environment, survived in the vast steppe, preserved their dignity, and maintained social harmony. Within their metaphorical and concise language, proverbs embody essential features of Kazakh identity such as love for and defense of the Motherland, "*El ishi – altyn besik"* (The land of your birth is a golden cradle), respect for kinship ties, "*Agassy bardyng zhagasy bar, inisi bardyng tynysy bar"* (He, who has an older brother has protection and who has a younger brother has support), reverence for both elders and youth, "*Ulkenge qurmet, kishige izet"* (Respect the elders and take care of the young), hospitality, "*Qutty qonaq kelse, qoi egiz tuady*" (When a blessed guest comes, sheep gives birth to twins), and high esteem placed on person's honor and dignity, "*Omir sholaq, adamdar bir birine qonaq*" (Life is short, people are guests to each other), "*Adam adammen adam" (*A person is a person because of other people).

They also embody unity, solidarity, and the maintenance of peaceful relations within the community, "*Yntymaq buzylmaityn qorgan and biirge ekken agash orman"* (Unity is an unbreakable castle; trees planted together become a forest). Each proverb conveys a fragment of national consciousness, reflecting how Kazakhs understood the meaning of life "*Baryna razy bol, zhogyna sabyr et"* (Be grateful for what you have, be patient with what you lack), human relationships: "*Bireuding ala zhibin attama, ar-namysyn taptama"* (Don't step over someone's white and black rope, don't trample on their honor and dignity), gender roles, *"Aiel uiding korki, erkek tuzding korki"* (Woman is the beauty of the urt, man is the beauty of the steppe), and such values as honesty and shame *"Olimnen uiat kushti"* (Shame is stronger than death). In this way, proverbs serve as both linguistic expressions and symbolic representations of the spiritual and ethical foundations that define Kazakh identity.

One of the most important aspects of Kazakh national identity is the emphasis placed on educating and raising the younger generation (Kurmangali et al., 2024). Within this value system, the education of daughters holds particular cultural significance. Daughters are not only considered members of the family but also future custodians of tradition, morality, and social harmony. Their upbringing is considered essential for transmitting cultural values, ensuring continuity across generations, and reinforcing the moral fabric of society. In particular, marriage situates daughters as bridges between families, clans, and regions, thereby reinforcing social cohesion and solidarity. In this way, daughters serve as living vessels of cultural memory, safeguarding the values and practices that define Kazakh identity (Kuzembayeva, 2024; Muldagaliyeva et.al., 2025).

From ancient times to the present day, it has been the responsibility of parents to ensure that their daughters are adequately prepared for their future roles as *"imandy qyz"* (well-mannered daughter), *"suikti zhar"* (beloved wife), *"aiauly ana"* (dear mother), *"aqzhaulyqty azhe"* (affectionate grandmother), and *"ot anasy"* (keeper of the hearth). These identity roles reflect deeply embedded ideas of virtuous female behavior, domestic responsibility, and generational continuity (Kuzembayeva, 2024). In contemporary Kazakhstan, the education of daughters is considered one of the national priorities: public discourse and policy emphasize that girls should receive not just a "modern" education but one rooted in Kazakh national values. By educating daughters that align with national cultural values, a society strengthens its national identity (Abdikadyrova et al., 2018; Akshalov & Kulamanova, 2024).

2.2. Cultuling

The concept of cultuling (culture in language) was first introduced by Pishghadam in 2013, grounded in the theory that human language and culture are inseparable because language encodes culture and provides the means through which culture is shared and passed from one generation to the next. The cultuling theory emerged from Pishghadam's broader framework, which posits that language functions as a vessel for cultural transmission. Cultuling refers to the linguistic structures and expressions that reflect the cultural background of a nation, emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between language and culture. As Pishghadam (2013) notes, "language can represent the culture of a society" (p. 47). Because the cultural characteristics of a society are embedded in its language, analyzing linguistic patterns, particularly through the identification of cultulings, can offer insights into the dominant cultural norms. This process requires a careful examination of language within its historical and societal context. In essence, investigating a society's language can uncover its hidden cultural dimensions (Pishghadam, 2013). Cultuling analysis (CLA) is a methodology developed to uncover these cultural-linguistic patterns. It is used in fields like sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and language education to better understand how language reflects social identity, values, and ideologies. CLA explores the deep entrenchment of linguistic meanings within cultural, attitudinal, and cognitive frameworks. It posits that the attitudes and thought patterns of individuals within a speech community can be examined through their language, enabling the identification and interpretation of dominant cultulings. Through this analytical lens, CLA practitioners strive to uncover the social, cultural, political, contextual, and communicative dimensions embedded in both overt and covert cultulings (Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, & Derakhshan, 2020; Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Naji Meidani, & Derakhshan, 2020). CLA sheds light on how cultuling structures influence discourse, which in turn contributes to the preservation, transformation, or elimination of cultural elements over time (Pishghadam et al., 2020). Following the seminal work of Pishghadam (2013), several subsequent works have applied the CLA method of

analysis. These include the studies of Ghaemi and Attaei (2022), Hasanzadeh and Shakeebaee (2023), Pishghadam and Ebrahimi (2024), and Muldagaliyeva et al. (2025).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design to examine the national cultural characteristics of daughter education in proverbs, as an essential component of Kazakh national identity, and to explore contemporary youth attitudes toward the gender-related concepts expressed in these proverbs, situating these perspectives within the broader context of ongoing modernization and globalization in Kazakhstan. The application of mixed-methods research facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues by integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, allowing the researcher to obtain rich insights that could not be captured using either method alone (Almeida, 2018). The research design included three sequential phases: (1) qualitative content analysis of a proverb corpus using CLA, aimed at uncovering the overt and covert cultulings (culture in language) entrenched in the meanings of proverbs; (2) quantitative survey to investigate youth attitudes toward gender-related proverbs; and (3) integration and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative findings to provide a holistic understanding of the research objective. This mixed-methods approach enabled a comprehensive analysis of the cultural and attitudinal dimensions of daughter education in Kazakhstan.

3.2. Participants

The quantitative phase of the present study was conducted via an online survey administered to first-year students aged 17–18 of Kazakh ethnicity studying at a public university. The decision to select young people in this age group as respondents was based on the premise that, at this developmental stage, they are capable of articulating personal attitudes and reflecting on culturally embedded social norms (Vanbuskirk, 2025). The transition from the familial environment of childhood to the academic environment of university life marks a significant rite of passage into adulthood. The respondents represent modern young citizens of independent Kazakhstan who were born and socialized during a period of profound societal transformation driven by globalization processes, which have influenced cultures, traditional structures, norms, and beliefs. Given the sensitivity of the survey topic, which concerns culturally regulated aspects of daughters' upbringing, an online survey format was chosen to ensure anonymity and minimize social desirability bias. Previous research indicates that online surveys provide a more comfortable environment for respondents to express genuine opinions on sensitive issues, thereby enhancing the objectivity and reliability of responses (Cohen et al., 2017).

The survey was emailed to 270 respondents, of whom 268 responded. The demographic composition of the sample was as follows: 139 male participants (51.9%) and 129 female participants (48.1%), with an average age of 17.8 years (SD = 0.6, range = 17–19).

3.3. Materials

The proverbs were collected from four authoritative sources: *Kazakh Proverbs and Sayings* (Akkozin, 2022), *Folk Wisdom* (Kaidarov, 2004), *Kazakh Folk Oratory* (Baltabai, 2007), and *Proverbs and Sayings of the Kazakhs of Central Asia* (Sattarov, 2011).

All authors of the present study, who are native speakers of Kazakh with more than 10 years of teaching and research experience, independently evaluated the proverbs according to two criteria: (1) relevance to the research topic, current usage in contemporary Kazakh society, and comprehensibility for young adults aged 17–18; and (2) collective agreement among evaluators. On the basis of unanimous agreement, a corpus of 60 proverbs meeting all selection criteria was established.

From this corpus, ten gender-related proverbs were selected for inclusion in the survey. Selection was guided by three thematic criteria: (1) representations of daughters' identity, (2) normative expectations regarding daughters' behavior, and (3) societal views on appropriate practices of raising daughters.

Following Dolnicar's (2013) recommendations on the use of cultural value statements, a binary response format was adopted for the survey. This approach was deemed appropriate as it reduces the

cognitive load on respondents and tends to produce more consistent and reliable responses, particularly in surveys that address attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors. Moreover, in Kazakh cultural discourse, proverbs typically function as categorical moral directives that delineate "right" or "wrong" conduct, leaving little room for neutral or ambivalent positions. On this basis, an agree/disagree format was considered more suitable for capturing culturally grounded responses than a Likert-type scale whose intermediate categories (e.g., 'neither agree nor disagree') may invite ambiguity and may yield analytically uninformative data (Revilla et al., 2014). This inclination toward clear moral stances is reflected in the Kazakh adage, "*Uiat bolsa da, shyndyqty ait"* (Tell the truth, even if it's shameful).

3.4. Procedure

Prior to the quantitative data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their participation was voluntary and anonymous. Informed consent was obtained electronically before respondents were allowed to proceed to the survey. Participants were informed that they were free to discontinue participation at any point at their discretion.

The survey was administered online and completed individually by respondents using personal electronic devices. Since the respondents were of Kazakh ethnicity, all materials were presented in the Kazakh language to ensure full comprehension and cultural appropriateness. Participants were instructed to read each proverb carefully and indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with its message. No time limits were imposed, and respondents completed the survey at their own pace.

To ensure the methodological robustness of the survey, its content validity and internal consistency were examined. Content validity of the survey was established through expert review. Two experts in the field evaluated the clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness of the survey items. The internal consistency of the survey was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The analysis yielded a coefficient of $\alpha = .933$, indicating a high level of internal reliability (see Table 1). This result suggests that the proverbs form a coherent set representing shared cultural expectations and normative beliefs concerning the upbringing and social positioning of daughters in the Kazakh context.

Table 1

Total Statistics and Reliability of the 10-Proverb Survey

Item	Proverb	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's α if Item Deleted
P1	Girls are prohibited from going to forty houses.	.818	.922
P2	A clever daughter gets an education; a stupid daughter becomes the object of gossip.	.610	.933
P3	May the girl who married and left home be farther than the reed field.	.634	.932
P4	Bad is the married daughter who returns home after getting divorced, and an enemy who returns with war.	.811	.923
P5	Girl's life path is narrow.	.649	.931
P6	One good girl is worth two bad sons.	.696	.929
P7	It is right to marry a girl after knowing her mother.	.832	.922
P8	Parents who raise their daughter with adequate care and guidance will never experience a feeling of shame.	.840	.921
P9	You should blame your daughter if her husband is bad.	.654	.931
P10	A bad daughter who is married often runs to her parent's home.	.824	.922
	Cronbach's alpha	.933	

4. Results

This section presents a qualitative content analysis of daughter education proverbs, aiming to identify the national and cultural meanings embedded in proverbs about daughters and girls, by uncovering the underlying national cultural cultuling. The analysis revealed three central themes reflecting a distinct

dimension of how these proverbs are interpreted today: 1. Girls and daughters as embodiments of beauty, joy, and good fortune, 2. Parental responsibility in educating daughters, and 3. The unifying role of daughters.

In addition, this section explores how contemporary Kazakhstani youth perceive and evaluate these traditional norms. Drawing on survey data, the analysis examines the extent to which these proverbially encoded values are maintained, reinterpreted, or challenged in the context of ongoing social transformation.

4.1. Girls and Daughters as Embodiments of Beauty, Joy, and Good Fortune

In Kazakh culture, girls are traditionally perceived as embodiments of beauty, joy, and good fortune, bringing happiness and well-being to their families and community. They are seen as gentle, charming, and capable, with their primary roles centered on family harmony and raising the next generation. The cultuling of beauty and bringing joy is vividly reflected in proverbs such as *"Qyz osse elding korki, gul osse zherding korki"* (A girl growing up is the beauty of the nation, a flower blooming is the beauty of the land), *"Qyz auldyng korki"* (A girl is the decoration of the village), and *"Ul ornyndagy tu, qyz aidyndagy qu"* (The son is a flag in the village and the daughter is a swan in the pond).

In the Kazakh context, a girl's beauty is associated not only with her physical attractiveness but also with her behavior. The proverbs *"Qyz qylygymen suikimdi"* (Girl is pleasant with her charming demeanor), *"Qyz minezdi, ul onerli bolsyn"* (Let the daughter be well mannered and the son be skillful), and *"Qyzdyng syluynan zhyluy"* (Warmth is more valuable than beauty in a girl) carry the cultuling emphasizing the importance of demonstrating respectful conduct, pleasant disposition, and inner grace. The proverb *"Ashyq qyzga bolady zhigit gashyq"* (A young man falls in love with an open-hearted girl) reflects the cultuling of cultural value placed on a gentle, charming, and open-hearted demeanor when shaping the private life of a daughter and girl. And the idea that if a girl has a bad character and manners, she will not be able to get married is encapsulated in the proverb *"Qyrsyqqan qyz bai tappas"* (A stubborn girl will not find a husband).

The proverb *"Qyz zhurgen zher mereke"* (Where there is a girl, there is always a festivity and good cheer) reinforces the cultuling by highlighting the symbolic role of girls as bearers of joy, celebration, and social vitality in the community. This proverb also reflects the celebratory nature of Kazakh gatherings, where girls play key roles, adding liveliness and warmth to the environment.

The cultuling emphasizing the positive energy of girls that brings good luck and prosperity to the family is encoded in the proverbs *"Yrys aldy qyz"* (Having a daughter at home is a blessing), and *"Qyzdyng qabagynda qut bar"* (Daughter's good disposition brings grace and good fortune to a family). These proverbs embody the traditional Kazakh belief that a daughter as a future wife and mother is expected to be the preserver of family harmony, peace, and welfare, and ultimately contribute to a stable and prosperous household.

4.2. Parental Responsibility in Educating Daughters

In Kazakh families, daughters are regarded as temporary members of the household, encapsulated in the proverb *"Qyz – qonaq"* (A girl is a guest). This reflects the expectation that daughters will eventually marry and become part of another family, a notion further reinforced by the proverbs, *"Qyz zhat–zhurttyq"* (A girl belongs to another family), and *"Qyz-ushqan qu"* (A girl is like a swan that flows away).

This temporary status profoundly influences the upbringing of daughters. They are cherished, nurtured, and treated with exceptional care and affection. Kazakh cultural norms discourage any form of mistreatment toward daughters, as expressed in the proverb *"Qyzdy zhylatpa. Qyzdyng qabagynda qut bar"* (Do not make a daughter cry. A daughter's happiness brings grace and fortune to the family). This proverb accentuates the cultuling of protecting a daughter's emotional state, which is a sacred parental duty. There is also a belief that *"Qyzy bar uidi perishteler qorgaidy"* (Angels protect the house that has a daughter), reflecting deep cultural reverence for daughters and their spiritual significance. In Kazakh culture, raising a daughter is seen not only as a familial duty but as a virtuous act that brings divine

merit ("*sauap"*). This cultuling is expressed through the proverb *"Qyz tarbielegen – sauap"* (He who brings up a daughter receives God's blessing). In Islamic tradition, *"sauap"* refers to spiritual reward for good deeds, so the proverb elevates parenting daughters to a sacred responsibility.

The moral and cultural responsibility for educating daughters has traditionally rested heavily on the mothers' shoulders. Throughout Kazakh history, from the patriarchal nomadic period to the present day, women have been entrusted with ensuring that their daughters receive a sound moral and cultural education. The cultuling emphasizing the mother's responsibility of serving as a positive role model for her daughter and thereby facilitating a dignified upbringing is encoded in proverbs *"Qyz anadan uirenbei onege almas"* (A daughter cannot be raised without learning from her mother), and "*Anany korip qyz oser"* (A daughter grows up learning from her mother). Another set of proverbs highlights the importance of marrying a daughter who has been raised by a virtuous mother: *"Taza sabadan qumis ish, meirman ananyng qyzyn al"* (Drink koumiss from clean utensils, marry a girl whose mother is benevolent), and *"Anasynyng tilin almaityn qyzdan bez"* (Stay away from the daughter who doesn't listen to her mother's advice). These proverbs embody the cultuling of preserving family honor and ensuring moral education through maternal guidance.

The cultuling of parental anxiety about the difficulties of raising daughters, such as protecting their honor and chastity, preparing the dowry, and ensuring a good marriage, is encapsulated in the proverbs that may sound absurd to a non-Kazakh ear: *"Qyz baqqannan qysyraq baqqan ongai"* (It is easier to raise a mare than a daughter). The idea is that raising a daughter requires more vigilance and responsibility than raising livestock.

Kazakhs believe that daughters should be raised in a careful and attentive atmosphere while they are in their parents' home, and that parents should try to ensure their daughters' girlhood is spent in love and peace. This is because it is unknown what fate awaits them when they marry and leave home. This idea is reflected in the following proverbs: *"Zhibekti tute almagan zhun etedi, qyzdy kute almagan kung etedi"* (He who does not know how to comb silk will turn it into wool; he who does not know how to care for his daughter will turn her into a slave). The proverb *"Akesi urgan ul ongar, sheshesi urgan qyz ongbas"* (A son beaten by his father becomes strong; a girl beaten by her mother becomes weak and worthless) warns against harsh treatment from a mother that may damage a girl's dignity or prospects. The next proverb sounds instructive to girls' parents who should raise their daughters *"qanattyga qaqtyrmai, tumsqtyga shoqtyrmai"* (not allowing the winged to hurt with its wings and peck with its beak). Daughters who are not given proper attention and affection may grow up feeling deprived of self-worth, confidence, and social respect, and may become submissive and oppressed in life (Abzhet, 2021).

In Kazakh culture, although daughters are loved, cherished, and pampered, they have constantly been under pressure to adhere to strict behavioral control due to deeply rooted cultural norms emphasizing family honor, gender roles, and social cohesion, as reflected in the following proverb: *"Qyzdyng zholy zhingishke"* (A girl's life path is narrow). To tell the truth, from a Kazakh cultural perspective, the underlying objective of these prohibitions is to safeguard the daughter's *"ar"* and *"abroy"* (reputation and honor), while simultaneously instructing her on the importance of good behavior, modesty, chastity, and careful speech and action. This control was seen as socially necessary to maintain moral order and uphold the family's good name because a girl's behavior was closely tied to her family's reputation. Any perceived impropriety could bring *"uyat"* (shame) not just on her, but on her entire kin group. This led to strict supervision of girls' actions, speech, and interactions with boys.

For Kazakhs, it was important for daughters to marry a worthy *"zhigit"* (a man of good character from a respectable family). Marriage was not viewed merely as a personal matter, but as a social and moral responsibility of the family. This cultural wisdom is encapsulated in the proverb *"Tengin tapsa tegin ber"* (If your daughter finds her equal, give her away without bride price). The proverb emphasizes the cultuling of social and moral compatibility between families, and the importance of an equal match in ensuring stability, mutual understanding, and the continuity of family honor and well-being.

It has traditionally been parents' duty to provide their daughters with a good dowry when they marry. It is believed that generosity or gifts given to a girl will bring blessings or good fortune. This idea is

encoded in the proverb *"Qyzga bergendi Qydyr oteidi"* (Whatever you give to a daughter, Qydyr will give you back). *"Qydyr Ata"* is a mythical figure in Kazakh folklore who is associated with prosperity, blessings, and divine favor. It is believed that he visits homes on Nauryz (Kazakh New Year) to bestow good fortune. This proverb reveals a cultuling that emphasizes the spiritual and moral value of supporting daughters, whether through dowry, education, or an act of kindness, as such generosity will yield both social and spiritual rewards. In this context, giving to a daughter is symbolic of investing in the nation's future, since girls are seen as nurturers of family well-being and carriers of cultural continuity.

Successful marriages and the formation of new family ties through in-laws were considered vital because a happy marriage ensured social stability and a positive family reputation. Failure in marriage was culturally disapproved of, as reflected in the following proverbs: *"Qaityp kelgen qyz zhaman, qaita shapqan zhau zhaman"* (A bad daughter is one who returns home after divorce, and an enemy who returns with war), and *"Shyqqan qyz shiden ary"* (May the girl who married and left home be farther away than the reed field). Another proverb, *"Kueu zhaman bolsa qyzyngnan kor"* (If the son-in-law is bad, blame your daughter), reflects the deeply rooted cultural belief in Kazakh society that a daughter's behavior and choices, especially in marriage, are seen as a reflection of her upbringing and, by extension, her family. In Kazakh culture, daughters are expected to be the moral compass and social glue of the family. While this may sound harsh according to modern standards, it illustrates traditional expectations around marriage and the role of women in preserving family dignity. Before leaving her natal home to live with her husband, her elders give her blessings (*"bata"*), one of which is *"Bargan zheringe sudai singip tastai but!"* (Sink like a stone and dissolve like water in your new home). The underlying cultuling is a heartfelt wish for successful integration and adaptation to the new environment, becoming part of it.

Kazakhs have an interesting proverb, *"Qyzdyng qyryq zhany bar"* (A girl has forty soles), deeply rooted in the cultural and emotional worldview of Kazakh people. It reflects the belief that a girl or woman possesses extraordinary inner strength capable of enduring and overcoming many hardships, almost as if she has forty lives to cope with them. This poetic expression encapsulates the cultulings of emotional and spiritual fortitude, resilience, vitality, and enduring spirit attributed to women in Kazakh society. This proverb also carries protective wisdom: it is often used to encourage or comfort someone during difficult times, especially when a woman is going through emotional or physical suffering. It implies that she will overcome it, just as she has many metaphorical lives to draw strength from.

4.3. The Unifying Role of Daughters

Kazakh girls and women play a socially significant role as unifying figures, connecting people and lands through marriage. By doing so, they help to establish solidarity and peaceful relations within society. This cultural specificity is vividly expressed and passed down through Kazakh proverbs. The proverbs *"Astyng damin keltiretin tuz emes pe, elmen zherdi qosatyn qyz emes pe?"* (It is not salt that gives taste to food; is it not the girl who unites people and lands?) and *"Eki auldyng arasyn zhol qosady, yel arasyn qyz qosady"* (Two auls are connected by a road; two peoples are united thanks to daughters highlights this idea. These proverbs activate the cultuling of daughters as a source of cohesion, a symbolic bridge, and a bearer of cultural continuity and harmony. Through marriage, daughters fulfill a familial responsibility as well as make a broader social contribution by creating kinship ties that extend beyond the immediate family, connecting clans, lineages, and communities, and thereby strengthening peaceful and friendly relationships across society as a whole.

4.4. Survey Findings

The aim of the survey was to identify the attitude of the contemporary younger generation towards the concepts expressed in a set of gender related proverbs against the background of the ongoing societal changes of Kazakhstan that have occurred during the last 34 years of Independence. The survey was conducted in an online format and included one question: Do you agree/disagree with the ideas expressed in the following proverbs?

Chi-square test revealed significant gender differences in attitudes towards patriarchal proverbs, with 9 out of 10 items showing statistically significant associations ($p < .05$). Overall, male respondents showed higher agreement (70.2%) than female respondents (29.8%), challenging the traditional gender ideologies encoded in gender-specific proverbs and thus demonstrating their freedom to define their identities and roles without being constrained by gender stereotypes when Kazakhstan was a nomadic society.

Table 2
Agreement and Disagreement with Proverbs about Daughters by Gender

No.	Proverbs	Males (n = 139)		Females (n = 129)	
		Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
1	Girls are forbidden from 40 houses.	106 (76.3%)	33 (23.7%)	63 (48.8%)	66 (51.2%)
2.	A clever daughter gets an education; a stupid daughter becomes the object of gossip.	129 (92.8%)	10 (7.2%)	103 (79.8%)	26 (20.2%)
3.	May the girl who married and left home be farther than the reed field.	129 (92.8%)	10 (7.2%)	37 (28.7%)	92 (71.3%)
4	Bad are the married daughter who returns home after getting divorced and an enemy who returns with war.	93 (66.9%)	46 (33.1%)	37 (28.7%)	92 (71.3%)
5.	Girl's life path is narrow.	118 (84.9%)	21 (15.1%)	105 (81.4%)	24 (18.6%)
6.	One good girl is worth two bad sons.	68 (48.9%)	71 (51.1%)	83 (64.3%)	46 (35.7%)
7.	It is right to marry a girl after knowing her mother.	100 (71.9%)	39 (28.1%)	76 (58.9%)	53 (41.1%)
8.	Parents who raise their daughter with adequate care and guidance will never be ashamed.	82 (59%)	57 (41%)	48 (37.2%)	81 (62.8%)
9.	You should blame your daughter if her husband is bad.	58 (41.7%)	81(58.3%)	25 (19.4%)	104 (80.6%)
10.	A daughter who is married often runs to her parents' home is bad.	83 (59.7%)	56 (40.3%)	38 (29.5%)	91 (70.5%)

Based on Table 2, Proverb 1 is supported by 76.3% of male respondents and disagreed with by 51% of female respondents. It is worth noting that, interestingly, the 51% figure does not represent an overwhelming majority, as 48% of female respondents, almost half of them, agree with the underlying message of the proverb (see Table 2). Proverb 2 has been endorsed by both male and female respondents (93% and 80%). Education is an invaluable asset for daughters because Kazakhs believe that to educate a girl is to educate a nation. Proverb 3 has the acceptance of 92% of male respondents and the disagreement of 71% of female respondents. *"Shi"* (reed field) symbolizes a boundary that a daughter shouldn't cross to return home.

Proverb 4 has caused a discrepancy in attitudes: 70% of male respondents agree with the underlying message of this proverb, while 71% of female respondents express their disagreement. In ancient times, a divorced daughter could only visit her parents' home as a guest, and her return was likened to that of an enemy. Proverb 5 is accepted by both male and female respondents (85% and 81%). Both gender groups acknowledge that a Kazakh girl's life is complex. A narrow path entails both ethically upright behavior and beneficial consequences, and leaving the narrow path is associated with many undesirable consequences, such as dishonor, loss of chastity, and indecent behavior.

Proverb 6 has produced unpredictable results in the opinion of male respondents, who are almost equally divided: 49% and 51%. 64% of female respondents agree with the message of the proverb. These data serve as evidence of the rejection of the concept of son preference recognized in Kazakh culture. Proverb 7 conveys a wise instruction to young men and, accordingly, 72% of male respondents agree with the message of the proverb, obviously, on the grounds that good mothers bring up good daughters. Only 59% of female respondents agree with the idea encapsulated in the proverb. In Proverb 8, which guides parents, the phrase *"qymtap ustau"* denotes the act of cherishing a daughter, surrounding her

with warmth and love, protecting her well-being, and keeping her safe from harm. However, the proverb also implies the limitation of her autonomy. It may be reasonably assumed that the latter implication, namely the restriction of freedom, was the reason for the discrepancy in responses, with 81% of female respondents disagreeing. 59% of male respondents agreed.

Proverb 9 is addressed to parents. This proverb represents a purely patriarchal attitude to the role of a girl, and, interestingly, it has raised disagreement of both male and female respondents, 58% and 80.6% respectively. The fact that both gender groups disagree with this proverb, which originates from the nomadic period of Kazakh history, suggests that it is somewhat outdated. Proverb 10 also represents a patriarchal attitude to the code of conduct of daughters and girls. 60% of male respondents expressed their agreement with the proverb, while 71% of female respondents disagreed.

4.5. Gender Differences in Attitude to Gender-Related Proverbs

Analysis of attitudes towards ten gender-related proverbs revealed differences in acceptance patterns between male and female respondents. Given the profound global changes that Kazakhstan has experienced in engineering, technology, the natural environment, and social and cultural life over the past 34 years, it was anticipated that the survey statistics would differ considerably. However, despite progressive changes in the attitudes of young people, the survey results demonstrate that patriarchal attitudes (proverbs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, & 10) remain deeply rooted in the consciousness of male respondents.

- 76.3% agree with Proverb 1.
- 92.8% agree with Proverb 3.
- 66.9% agree with Proverb 4.
- 84.9% agree with Proverb 5.
- 59.1% agree with Proverb 8.
- 59.7% agree with Proverb 10.

Among the collected data, one finding stands out as particularly noteworthy: the responses of male respondents to Proverb 9. Interestingly, the answers of male respondents to this proverb are almost evenly divided, with 41.7% agreeing and 58.3% disagreeing. The fact that 58.3% of male respondents disagree with this proverb indicates that contemporary young men are beginning to question traditional gender expectations that place the responsibility for family harmony solely on women.

Among female respondents, the survey results display a complex and often contradictory picture of gender attitudes. On the one hand, a clear majority of them disagree with the patriarchal messages in several proverbs, especially those that ruin family reputation:

- 71.3% disagree with Proverb 3.
- 71.3% disagree with Proverb 4.
- 80.6% disagree with Proverb 9.
- 70.5% disagree with Proverb 10.

However, the data for females also reveal a notable level of continued internalization of patriarchal values:

- 48.8% agreed with Proverb 1, which emphasizes restrictions on female mobility and autonomy.
- 28.7% agreed with Proverb 3, despite its negative implication that there is a boundary beyond which she has her own family and home; crossing it is undesirable.
- 28.7% agreed with Proverb 4 despite its negative implications about divorce.
- 29.5% agreed with Proverb 10, reinforcing the stigma against returning daughters.

The survey results demonstrate the tension between cultural preservation and the modernization of social values, particularly the resistance to traditional gender ideology among girls who reject these norms intellectually.

Nowadays, Kazakh girls are increasingly educated and career-oriented. They pursue higher-level education, enter diverse professional fields, prioritize personal development over early marriage,

embrace their individuality, and strive to become free-spirited and strong-willed personalities (Nussupova, 2023). At the same time, responses reveal that approximately one-third (35.5%) of female respondents still support or accept patriarchal gender stereotypes, either consciously or due to the deep-rooted nature of traditional norms in Kazakh culture (Shamuratova, 2022). Many daughters and girls navigate between tradition and modernity, honoring family expectations while asserting autonomy in education, career, or marriage choices. The main reasons for this, first of all, are that from early childhood, Kazakh girls are often socialized into roles emphasizing modesty, good behavior, respect for elders, and family harmony, and these early cultural imprints remain powerful because they are emotionally and morally internalized, not just learned. Daughters have always been under pressure from family and community to conform to the image of a "good daughter". In a collectivist culture like Kazakhstan's, community opinion matters greatly, and rejection of patriarchal expectations may raise disapproval, gossip, and family tension.

Therefore, acting outside of traditional norms can be equal to bringing *"uyat"* (disgrace) or disrespect to her family's reputation. In Kazakh culture, a girl's upbringing and behavior are often key factors in determining family honor, reputation, and marriage prospects. Under fear of gossip, shame, or disappointing their family, girls try to act in line with expectations, even when their personal beliefs differ. This creates a gap between belief and behavior that is common in transitional societies. The Kazakh society is undergoing so-called "selective modernization", adopting technology, education, and global values while keeping traditional family structures (Kyong-Dong, 2017).

5. Discussion

The objective of this study was twofold: first, to identify and interpret the national cultural characteristics of daughter education encoded in Kazakh proverbs as an integral component of Kazakh national identity; and second, to examine contemporary youth attitudes toward the gendered norms articulated in these proverbs in the context of modernization and globalization in Kazakhstan. To achieve this aim, the study employed Pishghadam's CLA as an analytical framework, enabling the exploration of how proverbs function as linguistic and cultural carriers of collective beliefs, moral values, and social expectations related to the upbringing of daughters. By combining qualitative proverb analysis with survey data from respondents, the study sought to capture both the traditional cultural meanings embedded in proverbs and their contemporary reinterpretation by the younger generation.

The qualitative analysis demonstrated that Kazakh proverbs represent daughters as culturally significant figures associated with beauty, moral purity, family honor, and social stability. Through overt and covert cultulings, daughters are portrayed as bearers of joy, blessings, and continuity, while at the same time being subject to strict moral regulation and parental control. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the central role of women in transmitting cultural values and maintaining social harmony in Kazakh society (Aldambergenova, 2018; Kurmangali et al., 2025; Zainulina, 2024). Proverbs that associate daughters with family honor, careful upbringing, and maternal guidance reflect deeply rooted cultural beliefs that connect female behavior to collective reputation and national identity.

Survey results reveal that Kazakh proverbs continue to exert a regulatory influence on gender perceptions among youth. Male respondents demonstrated stronger adherence to patriarchal interpretations of gender-related proverbs, particularly those emphasizing control over girls' behavior, which can be explained by early gender-role socialization and the persistence of patriarchal ideology embedded in family structures, education, and cultural narratives (Kuzembayeva, 2024; Muldagaliyeva et al., 2025; Olzhbaekova, 2025).

These patterns suggest that traditional gender ideology remains relatively stable among young men, even in the context of modernization. In contrast, female respondents expressed strong disagreement with proverbs that assign blame to daughters for marital failure or portray divorced women negatively. This resistance aligns with recent studies showing that young Kazakh women increasingly challenge traditional gender expectations while pursuing education, independence, and self-determination (Nussupova, 2023; Shamuratova, 2022). Female respondents, by contrast, showed a dual pattern: while a majority rejected proverbs that overtly condemn divorced women or restrict female autonomy, a significant minority selectively accepted restrictive norms rooted in concepts such as *"ar-uyat"* (moral

conscience and shame), family reputation, and modesty. This ambivalence reflects patterns observed in transitional societies, where modernization coexists with deeply entrenched traditional value systems and where individuals negotiate conflicting cultural scripts rather than fully rejecting inherited norms (Kyong-Dong, 2017). Even when their contents are consciously questioned, proverbs, as culturally authoritative expressions, continue to shape moral reasoning.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings highlights the dynamic role of proverbs as both carriers of cultural national code, identity, and cultural continuity. While proverbs preserve historical norms rooted in a nomadic, patriarchal past, their contemporary interpretation reveals shifting attitudes and generational change. The study shows that cultural meanings encoded in proverbs are not passively inherited but actively evaluated by youth in light of current social realities. This finding supports the view that language functions not only as a repository of tradition but also as a space where cultural values are renegotiated (Cobanoglu et al., 2023; Pishghadam et al., 2020).

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it demonstrates the effectiveness of CLA in uncovering deep cultural meanings embedded in proverbs and linking them to contemporary attitudes and contributes toward the development of a Kazakh-specific cultuling model. The findings also contribute to broader discussions on national identity construction by showing that the education of daughters operates as both a symbolic and pragmatic mechanism for sustaining social cohesion, moral order, and intergenerational continuity. Methodologically, it shows the value of combining linguistic analysis with empirical survey data when studying culture-related concepts. Practically, the findings may inform educational and cultural initiatives aimed at promoting gender awareness while respecting cultural heritage. Understanding which traditional messages are accepted, questioned, or rejected by youth can help educators, policymakers, and families engage in more meaningful dialogue about gender roles and social change.

Finally, the study has some limitations that suggest directions for future research. The sample was limited to first-year university students of Kazakh ethnicity, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could include participants from different age groups, regions, and ethnic backgrounds to capture a broader range of perspectives. In addition, qualitative interviews could provide deeper insight into the reasons behind agreement or disagreement with specific proverbs. Longitudinal research may also help track how attitudes toward traditional gender norms evolve over time as Kazakhstan continues to undergo social and cultural transformation.

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