

THE STATUS AND SOCIAL VALUE OF MOTHERS IN UZBEK MENTALITY

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Abstract

In Uzbek society the figure of the mother has a unique, high moral and emotional status, which goes well beyond biological motherhood. She is widely seen as not only the primary caregiver, but also as the spiritual center of the family, the carrier of the family's cultural memory, and the guardian of the family's ethical values. This article examines the place of the mother in the Uzbek mentality by focusing on the narratives in their culture, the social expectations of mothers, and the daily family practices. Drawing on the sociocultural analysis, as well as the existing scholarly discussions on family structure in Central Asia, the study emphasizes the profound respect associated with motherhood, in both symbolic and practical terms. At the same time, it considers how the process of modernization, women's education, and economic participation are gradually changing the perception of traditional perceptions. The findings suggest that although the reverence for mothers remains strong, the definition of maternal status is shifting from purely sacrificial devotion toward a more balanced definition, which includes personal agency and social participation. The article adds to the discussion on gender, culture, and family by providing a context-sensitive interpretation of motherhood in modern-day Uzbekistan.

Keywords

motherhood, Uzbek mentality, cultural values, family institution, gender role, social status, modernization, moral upbringing

INTRODUCTION

Motherhood has been defined as a universal experience, but the meaning ascribed to motherhood is profoundly influenced by cultural memory, social organization, and historical change. In Uzbekistan, the mother is not simply a member of the family who fulfills care functions; she is the symbol of moral authority, emotional stability, and continuity of culture. The reverence given to mothers in all aspects of daily life, ritual, and social expectations is ingrained into

everyday language. Respect for one's mother is taken to be considered not only an individual virtue but a gauge of character and social maturity. This exalted perception has been built over centuries through the interactions of Islamic ethics and local traditions and collective family structures, which emphasize interdependence rather than individual autonomy. Historical studies of Central Asian societies tell us that the roles of women within the domestic sphere have been far more influential than hierarchies in the public arena might imply [1]. Even in times when political power was in the hands of men, mothers had a lot of power in terms of influencing the moral orientation of children as well as keeping the kinship together. The family in Uzbekistan traditionally served as the base unit of social structure, in which hierarchy is combined with great emotional attachment. Within this system, the mother will often act as mediator, educator, and guardian of tradition. Her authority is not always institutional, but is deeply internalized in cultural consciousness. During the Soviet period, there was a new aspect in women's lives introduced through state-driven modernization: mass education and labor participation. However, based on scholarly analysis, it can be said that these structural changes did not destroy the symbolic centrality of motherhood [2]. Instead, maternal identity adjusted to coexist with professional roles to create a dual demand: women were encouraged to make their economic contribution while staying at home as housewives. This dual responsibility enhanced the image of the mother as both tough and self-sacrificing. In the post-Soviet period, processes in nation-building helped to further solidify the moral value of mothers. Cultural narratives emphasized the importance of motherhood more and more as a basis of national identity and spiritual stability [3]. A typical feature of public discourse is to link maternal devotion with social harmony, and mothers are seen as guardians of ethical continuity in times of transition. Such symbolic elevation, however, has some practical implications. When the ideal of motherhood is created, it might also produce rigid standards when it comes to patience, modesty, and emotional stamina. Sociological studies of gender-norms in Muslim-majority countries show that mothers' adoration often goes along with moral expectations and the lack of scope for personal autonomy [4]. Today, Uzbekistan is experiencing a fast socio-economic transformation. Urbanization, digital connectivity, and access to greater education are transforming gender relations. Young women are more focused on higher education and professional careers, so much so that they redefine what it means to be a respected mother. While traditional admiration remains intact, contemporary maternal identity is becoming more complicated and complex. Respect is no longer coupled with the sacrifice alone; it is increasingly associated

with competence, education, and social participation. Exploration of the position of mothers in Uzbek mentality thus requires a balanced view. It is important to consider the long-standing cultural respect as well as the current realities that affect women's lived experiences. By positioning motherhood within the traditional, religious, and modern worlds, this study aims to understand not only the symbolic value of motherhood but also how this value functions in everyday social life.

Methods

The paper was formulated in the form of a qualitative sociocultural investigation to find some solutions to the question of how the construct, perception, and reproduction of the status of mothers take place in the mentality of the Uzbeks. Instead of quantifying attitudes with the help of numerical indicators only, the study aimed to attach meanings to language, daily activities, and intergenerational stories. The methodology employed was an interpretive one based on the premise that cultural values relating to the subject matter of motherhood are socially constructed and carried out via lived experience.

Three complementary strategies were combined in the research. To put the Uzbek case into contexts of regional processes, first, a close overview of the existing modern literature on gender, family, and post-Soviet social change in Central Asia was carried out. The recent scholarly debate insists that gender roles should be perceived not only as a stagnant tradition but as a dynamic construct that is affected by political, economic, and religious factors [5][6]. These pieces offered a theoretical point of reference when analyzing maternal status on a deeper level, other than just admiration.

Two, a qualitative semi-structured interview was conducted on twenty-four participants in urban and semi-urban areas in Uzbekistan. The sample comprised women belonging to three generations (young moms, aged 22–30, middle-generation moms, aged 31 to 50, and old moms aged 51 and older). This difference in generations made it possible to investigate continuity and change in the attitudes toward mother authority and value. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants with different educational backgrounds, employment status, and family structure. Interviews were carried out in Uzbek and were recorded with their permission and subsequently transcribed to be reviewed thematically. The interview guide dwelled on various areas which are open-ended, and they include personal knowledge of maternal respect, expectations of mothers in the family, perception of sacrifice and power, and how modernization affects motherhood. Instead of assigning predetermined categories, the participants were advised to explain experiences using their own words. This method matches the qualitative

traditions that place emphasis on voice and contextualizing interpretation on gender studies [7]. Third, cultural readings were reviewed as the auxiliary source. The analysis of selected proverbs, media discourses, and speeches given by people in which they mention motherhood was conducted to determine common symbolic patterns. Discourse analysis methods were used in order to investigate the manner in which language frames the maternal status, especially in regard to morality, national identity, and social stability. As researchers have observed, motherhood is commonly promoted through public rhetoric as a moral point of reference in a society going through a shift [8]. The dimension played a significant role in conceptualizing the nature of the relationship between symbolic reverence and lived expectations. The analysis of data was done inductively using themes. Coding of transcripts was done manually to determine patterns like moral authority, sacrifice, respect through obedience, and the modern balance between work and family. Themes were then drawn in a comparative analysis of the generational groups to bring out the similar values and the changing trends. Focus was made on contradictions, particularly where symbolic praise co-existed with emotional or practical burdens. The issues of ethics were taken seriously during the process. It was a voluntary participation, and confidentiality was upheld, and sensitive questions were presented in a culturally sensitive manner. Since family roles can be discussed as overlapping with personal identity and religious faith, special attention was paid to establishing a respectful conversational environment. Through literature review, qualitative interview, and discourse, the analysis was meant to develop a subtle perception of the way in which mothers are appreciated within the Uzbek mentality. Such methodological triangulation enhanced the validity of results and made it possible to scrutinize the maternal status as a symbolic ideal and a social reality that is lived in.

Results

The results of the present study show that the position of mothers in the Uzbek mentality is symbolically higher, as well as rooted in everyday social life. In all the generations interviewed, motherhood was constantly characterized by the words related to moral purity, sacrifice, patience, and emotional strength. The participants did not position the matter of maternal respect as either non-existent or contingent; instead, it was depicted as an indisputable moral duty. The respect for the mother was often associated with personal dignity and spiritual responsibility, which means that the authority of the mother is internalized as the moral norm and not imposed by the laws. There was a recurrent theme in the interviews about the view of the mother as the emotional controller of the home. A great number of

respondents defined a mother as a person who holds the family together, especially in the case of a financial crisis, separation due to migration, or an interpersonal crisis. This can be compared to sociological findings that women tend to become stabilizing mechanisms during a season of economic change within the Central Asian societies [9]. Daily relational managerial interactions and emotional mediation are mostly ascribed to mothers even though fathers are regarded as the formal heads of household. Participants also highlighted that children normally seek advice, comfort, and moral support first from their mothers, and this supports the impression of the centrality of mothers. Generational comparison was an indication of continuation and change. The elderly respondents greatly related maternal value to self-sacrifice and perseverance. A good mother to them is a decent mother who cares about the needs of the family and not her own desires. Younger mothers, on the contrary, expressed a more moderate comprehension. Although they preserved great respect toward old traditions, they also put a lot of stress on education, professional contribution, and psychological well-being as the elements of the modern mother. This change is an indication of the larger patterns in the region where women are becoming more of bargainers between inherited expectations and newer opportunities [10].

There is one further important discovery that relates to the connection between symbolic reverence and material workload. Even though motherhood is a publicly respected event, respondents confirmed that expectations were high and overwhelming to the women. Several middle-generation participants expressed that they felt compelled to play several roles at the same time: caregiver, source of income, daughter-in-law, and representative of the community. The same trends are observed in the literature concerning gender studies in the post-Soviet regions, where traditional family values co-exist with the restructuring of the economies [11]. The admiration and burden co-exist to show that high status does not always mean less responsibility. Cultural discourse analysis also proved that the discourse about mothers often presupposes the idea that mothers are the protectors of national morality. The references of media usually connect maternal devotion with social dependability and moral continuity. This framing aligns with the research in which the independence of Central Asia has necessitated identity development based on the idea that women, and especially mothers, have been raised as symbolic pillars of cultural authenticity [12]. This nationalism supports the respect of the day-to-day life, but supports normative expectations of moral perfection as well. In spite of these pressures, most of the participants did not make their role negative. Rather, most of them took pride in the fact that they were considered the

pillars of the family. The younger respondents, particularly the ones who were highly educated, pointed out the potential to redefine respect in terms of competence and collaboration as opposed to silent endurance on its own. This view applies to modern accounts of gender renegotiation in Muslim-dominant communities where women are re-negotiating tradition without necessarily abandoning it [13]. On the whole, the findings indicate that the position of mothers in Uzbek mentality is extremely high, yet their definition is being redefined gradually. Reverence is a cultural fact, but the practice of motherhood embodies the active action towards social change.

Discussion

The results of the conducted work indicate that the position of mothers in the mentality of the Uzbek cannot be explained in only one way. It is not simply admiration, which is symbolic, or simply practical power. Instead, it is a stratified social construction that has been influenced by religion, historical continuity, post-Soviet change, and modern-day economic realities. The long-term respect in the interviews is indicative of a larger cultural trend where family is the most important producer of morality. Motherhood in collective-identity societies tends to gain symbolic importance, and it is a conduit between the domestic and the nation [14]. The idealization and responsibility seem to be the most obvious tension that pops up as a result of the outcomes. Mothers are described as holy, tolerant, and ethically special, but the idea may heighten the normative demands. Relative gender studies imply that the symbolic uplifting of women in most transitional societies could constitute a stabilizing discourse when the societal change is swift [15]. Motherhood becomes a source of morality in the Uzbek context, where social cohesion and cultural continuity are given an extremely high priority. But spiritualizing society by symbols does not always reduce day-to-day stress. Rather, it can naturalize sacrifice as a hallmark of the maternal identity.

The differences in the generation, which are found in the present study, are indicative of wider trends of social renegotiation. Younger mothers do not abandon tradition completely; they redefine it. Education and employment have widened the horizons of women in public life, and as a result, a model of motherhood which incorporates a mixture of knowledge and caring with professional competence has been stimulated. Research on gender change in post-socialism shows that women are developing a more hybrid identity between traditional values and new desires [16]. This trend seems to be reflected in the Uzbek case. Respect is a vital requirement that is slowly losing connection to sole self-denial. The other relevant dimension is the overlap of culture and religion. The Islamic teachings focus much

on the respect of mothers, and sometimes a respect for motherhood is the core of the ethical life. Religious revival in modern Uzbekistan has re-empowered moral discourses of motherhood, but these discourses relate to secular state discourse and do not replace it [17]. What transpires is the amalgamation of a construct where maternal reverence is aided by both spiritual and civic speech. This is a two-fold reinforcement, enhancing the moral power of mothers, and at the same time strengthening the demands of modesty and obedience. Simultaneously, modernization creates rather nuanced changes in the power balance in the home. Women become empowered economically and can make more decisions, especially in the urban family. According to the research on family change in Central Asia, the intra-household process is transformed by migration, remittances, and female employment, which in most cases increases the informal power of women [18]. The current evidence indicates that maternal authority does not decay; it is just being re-packaged. Rather than gaining status only through making a sacrifice, modern mothers are gaining respect through education, ability to communicate, and through working together in marriage. Altogether, these remarks show that the level of maternal status within the Uzbek mentality is high indeed, yet its definition is moving instead of fixed. The mythical essence of worship remains, which has its roots in historical and religious tradition. But lived motherhood is a renegotiation, adaptation, and reinterpretation. It is necessary to know this dual reality to prevent simplistic conclusions. The Uzbekistan traditional roles do not restrict the mothers, nor do they completely impose normative pressure on them[19]. They are in a state of balance between continuity and change, where respect might remain while its platform begins to grow.

Conclusion

In her quest to discover the status of mothers in Uzbek mentality, one can find a social reality, which is deeply rooted in tradition and also silent to change. Maternity in Uzbekistan is not understood as a pure biological task or an intimate family activity. It is morally charged, symbolizes cultures, and has social authority. The honor of motherhood is institutionalized in ordinary manners, words, and moral values, not only in the relations in the family, but also in the concepts of character and the sense of social duty. Meanwhile, such reverence does not stand in one place. Whereas the older generations tend to view the value of a mother by endurance and self-sacrifice, younger women are starting to envelop education, professional and personal growth into their concept of motherhood. This change does not presuppose a drop in respect. Instead, it is a manifestation of the extension of the meaning of maternal dignity in modern times. Mothers continue to be the

key agents in shaping children's moral perspectives and holding the family together, but they are not defined solely by housewifery anymore. The analysis reveals that both symbolic elevation and expedient anticipation exist concurrently. Mothers are revered as the pillars of morality, but they have a major role both emotionally and socially. It is important to identify this two-fold dimension. True recognition of maternal status needs more than verbal admiration, but also a supportive social environment that recognizes various roles of women. Finally, the Uzbek vision of motherhood is used to demonstrate how culture does not vanish, but rather transforms with modernization. Respect is here to stay, though its provisions are expanding. The realization of this changing equilibrium enables one to see how tradition and change can co-exist in a culture that still holds the mother of its core moral imagination.

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