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## CROSS-CULTURAL SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN KAZAKHS AND KOREANS

### Abstract

This article aimed to investigate the main differences and similarities in family relationships and major life values between Kazakhs and Koreans. The participants were the representatives of both nationalities of different ages who had an experience of living and working or studying both in South Korea and Kazakhstan. The methods included online and offline interviews, open surveys in Russian and Korean languages, which were later translated into English. The results have shown that there are a lot of similarities, as well as differences, despite the fact that both nationalities contrast each other in many terms including religious, historic, traditional, outlook and so on. Filial piety can be pointed out as a main similarity between those nationalities, in spite of distant background and ideological views. However, attitude towards family relationships and life values are changing vastly among Koreans, which cannot be said about Kazakhs, where it is diversifying, but not quickly.

**Keywords:** family, filial piety, relationships, similarity, values.

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## ҚАЗАҚ ЖӘНЕ КОРЕЙ ҰЛТТАРЫНЫҢ ОТБАСЫЛЫҚ ҚАРЫМ-ҚАТЫНАСТАҒЫ МӘДЕНИАРАЛЫҚ ҰҚСАСТЫҚТАРЫ МЕН АЙЫРМАШЫЛЫҚТАРЫ

*Аңдатпа*

Осы мақалада қазақтар мен корейлердің отбасылық қарым-қатынастарындағы және өмірлік құндылықтарындағы негізгі айырмашылықтар мен ұқсастықтары қарастырылған. Сауалнама қатысушылары арасында Оңтүстік Кореяда да, Қазақстанда да өмір сүру және жұмыс немесе оқу тәжірибесі бар әр түрлі жастағы екі ұлт өкілдері болды. Әдістерге онлайн және офлайн сұхбаттар, орыс және корей тілдеріндегі ашық сауалнамалар кірді, олар кейінірек ағылшын тіліне аударылды. Екі ұлт та бір-біріне діни, тарихи, дәстүрлі, дүниетанымдық және т.б. жағынан қарама-қайшы келетініне қарамастан, сауалнама нәтижелері көптеген ұқсастықтар мен айырмашылықтар бар екенін көрсетті. Идеологиялық көзқарастар мен шығу тегінің алыс айырмашылықтарына қарамастан, перзенттік тақуалық – екі ұлтқа да тән айқын ерекшеліктер. Дегенмен, заманауи корей отбасыларында отбасылық құндылықтар мен отбасылық қарым қатынастар қарқын өзгеріп келе жатқанын байқауға болады, керісінше қазақ отбасыларында ондай өзгерістер байқалмайды.

**Түйін сөздер:** отбасы, перзенттік тақуалық, қарым-қатынас, ұқсастық, құндылықтар.

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## КРОСС-КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ РАЗЛИЧИЯ И СХОДСТВА В СЕМЕЙНЫХ ВЗАИМООТНОШЕНИЯХ КАЗАХОВ И КОРЕЙЦЕВ

*Аннотация*

Данная статья нацелена исследовать основные различия и сходства в семейных отношениях и основных жизненных ценностях казахов и корейцев. Среди участников были представители обеих национальностей разного возраста, имевшие опыт жизни и работы или учебы как в Южной Корее, так и в Казахстане. Методы включали онлайн и офлайн-интервью, открытые опросы на русском и корейском языках, которые позже были переведены на английский. Результаты показали, что существует много сходств, а также различий, несмотря на то, что обе национальности противопоставляют друг друга во многих отношениях, включая религиозные, исторические, традиционные, мировоззренческие и так далее. Сыновнее благочестие можно указать как основное сходство между этими национальностями, несмотря на отдаленное происхождение и идеологические взгляды. Однако отношение к семейным отношениям и жизненным ценностям у корейцев сильно меняется, чего нельзя сказать о казахах, где оно диверсифицируется, но не быстро.

**Ключевые слова:** семья, сыновнее благочестие, отношения, сходство, ценности.

**Introduction.** When the Joseon dynasty first adopted and introduced the neo-Confucian worldview, it influenced not only politics, but also became an integral part of moral philosophy in society among Koreans. The family has been the main unit of society, if we delve into the essence of the concept of "Confucian strict mores". Filial piety is closely related to loyalty to the Motherland. For centuries, this perception persists, despite modernization, in Korean society [1].

Kazakhs, in their turn, did not adhere to any political ideology or lifestyle like Confucianism, but nevertheless, the family was and is one of the most important aspects of life and society for this nationality. While studying articles and research papers on this topic, a very small number of scientific articles or dissertations were found, in which a comparative analysis compared the cultural differences and similarities of these two nationalities. Therefore, the purpose of this work is to study in detail and study cross-cultural differences and similarities in family relationships and values of the two nationalities. The relevance of this work is explained by the scarcity of information and articles on this topic. Nowadays, there are more and more adults or students who are forced or want to go abroad for new experience and knowledge due to work or educational circumstances. Abroad, they might face misunderstandings or, on the contrary, great similarities. With this article, we want to answer the exciting questions that representatives of the two nationalities, namely those we mentioned above, would think about.

**Literature Review.** A lot of research has been related and many articles have been written on the influence of Confucianism on Family relationships among Koreans. Young-Shin Park and Uichol Kim [2] have shown in their article what a great impact has had Confucianism on the family values of Koreans from the earliest centuries, how it has affected their further lifestyle. They have also mentioned that the attitude in family relationships in Korean families acts as a main factor further in academic achievements of their children. Moreover, Insook Han Park and Lee-Jay Cho [3] have investigated this ideology's impact in depth and have shown the changes in their lifestyle comparing last decades till 1990 with the attitude towards ideal family relationships from the dynasty of Joseon. Nevertheless, as it has passed more than 20 years since this research, the values have not dramatically changed in Korean society.

Kazakhs, in their turn, did not adhere to any political ideology or lifestyle like Confucianism, but nevertheless, the family was and is one of the most important aspects of life and society for this nationality. Esuna Dugarova [4] gave an explanation for family relationships in Kazakhstan as a "small social unit whose members are connected by marital or parental relationship, common household, and mutual moral responsibility and help" and it is related to not only Kazakhstan, but the other post Soviet countries too.

While studying articles and research papers on this topic, a very small number of scientific articles or dissertations were found, in which a comparative analysis compared the cultural differences and similarities exactly of these two nationalities. It shows how scarce is the amount of decent comparison researches between Kazakh and Korean family relationships. However, a lot of research papers, whose authors relied on empirical data and methods while writing their work, prove that comparative analysis reflects the similarities and differences of different nationalities in a clear way.

A decent amount of articles and scientific papers were devoted to the comparative analysis of family relationships between two or more nationalities, as Koreans and Americans, Koreans and Vietnamese, etc. For instance, Kyu Taik Sung [5] compared the perception of motivations for filial piety and reciprocal obligation between Americans and Koreans. The research have shown that for Koreans family harmony, filial respect and attachment are main values, whereas Americans reflected different motivations for parental care. As another example, Young-Me Lee and Karyn Holm [6] have compared Korean Immigrants in America and Koreans' family relationships, its changes, adaptation and all of its influence on depression. The investigation and empirical data have displayed that, despite different lifestyles and outlooks, Koreans in America could save their values and filial piety in another country. Nonetheless, according to the conclusion, the attitude is changing, especially among younger generations in the USA, so they are becoming more and more similar to the American population.

According to all of these studies, it can be said, that there have been done quite robust work on investigating Korean nationality's family relationships and comparative analysis with different nationalities, but in comparison there is a deficiency of clear and credible research papers and

dissertations on Kazakh nationality's family relationships and comparative analysis with different nationalities.

### **Research questions**

- What are the main values in the life of Kazakhs and Koreans?
- How are their family relationships different or similar? Do representatives of these nationalities notice similarities?

**Methods.** *Research design.* This study utilized several types of research approaches: ethnography research method has been used to study in depth the behavior and cultural background of the representatives of both nationalities. The research method of phenomenology was used, because the main research question implied to the topic of phenomena of the “values” by these two nationalities. Moreover, the grounded theory approach, cross-sectional studies were exploited, because we collected the data according to the Koreans' and Kazakhs' notices and thoughts. This new information will be implied in further development of these topics. To organize all the interviews and surveys, we needed to gather a group of people from both nationalities. The individual interviews and open surveys were main necessary approaches in this topic. The comparative analysis was also significant to study this topic, because the data was contrasted and compared.

*Sample and setting.* The sample consisted of 23 people at the age of 19-50 in order to see the difference of the answers. The selection criteria were: 1) adults who work in South Korea/Kazakhstan (the age and the place of work doesn't matter), 2) students of both countries who are currently studying at universities, 3) people who have been living already in Kazakhstan or Korea for many years.

*Translation Procedure.* All interviews and surveys were held in Russian, Korean and translated into English.

*Data analysis.* The data was collected and coded in order to shorten the information and get the main idea.

*Tools:* questions for interviews, (due to the current situation questions interviews were adapted into survey in the Google form), google surveys.

These were the main questions which were used in the interviews for the research:

1. How long have you been living / working /studying in Kazakhstan or South Korea?
2. What did you like the most about the new country / nationality?
  - a) People's mentality and relationships between each other;
  - b) Culture;
  - c) Traditions and history;
  - d) Quality of life;
  - e) Climate;
  - f) Nothing from mentioned above;
  - g) Other.
3. What is considered as a main value for your nationality?
  - a) Family and family relationships;
  - b) Career promotion and path;
  - c) Achievement of individual goals;
  - d) Self-development;
  - e) Other.
4. Have you noticed any similarities or differences in the behavior of the nationality of the hosting country with your own?
  - a) Yes, a bit;
  - b) Yes, many;
  - c) No, none;
  - d) No, at all.
5. If yes, could you give any examples?

6. How did these similarities or differences help you to somehow overcome so-called “culture shock” or make easier the adaptation process in a new country?

7. Do you think family relationships are still one of the main values in a modern world?

a) Yes;

b) No;

c) I don't know.

8. If not, why has it changed, in your point of view?

9. Do you think, it is needed to remain the same: perceptions, values, family relationships?

### **Results and Discussion.**

*Sample.* A total of 23 representatives of both nationalities: Kazakhs and Koreans have taken part in this poll. Over 26% of them have lived in South Korea and Kazakhstan for more than 5 years, 13% of them 3-5 years, 30% of them for 1-2 years and left 30% have lived for less than a year. They were asked overall 9 questions, some of the questions were open and could be completed with their opinion.

Group of Korean representatives mentioned climate of Kazakhstan as the most pleasant aspects of residence, whereas Kazakhs have chosen quality of life in South Korea as the most enjoyable thing. Culture, traditions and history have reflected the same proportion among Koreans (each 37,5%), people's mentality and their relations were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> place by 25%, while quality of life has not been chosen a lot among them only by 12,5%. It can be understood in comparison, because Kazakhstan is still one of the developing countries in many terms, such as economic, whereas South Korea is in top developed countries in the world.

In contrast to Koreans, younger generation of Kazakhstan are influenced and impressed greatly by K-wave, that is why the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> most common preferences have been taken place by culture, traditions and history variants (66,7% and 53,3%). Another remarkable moment is that Kazakhs are tend to find more parallels between the behavior and relationships of those two nationalities. This might be one of the huge advantages in adapting to a completely new country with a foreign language for them.

Living, studying and working in another country individuals compare and contrast unconsciously most of the times with previous representations of their nationality. The results show that Koreans have a tendency to notice it more often than Kazakhs, because approximately 87,5% of them have seen the similarities, compared to 66,7% Kazakhs. There might be a reason of the years of living experience in the hosting country, because over 70% of surveyed Koreans have been living in Kazakhstan for more than 5 years. One of the most common similarities that they had mentioned are “respect for elders”, “hospitality”, “both nationalities know how to be thankful even for little things, and that helps a lot at workplace and in life”, “climate of both countries and appearance of those nationalities are alike each other”. As they had noted earlier, these things help them a lot in adaptation process and not to suffer from “culture shock”. As for the difficulties, Koreans have mentioned language as the most difficult moment, whereas, Kazakh-speaking students mostly find it easy to learn Korean language, because they are similar in many grammatical constructions and have the same morphology system which is “agglutinative”.

Moreover, Kazakhs have written a lot of differences which individuals neither cannot see in Kazakhstan, nor helped them to overcome “culture shock”, because they have not felt it. The differences were more pleasant rather than inconvenient, such as “high quality service system”, “politeness for foreigners”, “greater responsibility relation for everything”, “respect for surrounding people”.

Pre-last question's results were almost the same for both nationalities with indicators of 87,5% and 73,3%. Despite different background, religion and traditions life values of family relationships are similar for both nations. However, last question's results show that Kazakhstan's generations assume that it might be changed in the future to career path or self-realization, etc. Koreans' think in another way and suppose it would remain the same in the future. Before organizing the poll,

expectations were different, because other nationalities might think that Koreans tend to choose career over family relationships, conclusion has shown otherwise.

*Table 1 – What Koreans liked the most about Kazakhs as a nationality and Kazakhstan as a country (participants could list several from below)*

Title	Per cent (Koreans)	Per cent (Kazakhs)
People’s mentality and their relationships with each other	25%	60%
Culture	37,5%	66,7%
Traditions and history	37,5%	53,3%
Quality of life	12,5%	93,3%
Climate of the current residence	50%	13,3%
Nothing from the list	0%	0%
Other (Food, variety, etc.)	Has not been mentioned	6,7%

*Table 2 – The main life values in their nationality (participants could name several)*

	Per cent (Koreans)	Per cent (Kazakhs)
Family and family relationships	62,5%	93,3%
Career promotion and path	37,5%	53,3%
Achievement of individual goals	25%	40%
Self-development and self-realization	25%	40%

*Table 3. Observation from own experience on similarities by representatives*

	By Koreans	By Kazakhs
Yes, a lot	25%	40%
Yes, a bit	62,5%	26,7%
No, at all	0%	20%
Not many	12,5%	13,35

*Table 4 – Participants’ view on whether family relationships are still major life values in a modern world*

	Koreans’ opinions	Kazakhs’ opinions
Yes	87,5%	73,3%
No	12,5%	0%
I don’t know	0%	26,7%

*Table 5 – Perception, filial piety and values should remain the same / we have to maintain that balance*

	Koreans	Kazakhs
Yes	75%	46,7%
No, it must change	0%	13,3%
No, it can be changed, there is a possibility	25%	40%

**Conclusion.** This article focused on the discovery and investigations of great similarities and differences in family relationships and life values of Kazakhs and Koreans, relied on the real-life experience of representatives of two nationalities. These findings offer a deeper understanding and comprehension of two distinct cultures by comparative analysis. This investigation suggests that despite different background and having their unique features these two nations are mostly similar in outlooks towards family relationships and life values. It is expected that the article will be a help for students and researchers in finding out some more information and adapting process in a completely new community sharing some common views with them.

However, this investigation has several limitations. Firstly, the poll and survey was conducted without any critical criteria towards participants. The results might have been different if there was a specific criteria for the attendants. Secondly, the answers might have been different if the living period in another country was the same for all participants. In this article's poll majority of respondents from South Korea, living in Kazakhstan, have been living there for more than 5 years, whereas Kazakhs' experience of residence period in South Korea was with a huge difference starting from 1 year to 5 years. Koreans might have had a wider background in understanding Kazakhs' culture in our poll due to the mentioned factor, rather than Kazakhs. Thirdly, all the surveys and polls have been conducted online due to the current circumstances (COVID-19 and social distancing). The results and answers would have been more detailed otherwise. Despite the limitations this research has shed light on the topic of cross-cultural differences and we hope it would be a valuable source for the researchers who focus on investigation of Korean culture and history and for all the people and students who are interested in this area.

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