Uncovering Gender, Language, and Intersected Asymmetries in History Textbooks

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INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is crucial for peace and social cohesion. According to Kangas et al. (2014), greater gender inequality can lead to increased social tension. It is particularly important to reduce tensions in school education since pupils can be brought up with the assumption that injustice is the norm, and they might practise exclusion and discrimination when reaching adulthood. Therefore, the United Nations has prioritised sustainable development goal (SDG) 4.7 within SDG 4 'Quality Education' (United Nations, 2015). SDG 4.7 aims to provide knowledge and skills for learners to foster gender equality, peace, and non-violence (United Nations, 2015).

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All three Central Asian countries included in the current book have recognised SDG 4 and borrowed and adjusted it to their national policies. Kazakhstan, for instance, does not directly report on SDG 4.7, but expresses its commitment to the general SDG 4 (Sustainable Development Goals, n.d) and has adopted inclusive education, which might show its commitment to SDG 4.7 (Kazakhstan, 2007). Tajikistan is more explicit about SDG 4.7, and it has set up an objective 'to ensure access to quality and inclusive life-long learning and skills opportunities' in education (United Nations Tajikistan, 2022). Uzbekistan emphasises that the schools teach human and children's rights at school within SDG 4.7 (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, n.d.).

However, none of the countries explicitly mentions gender equality as an essential part of SDG 4.7 or what they do to provide knowledge on gender equity in education in their local reports. Nevertheless, as the Central Asian countries have announced their commitment to the goal, it can be assumed that gender equality is also implied to be one of the values in their policies since SDG 4.7 includes it. This study seeks to verify this assumption within school history textbooks. Focusing on Kazakhstan as a case, this paper examines whether secondary schools share and project positive views on gender equality in school textbooks, and whether they contribute to instilling the new generation with gender equality values. Additionally, the study explores the intersection of gender with other social and language bias, responding to the impetus by Durrani et al. (2022).

The impact of the school curriculum in shaping pupils' worldviews makes it important to uncover any discrepancies between national policy on social equality, education, and curriculum content. The focus is on Kazakhstani history curriculum and textbooks since this country ranks higher on education and gender equality indicators (Tabaeva et al., 2021), making it a critical case study. Kazakhstan's superiority in gender equality is obvious by its lowest gender inequality index (GII) in the region—0.161 for 2021, while in Tajikistan it equals 0.285, and in Uzbekistan—0.227 (UNDP, 2022). Hence, Kazakhstani school textbooks are expected to align with gender equality targets and indicators more than other countries in the region. If gender and ethnic inequalities are found even in Kazakhstani textbooks, this may indicate that these challenges are more profound in other Central Asian countries.

This study seeks to verify this alignment by examining history textbooks. Globally, history textbooks have been shown to reflect political

ideologies and perpetuate inequalities (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000), and they are a key site for constructing national identity in a gendered way since national narratives in history textbooks differentiate between men and women concerning their positions and responsibilities (Durrani & Dunne, 2010). By exploring history textbooks from a gender perspective, we can gain a deeper understanding of other social asymmetries in education (Dunne, 2009), particularly regarding nation-building strategies (Tabaeva et al., 2021).

Conceptual Framework

Gender (in)equality in Central Asia and Kazakhstan

Despite a shared history, cultural heritage, Turkic roots, Islam as a predominant religion, and geographical proximity, Central Asian countries vary in gender equality due to several reasons, including different levels of commitment to traditions and religion. For example, Uzbekistan was historically more religious than Kazakhstan, and Uzbek women faced greater challenges from the Soviet anti-veiling campaign (1920s) (Kane & Gorbenko, 2016). The Soviet administration viewed Muslim women in Central Asia as 'backward and oppressed', with the first step towards gender equality being the reduction of Islam's influence (Behzadi & Direnberger, 2020).

Being in close proximity to Russia, Kazakh women actively followed the Soviet women's emancipation policies and participated in the labour market equally with men relative to other Central Asian women (Heer & Youseff, 2018). For example, Tajik women, especially those from rural areas, were not as involved in the labour market as Kazakh women (Behzadi & Direnberger, 2020). Despite the women's emancipation policy, the Soviet administration's perception of gender equality was superficial, as women were still expected to perform most of the domestic duties, while men, in contrast, were distanced from them (Kandiyoti, 2007). Besides, women were primarily involved in low-paid jobs such as teaching (Belova, 2011).

After the USSR's dissolution, Central Asian states revived traditional gender norms which they associated with Islam, reinforcing gender imbalance in favour of men (Thibault, 2021). This welcomed women to be housewives and to engage less in the labour market (Commercio,

2015). In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, girls' participation in school education was lower than boys in the early post-Soviet stage (Silova & Abdushukurova, 2009), and in Kazakhstan, women are still underrepresented and marginalised in the high-paid STEM field (CohenMiller et al., 2021). While Kazakhstan has been relatively ahead in gender equality (UNDP, 2022), previous studies still report significant gender disparity and stereotyped gender roles in school textbooks (Durrani et al., 2022; Fedosseyev, 2022; Palandjian et al., 2018), along with an ethnically oriented nation-building policy that prioritises titular Kazakh ethnicity (Asanova, 2007). Uzbekistani and Tajikistani textbooks also appear to praise titular ethnicities through their history narratives (Blakkisrud & Nozimova, 2010; Ersanli, 2002).

The current study aims to analyse the broader picture of gender disparities, considering their intersection with other forms of social marginalisation, particularly ethnicity, with a focus on Kazakhstan and its 'politicised' history textbooks. For this, I frame my multi-layered discourse analysis within the 4Rs framework.

The 4RS in Textbook Gender Discourses

Using the Political Economy of Education Research (PEER) perspective, this study applies the 4Rs framework to explore the impact of inequalities on social cohesion across different domains in crisis- or conflict-affected contexts. The 4Rs framework, proposed by Novelli et al. (2017), includes four dimensions requiring amendments: redistribution—ensuring access to knowledge for all, representation—involving all the stakeholders in decision-making in education, recognition—acknowledging diverse identities in the educational system and reconciliation—promoting understanding and respect between social groups. This framework is applicable to the study of Kazakhstan, a post-Soviet multiethnic country with dominating titular Kazakhs, then Russians, Uzbeks, Ukrainians, and others (Bureau of national statistics, 2023). The country is going through postcolonial transformation and has experienced several interethnic conflicts since independence (Tabaeva et al., 2021). The co-existence of these ethnicities and cultures is expected to be projected in history textbooks, and to study this issue through a gender lens, I use the 4Rs' adaptation to gender analysis suggested by Durrani and Halai (2018).

Redistribution

History textbooks can create hegemonic discourses on gender in which women are not portrayed as agents of change. Thus, they are mostly portrayed in domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning, and child caring or stereotypically 'feminine' occupations such as teachers and healthcare specialists, while men are depicted in higher professional jobs and more important roles in society across multiple school textbooks in Kazakhstan (Durrani et al., 2022; Palandjian et al., 2018). Such portrayal can limit career guidance and socially active role models for girls.

The scarcity of knowledge about prominent women may reveal deeper knowledge gaps in textbooks, with pupils receiving limited information about female role models at one grade while completely excluding them at the next level. This raises the question about the fair distribution of knowledge. Additionally, girls may be deprived of knowledge about representatives of their identities, such as ethnicity (Kazakh and non-Kazakh) or language (Kazakh or Russian), despite the multiethnicity of Kazakhstani society. Kazakhstani education, overall, is inclined to be ethnically oriented and prioritises Kazakh language speakers (Bekzhanova & Makoelle, 2022). Given the multidimensionality of discrimination, I adopt an intersectional view of gender offered by Isakovic (2018), who argues that gender should not be treated as the only factor which affects inequalities, and other intersecting identities, such as race, social class, age, and ethnicity also shape asymmetries. Accordingly, my analysis investigates whether gender intersects with ethnic identities to exacerbate the scarcity of knowledge about certain characters in historical narratives in school textbooks.

Recognition

Recognition or recognitive justice refers to the respect and validation of different identities, backgrounds, and experiences in society (Novelli et al., 2017). It is especially important for multicultural Kazakhstan since it fosters peace between diverse groups. However, previous studies focusing on gender have shown that women are not given enough recognition as successful figures in science, politics, and other stereotypically 'masculine' domains (Durrani et al., 2022; Fedosseyev, 2022; Palandjian et al., 2018). They are often depicted in relation to men and considered

inferior to them. None of these works, however, examine the issue of recognition of other intersected identities such as ethnicity, social class, or language in history textbooks.

Representation

Representation is important to understand how the voices of all stakeholders in producing history textbooks are heard. One of the key stakeholders in compiling relevant content for history textbooks is the Kazakhstani Government. It aims to promote inclusive education (Kazakhstan, 2007) and gender equality in society (Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019). However, it is unknown whether the voice of this stakeholder, the Kazakhstani Government, is actually heard while producing the history textbooks since, as Dukeyev (2023) argues, history textbook authors in Kazakhstan write about the past without external pressures or control from policymakers.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation, according to Novelli et al. (2017), means mitigating social inequities in the past and creating a more just society. In terms of gender, Durrani and Halai (2018) argue that it is crucial to reduce the association of hegemonic masculinities with violence and promote mutual understanding in society. Meanwhile, school curriculum often promotes aggression as the ideal trait of a man and encourages gender-based violence against women (Durrani, 2008). Similarly, it is unclear how the ideal masculinity is portrayed in Kazakhstani history textbooks and whether they also perpetuate violence and threaten security. This gap needs investigation.

METHODOLOGY

The gaps in gender scholarship in Kazakhstani school curriculum raise the following research question:

> How is gender enacted across history textbooks of different levels (i.e. grade 7th–11th) in Kazakhstani schools?

Does the language of the textbooks (i.e. Kazakh and Russian) influence gender representations and inclusion/exclusion issues?

I respond to the above questions by using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) and quantitative methods.

I employed MCDA as a tool for my qualitative analysis. In this approach, all modes of discourse, including text, image, sounds, etc., contribute to meaning-making and should be considered (Jewitt, 2008; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Here, I explore the link between the meanings communicated through texts and images in history textbooks. While both modes do not have to be congruent, they can complement each other. Images can reveal more hidden ideas of the discourse since they offer wider options for interpretation (van Leeuwen, 2008). I chose Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) since it aligns with the 4Rs framework of this study. CDA focuses on social inequalities, discrimination, and exclusion/inclusion issues in political and social contexts (Fairclough, 2010; Van Dijk, 1993). Among diverse methods of CDA, I narrowed down to van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor analysis for both discourse modes, i.e. text and images.

Van Leeuwen (2008) posits that social actors are discourse participants who can and cannot be 'agents' (active doers) (p.23). In this case, the icons and other characters in the history textbook discourses were viewed as social actors in alignment with my analytical tool. How textbook authors represent social actors—through inclusion or exclusion—sheds light on the attitude of a discourse producer to the actors, as well as social hierarchies in the discourse (Darics & Koller, 2019). Precisely, I focused on gender hierarchies.

First, I performed a basic quantitative analysis, counting social actors in the textbooks. To explore the relationship between gender and ethnic bias, I created a table with columns for Kazakh males and non-Kazakh males, Kazakh females, and non-Kazakh females in textbooks both in Kazakh and Russian. I divided the actors roughly into Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs without any clarification of the ethnicities of the latter. Then, I counted the number of social actors presented for each ethnic and gender group in the textbooks. Each social actor was counted only once in the text, even if they were mentioned in other chapters.

In the qualitative stage, I aimed to verify or refute my findings from the quantitative analysis. For this, I conducted a social actor analysis of the

modes, summarising each chapter and noting instances of gender-based and intersected exclusions and inclusions of social actors. The analysis was conducted comparatively in both Kazakh and Russian textbooks of the same grade, chapter by chapter, to detect discrepancies in representations and suggest corrections.

The qualitative analysis provided additional insights into the quantitative findings, resulting in three themes: gender and ethnic bias, gender and language bias, and gender norms in the history textbooks.
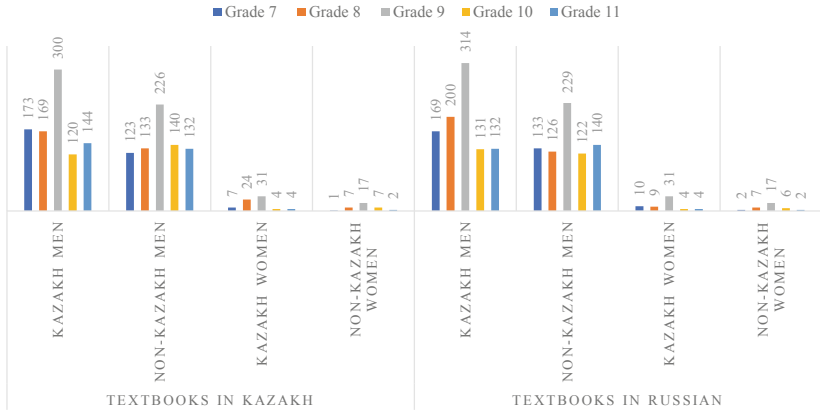
Findings and Discussions

Gender and Ethnic Bias

The quantitative analysis demonstrates a significant gender imbalance in favour of men in the texts (Fig. 7.1). Bars 3 and 4 for Kazakh language textbooks and bars 7 and 8 for Russian language textbooks indicate that women are almost invisible. This suggests that linguistic representation of women as social actors is low. There is some difference between representing Kazakh and non-Kazakh women, but it appears to be less significant than the difference in men's representation. Therefore, gender identity seems to influence the exclusion of social actors much more than ethnicity. In contrast, the analysis of illustrations provides more controversial patterns such as the unexpected numerical dominance of Kazakh women over non-Kazakh men in grade 7 (Fig. 7.2).
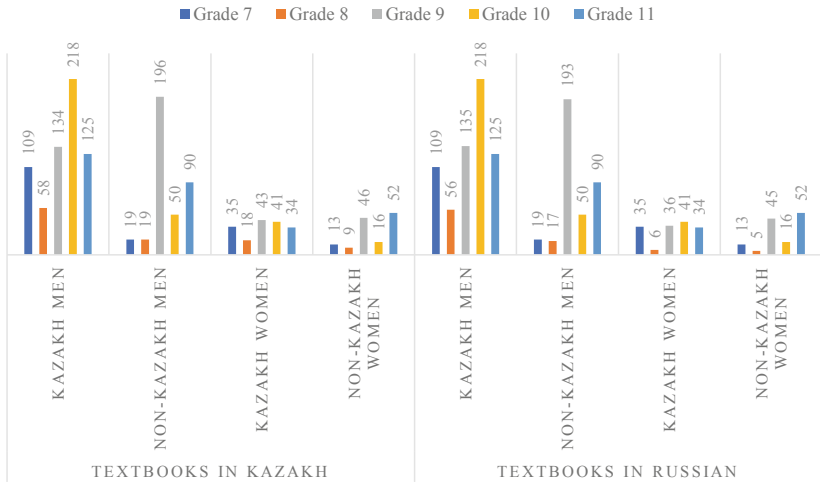
Overall, women seem to be underrepresented in the images as well. However, there are some fluctuations across grades. For instance, Kazakh women (35) in grade 7 appear in images more than non-Kazakh men (19) and are almost equally presented in grade 8 (18/19). Upon conducting an in-depth visual analysis, it became apparent that while the images indeed include females, all of them are in group pictures, such as those in Figs. 7.3 and 7.4, and not in portraits, except for singer M. Shamsutdinova in 7th grade Kazakh textbook (p. 139) and an abstract Kazakh woman (p. 165).

Even in these group pictures, women are depicted engaging in stereotypically accepted activities such as doing handicrafts like felting (Fig. 7.3) and being (prospective) teachers (Fig. 7.4). Following van Leeuwen's (2008) distinction between close-up and 'long shot' visualisations of social actors (p. 138), I assume that the underrepresentation of women

Grade 7   Grade 8   Grade 9   Grade 10   Grade 11

TEXTBOOKS IN KAZAKH

KAZAKH MEN: 173, 169, 300, 120, 144
NON-KAZAKH MEN: 123, 133, 226, 140, 132
KAZAKH WOMEN: 7, 24, 31, 4, 4
NON-KAZAKH WOMEN: 1, 7, 17, 7, 2

TEXTBOOKS IN RUSSIAN

KAZAKH MEN: 169, 200, 314, 131, 132
NON-KAZAKH MEN: 133, 126, 229, 122, 140
KAZAKH WOMEN: 10, 9, 31, 4, 4
NON-KAZAKH WOMEN: 2, 7, 17, 6, 2

Fig. 7.1 Frequency of distribution of social actors across grades by gender and ethnicity in text

Grade 7   Grade 8   Grade 9   Grade 10   Grade 11

TEXTBOOKS IN KAZAKH

KAZAKH MEN: 109, 58, 134, 218, 125
NON-KAZAKH MEN: 19, 19, 196, 50, 90
KAZAKH WOMEN: 35, 18, 43, 41, 34
NON-KAZAKH WOMEN: 13, 9, 46, 16, 52

TEXTBOOKS IN RUSSIAN

KAZAKH MEN: 109, 56, 135, 218, 125
NON-KAZAKH MEN: 19, 17, 193, 50, 90
KAZAKH WOMEN: 35, 6, 36, 41, 34
NON-KAZAKH WOMEN: 13, 5, 45, 16, 52

Fig. 7.2 Distribution of social actors across grades by gender and ethnicity in illustrations

Киіз басу

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Fig. 7.3 Felting (7th grade, Kazakh, p. 52)

Fig. 7.4 Kazakh pedagogical (teacher training) institute (11th grade, 2nd part, Russian, p. 125)

in portraits could indicate more preference for men whose portraits dominate.

Another observation is that non-Kazakh women are visually represented more than Kazakh females in grades 9 and 11 in both languages (Fig. 7.2). However, all those illustrations are group pictures, and some of them are not related to Kazakhstan, but rather depict events in Russia (Figs. 7.5 and 7.6). The strikes in Figs. 7.5 and 7.6 are visualised from an upper perspective, from top to down, implying a distance from the viewer's history and identity, as suggested in Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 145). The textbook narration states that the events happened at a distance, in Russia, but are closely linked to Kazakhstani history.

Generally, portraying women's social activism in these illustrations is a positive feature of the 9th grade textbooks. Non-Kazakh females here even outnumber Kazakh women (Fig. 7.2). Likewise, non-Kazakh females dominate over Kazakh ones in images for 11th grade and texts in grade 10 (due to portrayal of Russian queens) (Fig. 7.2). Nevertheless, overall,

**Fig. 7.5** October revolution, 1917 (9th grade, part 1, Russian, p. 46)

Fig. 7.6 Strike of women workers of Putilov plant on the first day of the February Revolution, 1917 (9th grade, Russian, part 1, p. 41)

non-Kazakh females are still the least represented group across all the textbooks (Fig. 7.7), and their images are not close-up portraits which can imply they are not positioned as close to the viewers' identities.

Besides, non-Kazakh women are excluded as prominent figures in the Kazakhstani discourse by not being presented in close-up or portrait format. The most discriminatory textbooks are for grades 7, 8, and 11 (except images) in both Russian and Kazakh languages. Grade 10 features more non-Kazakh men and women than Kazakh ones, but this is due to the overuse of citations of famous foreign scholars such as Karl Ritter, Herodotus, and Alexander von Humboldt. Grade 11 shows more non-Kazakh than Kazakh females, but this is caused by overusing group pictures. The most gender-inclusive grades are 9 and 10, produced by Mektep.

This pattern contributes to redistribution of the 4Rs model, as girls (both Kazakh and non-Kazakh) need knowledge of successful females as role models, especially as highly appreciated heroes, social activists, professionals, and scientists. Moreover, non-titular ethnic schoolgirls require knowledge of prominent social actors of their ethnic and gender identities
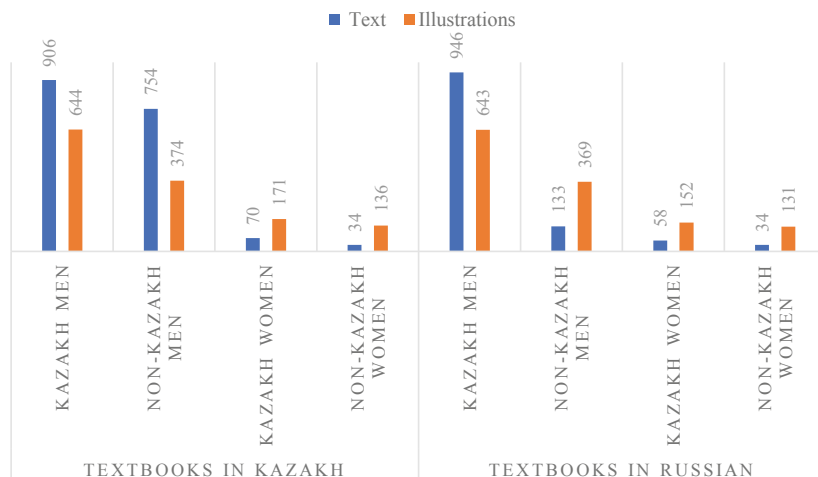
Fig. 7.7 The overall distribution of social actors based on gender and ethnicity in texts and illustrations

as role models (at least, non-Kazakhs). Similar to ethnic bias, discrimination in language can also affect gender and intersecting inequalities.

Gender and Language Bias

A comparative analysis of social actors in Kazakh and Russian language texts reveals some differences, despite the two languages appearing identical at first glance. Furthermore, the textbooks seem to be translations of each other, either from Russian into Kazakh or vice versa. Thus, one of the assignments asks students to describe their favourite writers and artists in the essay (Table 7.1).

In Kazakh, not all nouns have inherent lexical gender. This is particularly evident in the case of professions or occupation nouns. In general, Kazakh does not form feminine equivalents for professions by changing the endings or using different forms of the noun. The only possible way to emphasise a feminine gender is adding the word '*әйел*' ('*female*') before the noun, for instance, '*әйел құрылысшы*' ('*female builder*') and '*әйел дәрігер*' ('*female doctor*'). This construction emphasises the gender which may not always be relevant or necessary.

Table 7.1 An example of linguistic bias

Original Text	English Translation
Kazakh: Ұсынылған тақырыптардың бірін таңдап, эссе жазыңдар: «Менің сүйікті жазушым», «Менің сүйікті суретшім»	Choose one of the topics and write an essay: 'My favourite writer', 'My favourite artist'
Russian: Напишите эссе на любую из предложенных тем: «Мой любимый казахский (казахстанский) писатель», «Мой любимый казахский (казахстанский) художник»	Write an essay on any of the suggested topics: 'My favourite Kazakh (Kazakhstani) writer', 'My favourite Kazakh (Kazakhstani) artist'

Source 10th grade, Kazakh, p. 240 and Russian, p. 242

In contrast, the Russian language has the capacity to form feminine nouns out of masculine ones. However, in most cases, this capacity is not used, and a masculine noun is used as a generic default to include both genders. Consequently, contemporary Russian is criticised for being gender insensitive, and these days linguists recommend using more feminine nouns to increase the visibility of women (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001). Similarly, text in Russian (Table 7.1) does not give students an option to include females. It asks to write about 'writers' (писатели) which is a masculine noun in plural form. Although it is used as a generic and neutral default, it would be beneficial to use the feminine form *'писательницы' (female writers)* adding the relevant suffix since this word officially exists and does not possess any negative connotation (as some Russian feminine forms of nouns on occupation do). The same critique could be applied to the use of *'художник' (artist)* in Russian. There is a possibility to use the form *'художница' (female artist)* to emphasise the option of writing about women.

I am not suggesting changing the language rules or inventing feminine nouns as practised in social and mass media. However, it might be possible to incorporate at least the officially existing feminine nouns into textbook discourses, e.g. '*казашки и казахи*' (female and male Kazakhs), '*колхозницы и колхозники*' (female and male collective farmers). The problem is that, according to the research, these default masculine nouns are primarily associated with men, not women (Doleschal, 1993; Schmid, 1998). In contrast, the Kazakh language is not gendered, so adding more feminine nouns through morphological means (suffixes), like in Russian, is not possible.

Table 7.1 poses another issue, which is the differences in translations. The Kazakh textbook prompts students to depict any writer or artist, while the Russian textbook specifies that it should be a Kazakh or Kazakhstani artist ('Kazakhstani' is in the brackets). Generally, 'Kazakhstani' implies the nation with multiple ethnicities, and distinguishing Kazakhs may suggest hidden priority to them as a titular ethnicity which could marginalise non-Kazakh pupils in Russian classes. Therefore, with respect to the redistribution of knowledge within the 4Rs framework, female social actors and those of non-Kazakh ethnicities are marginalised. To address this issue, increasing their representation and highlighting the importance of information about them are necessary. Additionally, it is crucial to examine how exactly these females and males are represented and how gender norms are taught to pupils.

Understanding of Gender Norms

Idealised Femininities

Textbook discourses portray the 'ideal' woman as weak, vulnerable, submissive, and passive. These gender norms can be communicated implicitly in the textbooks. Discourse producers highlight passiveness and submissiveness by placing social actors in certain positions within the sentence. This pattern is exemplified in extract (1):

(1) *Жанқожа Кенесары Қасымұлымен туыстық қарым-қатынас орнатты. Хан оның қызына үйленді*

Zhankozha established a kinship relationship with Kenesary Kasymuli. The Khan married his daughter" (7th grade, Kazakh, p. 101)

Here, Zhankozha's daughter is depicted as an object in the sentence, not a subject, despite the fact that marriage is an action that requires the participation of both partners. Following van Leeuwen's (2008, pp. 30–31) explanation, this backgrounding of the woman as a social actor suggests that the marriage was not her decision, but rather that of her father due to his political interests. Otherwise, the sentence could be '*Khan and Zhankozha's daughter got married*'.

This pattern of discourse is confirmed in images as well, which often illustrate women as victims and a weak social group (Figs. 7.8 and 7.9).

Fig. 7.8 A woman in famine is holding her starving child (8th grade, Kazakh, p. 98)

The stigma surrounding women's passiveness, however, is occasionally mitigated in certain discourses where women perform as prominent icons. As such, extract (2) presents Saka queens Tomiris and Zarina with admiration highlighting their exceptional status and achievements:

(2) *В сакском обществе у женщин был высокий статус….царица Зарина не только успешно воевала с «варварами», но и основала несколько городов, а царица Томирис возглавляла свое царство в войне против персов.*

Fig. 7.9 People deported to Kazakhstan from the borders of the Soviet Union (11th grade, Russian, p. 113)

> *In the Saka society, women had a high status…Queen Zarina not only successfully fought against the "barbarians", but also founded several cities, and Queen Tomiris led her kingdom in the war against the Persians* (9th grade, Russian, p. 105)

This chapter devotes special attention and space to these women, who are positioned as the direct ancestors of Kazakhs. Notably, their accomplishments are framed in stereotypically 'masculine' domains, such as fighting against barbarians, founding cities, and leading the kingdom into war. This representation signals that women are recognised as prominent figures mostly when they possess so-called 'masculine' abilities. Although some prominent women are represented in the 9th grade, there are still not enough of them, which raises the issue of recognising women in the Kazakhstani history discourse. Additionally, one of the mentioned prominent non-Kazakh women is Nataliya Sats in extract (3).

> (3) …. *усилиями сосланной в Алма-Ату Наталии Сац в столице Казахстана появился Театр юного зрителя…..* (10th grade, Russian, p. 229)

…. with the efforts of Nataliya Sats, who had been deported to Alma-Ata, in the capital of Kazakhstan there appeared a Theatre of the Young Spectator…
(10th grade, Russian, p. 229)

However, the female social actor is not presented as a subject, but the attribute to the subject 'efforts', implying that her efforts were not the only ones that established the theatre. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy between the Russian and Kazakh textbooks, with the Kazakh version providing only the first letter of her name (Н. Сац), which does not enable readers to identify her gender. This difference between the Kazakh and Russian textbooks is unfair because Kazakh-speaking pupils may not realise that the social actor is a woman, especially a non-Kazakh woman. An accompanying illustration could be helpful to reveal Sats' gender, but no image is provided. This raises the problem of recognition of all social groups, as emphasised in the 4Rs model. The marginalisation of non-Kazakh females in textbooks is a problem that should be resolved. The following prominent non-Kazakh women could be included in the textbook: athletes O. Shishigina and E. Rybakina, or a geologist T. Koshkina. As indicated, feminine identities are often described stereotypically with acknowledgement based on 'masculine' abilities such as fighting, establishing a kingdom. Acknowledgement of females also varies based on ethnicity. Recognition for men, however, relies on different gender norms.

Hegemonic Masculinity

In history textbooks, an 'ideal' man is illustrated as strong, powerful, active and decisive, and a leader, warrior, social activist, or a scientist. This confirms previous studies on textbooks from diverse curriculum areas (Durrani et al., 2022; Palandjian et al., 2018).

An eye-catching pattern in history textbooks is that aggression, war, and conflict are associated with men. Although there are a few women warriors (Tomiris, Zarina, A. Moldagulova, etc.), even they are not visualised as agents in real battles. Their positions in images are such that viewers look up at them and admire them as role models (Fig. 7.10) (van Leeuwen, 2008, pp. 139–141).

Thus, women are not associated with violence as much as men, whose images are often depicted in battle scenes like in Fig. 7.11.

Fig. 7.10 Kazakh female soldiers A. Moldagulova and M. Mametova (8th grade, Kazakh, p. 150)

In this regard, texts are congruent with illustrations. In extract (4), for instance, a prominent icon Abulkhair Khan's violence is praised as a positive feature:

(4) *Әбілқайыр хан …. қалмақтарға қарсы бірнеше жеңісті жорық жасады,…. Түркістан қаласына жетіп, оны тікелей шабуылмен азат етті,….жоңғарларға қарсы бірнеше сәтті жорық жасады. Осы кезде оның ұйымдастырушылық таланты, …қаһарман ерлігі айқын танылды.*

Abulkhair Khan …. conducted several victorious invasions of Kalmyks,…. reached the city of Turkestan and liberated it by a direct attack,…. made several successful invasions of Dzungars. At this time, his organisational talent, ….and personal heroism were clearly recognised. (7th grade, Kazakh, pp. 17–18)

Бұланты-Білеуті шайқасы.
Р. Қожағұлованың суреті

Fig. 7.11   The Battle of bulanty-bilenti (7th grade, Kazakh, p. 21)

Although the extract depicts invasions as defence and response to the enemies, this cannot mitigate Abulkhair's violence. He performs as a foregrounded agentive social actor who initiated the invasions. The use of positive adjectives like '*successful*' and '*victorious*', as well as phrases like '*organisational talent*', etc., reinforces the message. This can contribute to the normalisation of masculine violence.

To mitigate the praise of violence, the use of a modal verb such as 'have to' and backgrounding Abulkhair as a social actor could be useful.

For example, '*The army under Abulkhair's subjugation had to invade them in response*' (Kazakh: '*Әбілқайыр басшылығындағы әскер оларға жауап ретінде жорық жасауға мәжбүр болды*' and Russian: '*Армия в подчинении Абулхаира была вынуждена сделать ответное нашествие*'). This issue relates to the reconciliation domain of the 4Rs' framework and calls for the replacement of violent masculinity with peaceful masculinity (Durrani & Halai, 2018, p. 30). Promoting aggression as a normal and even positive feature for men is not desirable in educating pupils.

Conclusions

Multimodal CDA was used to explore two research questions. The first question investigated the enactment of gender across different school textbooks. The study found that non-Kazakh females are the least represented, while Kazakh males are the most represented groups in the historical discourse across different school textbooks. Meanwhile, gender is a bigger marker of discrimination than ethnicity. Different level textbooks exclude women to varying extents, with textbooks for 9th and 10th grades being the most symmetrical, and those for grades 7th and 8th being the most asymmetrical. The 11th grade textbook by Atamura publisher shows a relatively fair balance only in illustrations, that warrants further investigation on differences in presenting gender between the publishers. Even though Mektep publisher seems to promote gender equality more than Atamura, this needs further verification with a larger sample. Moreover, the most egalitarian 9th grade textbook includes one non-Kazakh female co-author, unlike the other texts which do not include any ethnic minority female co-author, suggesting the inclusion of an ethnic minority female co-author might positively impact ethnic and gender equality, although further examination involving more authorship teams is needed.

The second research question concerned how the language of a textbook influences gender and ethnic discrimination or equality. My analysis indicates that language affects gender and ethnic bias. Russian is a gendered language, and it can create separate nouns to indicate females' identities and occupations. However, textbooks predominantly use masculine nouns as a default, therefore excluding women. One flaw of the textbooks is their prioritisation of Kazakhs and backgrounding other ethnicities (Kazakhstanis), as seen through discrepancies in the translation

of social actors. This can make Russian-speaking non-Kazakh pupils feel alienated from their national identity.

Furthermore, language used in the texts reinforces traditional gender roles, with femininity associated with vulnerability and submissiveness, whereas masculinity is linked to power and leadership. Paradoxically, textbooks pay more attention to female characters when they demonstrate stereotypically masculine traits such as power, leadership, and militancy. Besides, ethnicity affects the presentation of prominent women: The Russian language textbook that mentions a prominent non-Kazakh female does not even include her picture, while the Kazakh one does not even reveal her gender textually by withholding her first name. Such translation discrepancies further contribute to the exclusion of ethnic minority women.

In addition, the textbooks also glorify violence by associating it with 'ideal' masculinity and using positive adjectives to describe it. This not only enhances the dominance of male leaders, but also hinders efforts towards peace and social cohesion among pupils. It is clear that redistribution of knowledge or portrayal is necessary to reduce gender disparity and increase the inclusion of non-Kazakh females in particular. Recognition of their contributions is essential, and all stakeholders' voices should be represented, including the government's interest in promoting gender equity. Furthermore, reconciliation entails reducing the glorification of violence and its association with masculinity, and updating the content in collaboration with linguists and visual analysts.

In summary, the study highlights the need for a more inclusive and balanced gender and ethnic representation in Kazakhstani school textbooks and a critical analysis of the discriminatory language and illustrations which can threaten peace in the country.

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