



Conquering heights, challenging norms: the motives and experiences of elite female climbers in a patriarchal society

Yermek Galiakbarov , Ordenbek Mazbayev , Baldyrgan Onayeva , Botakoz Bolatova , Viachaslau Filimonau & Hakan Sezerel

To cite this article: Yermek Galiakbarov , Ordenbek Mazbayev , Baldyrgan Onayeva , Botakoz Bolatova , Viachaslau Filimonau & Hakan Sezerel (07 Apr 2025): Conquering heights, challenging norms: the motives and experiences of elite female climbers in a patriarchal society, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, DOI: [10.1080/09669582.2025.2487677](https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2025.2487677)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2025.2487677>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



[View supplementary material](#)



Published online: 07 Apr 2025.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 873



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

Conquering heights, challenging norms: the motives and experiences of elite female climbers in a patriarchal society

Yermek Galiakbarov^{a,b}, Ordenbek Mazbayev^c, Baldyrgan Onayeva^c, Botakoz Bolatova^d, Viachaslau Filimonau^e and Hakan Sezerel^f 

^aDepartment of Design, Service and Tourism in the School of Business and Information Technology, Turan-Astana University, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan; ^bDepartment of Tourism and Hospitality, Maqsut Narikbayev University, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan; ^cDepartment of Tourism, L.N. Gumilyov, Eurasian National University, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan; ^dK. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University, Aktobe, Republic of Kazakhstan; ^eUniversity of Surrey, Guildford, UK; ^fDepartment of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Anadolu University, Tepebasi, Eskisehir, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Limited research explores the motivations of women climbers, particularly within patriarchal societies where participation faces gender-related stereotypes and cultural prejudices. This study addresses this knowledge gap, aiming to understand how to promote female engagement in climbing as serious leisure, contributing to gender equality in tourism. Focusing on elite female climbers in Kazakhstan, this study investigates their motivations and resistance against dominant power structures. Utilizing self-determination theory, the concept of domination and resistance, and intersectional theory, this study employs interpretive phenomenological analysis of 16 personal accounts of female climbers. Findings reveal a variety of climbing motives including physiological, developmental, social, and psychological. A new motive, or a boundary condition contributing to climbing motives, is identified that showcases subtle forms of women's resistance. These forms aim to assert women's autonomy, defy societal norms and expectations, and enable subversive behavioural acts. By revealing resistance as a stand-alone motive or as a potential boundary condition contributing to other climbing motives, this study highlights how women, especially in patriarchal societies, navigate the complex intersection of traditional gender roles in pursuit of their climbing aspirations. The study provides recommendations for encouraging female participation in serious leisure within patriarchal societies and beyond, fostering inclusivity in tourism activities..

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 8 October 2024
Accepted 27 March 2025

KEYWORDS

Mountaineering; motive; gender identity; femininity; masculinity; resistance; patriarchal society

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Albert Nsom Kimbu

Introduction

Motivation to climb represents an established object of academic research in serious leisure studies considering the ever increasing number of people who participate in climbing globally (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). For example, only in USA, the number of

CONTACT Viachaslau Filimonau  v.filimonau@surrey.ac.uk  University of Surrey, Stag Hill, Guildford GU2 7XH, UK.

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2025.2487677>.

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

participants in climbing and bouldering has grown by circa 30% between 2016 and 2021 (Statista, 2024a) and the growth of over 40% has been observed in England between 2016 and 2023 (Statista, 2024b). As new socio-demographics start engaging in climbing, it is necessary to keep empirical research on their motivations up to date (lonel et al., 2023). The results of such research can inform industry stakeholders on how to (re-)design the related products and services to meet existing and emerging consumer needs (Clinch & Filimonau, 2017).

Research concerned with the topic of climbing motivations identifies a range of intrinsic (for example, a desire to stay physically active) and extrinsic (for instance, a search for recognition by fellow climbers) factors prompting climbers to participate (Ewert, 1985). Research also reveals associations between climbers' personal characteristics, such as age, skills and experiences, with their motivation to climb (Lee et al., 2020). Lastly, research highlights the importance of such psychological variables as individual risk perception (Pomfret, 2006), the need for personal self-realization (Tsaour et al., 2013), self-determination (Lee & Ewert, 2019) and perception of climbing as a calling (Galiakbarov et al., 2024) in explaining the motives to climb. Research highlights the complexity of individual motivations to participate in climbing and calls for more nuanced, empirical studies to situate and explain the drivers of participation in various socio-cultural and political contexts that frame the climbing experience around the world (Dilley & Scraton, 2010).

Despite the established and evolving line of studies on climbing motivations, there are important knowledge gaps that require further investigation. One gap is attributed to climbing being a male dominated serious leisure activity (Robinson, 2008) with subsequently limited engagement of female climbers in academic investigations (Pomfret & Doran, 2015). A systematic review of research on the psychology of mountaineering identifies that female climbers are featured in empirical investigations five times less frequently compared to their male counterparts (Jackman et al., 2023). This is further confirmed by statistical evidence pinpointing that women constitute less than 25% of the total number of climbers and boulders globally (Statista, 2024c). Concurrently, studies have established that gender differences influence why people climb and how they experience climbing (Llewellyn & Sanchez, 2008). This indicates the need to better understand the motives of women to participate in climbing (Garrido-Palomino & España-Romero, 2023).

A better understanding of why women participate in climbing is especially important for patriarchal societies. This is because serious leisure in general, and climbing and mountaineering in particular, have long been subjected to patriarchal bias and even ignorance, thus representing a marginalised topic in tourism studies (Eger et al., 2022). Yet, examining the role of gender in serious leisure, and questioning the traditionally established or assumed relationships between gendered cultures in serious leisure activities, is paramount for transitioning tourism towards sustainability (Hall & Brown, 2022). This is because the topic of gender and gender (in)equality is featured in at least five Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations (UNSDG), namely UNSDG 1, 4, 5, 8, and 16 (UNWTO, 2020). Further, in their systematic scoping review of sustainable tourism indicators in relation to the sustainable development goals, Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023) recognise that UNSDG 5 (Gender Equality) has been featured insufficiently in extant tourism scholarship. Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023) call for more empirical investigations on the empowerment of women, including researching the determinants of their participation in various tourism activities, to enable progress of global tourism towards the goals of sustainable development.

Although studies have started considering the influence of patriarchal structural constraints on climbing motivations (Apollo et al., 2023), these studies have largely been examined from the western perspective (see, for example, Doran et al., 2018; Little, 2002; Moscoso-Sánchez, 2008). These studies have provided valuable insights; however, their results do not cover the diversity of climbing markets which are gradually expanding towards developing countries (Liu

et al., 2022). Further, as Henderson and Gibson (2013) argue in their integrative review of women, gender, and leisure, despite the growing interest in studying women's participation in serious leisure in non-western contexts, empirical investigations undertaken in such contexts remain limited, thus underlining the hegemonic 'western' agenda in extant research. Further, the gender inequality gap in many western societies is slowly, but gradually, closing; for example, the Gender Inequality Index by UNDP (2024a) which assesses gender-based disadvantages suggests that, from 2016 to 2023, it has improved by over 20% in most European nations compared with circa 5% of the world's average. This calls for more research on the determinants of widening women's participation in various social activities, including serious leisure, in developing countries. Such research can enable global progress towards the goals of gender equality (UNWTO, 2020).

Studies on women's motivations to climb in non-western contexts, where the influence of patriarchy is particularly strong, are however rare (Apollo, 2021). This is a major shortcoming because such studies can highlight how and why female climbers attempt to challenge the long-established societal and cultural norms assigning women a primary role of domestic labour and care (Dilley & Scraton, 2010). Research on motivations of female climbers residing in non-western, patriarchal societies can therefore provide interesting insights into the psychology of 'climbing against the current'. In turn, this will aid in a better understanding of the intersectionality between gender identities, cultural norms and women's aspirations in pursuing serious leisure activities, such as climbing.

To partially address these knowledge gaps, this study has set to explore the climbing motivations of women in Kazakhstan being guided by the following research question: *How do elite female climbers in Kazakhstan navigate the intersection of traditional gender roles, cultural prejudices towards women and female role in society and their aspirations in climbing?* Kazakhstan provides a suitable context for this analysis because it represents a country with strong traditions of patriarchy. A recent report on gender inequality in Kazakhstan has established that over 90% of its residents have gender-related prejudices and circa 70% of its men agree that a woman's main duty should be taking care of household chores (UNDP, 2024b). Concurrently, Kazakhstan has a long established school of climbing and mountaineering which trains elite climbers of both genders (Galiakbarov et al., 2024). Therefore, Kazakhstan represents an interesting research context given that, to pursue climbing as a serious leisure activity, its female climbers have to steer through cultural prejudices and balance societal expectations of traditional household roles.

To answer its research question, the study will be guided by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) which explains human motivation by examining the effect of various psychological needs of female climbers and the role of social contexts in which these needs occur, such as gender identities and cultural norms in patriarchal societies. Self-determination theory represents one of the key theoretical frameworks used to explore motivations of serious leisure participants (Qiu et al., 2020). The unique contribution of the current study is that self-determination theory will be complemented with insights from intersectional theory (Lykke, 2010) given the research focus on the complex interactions between gender, cultural biases, and societal prejudices that shape the motivations of female climbers in the patriarchal Kazakhstan. Another contribution of the current study is that it will supplement self-determination theory with the concept of domination and the arts of resistance proposed by Scott (1990). This concept, explaining how individuals dissent from commonly accepted public views and societal rules, can aid in understanding how female climbers subtly challenge gender norms and cultural stereotypes, such as those attributed to women's participation in climbing in patriarchal societies. By combining these theoretical frameworks, the current study will provide novel insights into the interplay of such intersectional factors as gender, culture and socio-economic status of women in the motives of elite female climbers in the patriarchal society of Kazakhstan. The next section conceptualises the study.

Conceptualisation

Motivations of female climbers

Research suggests that motivations of female climbers exhibit similarities and differences from those of their male counterparts. It is worth noting, however, that most studies concerned with understanding why women participate in climbing and how/if their motives differ compared to men have been conducted in western contexts (Galiakbarov et al., 2024). It is therefore important to re-test and re-confirm their results in other climbing markets, such as those represented by countries with highly patriarchal societies. This is because, in such societies, the intersection of gender with other significant social identities, most notably perceptions of traditional family roles and masculine decision-making prevalent in all life spheres, can considerably affect women motivations to participate in social and economic activities. For example, studies have shown that the motives of Kazakh women display some similarities, but also showcase some considerable differences, compared to those of their western counterparts in such male-dominated activity as entrepreneurship (Bui et al., 2018; Yousafzai et al., 2024), including the sector of tourism (Filimonau et al., 2024). It is therefore fair to assume that climbing motivations among Kazakh women can also be different, thus justifying a nuanced investigation.

In terms of similarities in climbing motives between genders, women and men participate in climbing in pursuit of novelty (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). Like men, female climbers are attracted by the natural beauty of mountains (Mazel, 1994); they have a desire to challenge their physique (Appleby & Fisher, 2005); improve their fitness levels (Doran et al., 2020); and escape from day-to-day routines (Ewert et al., 2013). An inclination to experience the feeling of awe (Hall, 2018) and catharsis (Zhou et al., 2020) can equally determine motivations to climb for both women and men.

As for the differences in climbing motives, Pomfret and Bramwell (2016) find that women are more strongly motivated by so-called passive motives or motives that do not require excessive physical involvement, such as a desire to relax, seek interaction and enjoy the natural environment when climbing. Contrarily, men are more interested in so-called active motivations, such as intra-group competitiveness and conquest of new heights. Similarly, Ewert et al. (2013) posit that female climbers are more strongly motivated by the social factors or factors involving interaction with other climbers, such as the socialisation opportunities that climbing provides; in contrast, male climbers exhibit a higher desire for self-actualization and sensation-seeking. These findings are aligned with Dilley and Scraton (2010) who argue that women are more likely to climb with an all-female group to socialise and avoid an intra-group conflict. These findings are also in agreement with Lee et al. (2020) who posit that women may prefer climbing with other women because this allows them to better experience their gender and even re-define their gender identity and develop the feeling of self-determination in pursuit of their aspirations in climbing despite it being a male dominated activity.

Female climbing motivation as a means of self-determination and constraint negotiation

Climbing may provide women with the opportunity to develop a sense of self-determination (Lee et al., 2020), and self-determination theory can therefore aid in explaining motivations of women climbers. Self-determination theory is a psychological theoretical framework that identifies the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key elements of human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012). When these needs are fulfilled by participating in certain activities, such as climbing, individuals are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation (Legault, 2020). This experience, in turn, prompts individuals to more actively engage in such activities in pursuit of the inherent satisfaction and enjoyment which they provide (Ryan & Vansteenkiste, 2023).

Self-determination theory has been found relevant to understand human motivations across various disciplines, including organisational studies (Deci et al., 2017), health science (Ng et al., 2012), and education (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). In the context of serious leisure and tourism, its relevance for examining climbing motivations has been established by several studies. Kiewa (2001) highlights self-determination as an important driver of satisfaction within the rock climbing experience, particularly among women. This study does not however utilize self-determination theory directly but defines self-determination as one's control over the structure of the activity, such as mountaineering. The study concludes that the more control a mountaineer has over the climb and her/himself, the more satisfied they become which increases the likelihood of their repeated participation in rock climbing. Crockett et al. (2022) harness self-determination theory to demonstrate that participation in mountaineering requires competence, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation. This study also shows relevance of the factor of relatedness which is practiced through interpersonal relationship (with other mountaineers), nature connection, and place attachment. Connection with nature as a factor of self-determination in climbing is also demonstrated by Woodman et al. (2020). Further, Hardie-Bick and Bonner (2016) show that, when combined with the need to experience self-control over one's capabilities, connection to nature can lead to the perception of flow, enjoyment and self-esteem among climbers. Lee and Ewert (2019) apply self-determination theory to identify how motivations with various level of self-determination can facilitate or hinder participation in rock climbing. Their study demonstrates that identified motivation is positively associated with commitment, identity development, and personal rewards while intrinsic motivation is positively associated with personal and social rewards. Lastly, Lee et al. (2020) find that skills and experiences of climbers are positively associated with intrinsic motivations, with climbers being therefore self-determined to improve their skills by participating in mountaineering repeatedly.

Importantly, the literature argues that male climbers are equally self-determined compared to their female counterparts, and that no evidence of significant gender difference in the levels of self-determination between women and men exists (Ewert et al., 2013). However, self-determination among male climbers can take different forms compared to female climbers. More specifically, when participating in climbing, men are primarily driven by a desire for personal growth (Pomfret & Doran, 2015) and self-renewal (Tsauro et al., 2013), thus being determined to self-improve. While often possessing the same trait (Crockett et al., 2022), women are more strongly inclined to engage with the climbing community and develop the feeling of relatedness. This exhibits a stronger need for socialisation, as discussed above.

Another important differentiator of female climbers from their male counterparts is that they consider climbing as a social context to exhibit their gender identity and negotiate the external factors preventing them from achieving their aspirations (Lee & Ewert, 2019). These factors, or constraints, are attributed, *inter alia*, to the cultural norms and expectations of women in specific societies, such as the patriarchal ones (Llewellyn & Sanchez, 2008). By participating in climbing, women can therefore demonstrate to the others and themselves that they can resist or even uprise against these external factors and pursue their aspirations regardless of these factors' occurrence (Dilley & Scraton, 2010).

For example, Doran et al. (2020) show how participation in climbing enables women to better negotiate their internal constraints, such as a lack of time for climbing due to employment and family commitments. This study also indicates how female climbers seek to balance out climbing and household related activities and build confidence in the meaningfulness of pursuing climbing, especially in situations when traditional gender roles assumed by the society do not encourage it. Likewise, Evans and Anderson (2018) highlight the significant gender dimension of external constraints that must be regularly negotiated by female climbers, such as the dominant societal view that women should not engage in climbing. Their study proposes that successful negotiation of this gender-related constraint is paramount for empowering women and encouraging their participation in climbing. Lastly, Doran et al. (2018) identify

so-called inter-personal constraints which women have to negotiate when participating in climbing; these are partially associated with the under-representation of women in climbing which requires female climbers to build resistance against the perceived feeling of minority. Resistance may therefore represent another factor which differentiates female climbers from their male counterparts in terms of climbing motivation. Insights from intersectional theory can aid in understanding this resistance and how/why it occurs in patriarchal societies, such as Kazakhstan.

Climbing in patriarchal societies and intersectionality

Intersectional theory is a sociological analytical framework examining how various social identities, such as gender, sexuality, race, class, and (dis)ability, intersect to shape unique experiences of discrimination and privilege (Collins & Bilge, 2020). Intersectional theory originated in critical race studies (Gillborn, 2015). However, it soon penetrated gender research providing a novel perspective on how women navigate the complex landscape of cultural and social prejudices and biases resulting in discrimination, especially in societies where such biases remain widespread (Cho et al., 2013).

Intersectional theory posits that individuals possess multiple social identities that simultaneously shape their lives (Settles & Buchanan, 2014). For example, in the context of female climbers, these social identities are represented by the immediate family role (a someone's spouse and a someone's mother), extended family role (a someone's daughter) and economic role (a someone's employee). These identities are not separate from one another but overlapped which shapes complex and unique experiences of perceived (dis)advantage (Werbner, 2013). For instance, a woman in Kazakhstan has always been recognised as a good mother with motherhood being appreciated and valued in the Kazakh society (Abdikadyrova et al., 2018), thus assigning a certain advantage to being female. However, concurrently, leadership qualities of woman in Kazakhstan are hardly recognised, and this often disadvantages female candidates when recruiting for managerial positions (Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2021). Intersectional theory therefore highlights how established systems of power and oppression, such as those attributed to gender roles, but also sexism, racism, and classism, are interconnected and reinforce each other (Collins & Bilge, 2020). These various intersections of social inequality are referred to in intersectional theory as the matrix of domination (Peretz, 2021) which explains how differences among people (for example, gender) oppress individuals (for instance, women) and negatively affect their living experience in societies where such domination has long been prevalent, such as patriarchal societies.

Intersectional theory further argues that an act of domination usually results in resistance whereby the oppressed individuals refuse to accept this oppression (Muñoz-Puig, 2024). This refusal can be either active, such as a direct rebel, or passive, such as when the oppressed individual may publicly demonstrate their compliance with the oppression but disagree with it privately (Settles et al., 2020). The first step to resist is to define and value (your)self as someone different from those who dominate (Alinia, 2015). Subsequently, this can aid in developing and preserving a feeling of self-esteem aiding the oppressed individual in withstanding the continued oppression (Gambino, 2020). Resistance is thus a core concept of intersectional theory which helps to understand how the oppressed individuals survive in the complex circumstances of dominance (Gouws, 2017).

Intersectional theory has been introduced to tourism and leisure scholarship only recently (Chambers, 2023) where it has been applied to examine the role of gender in the workplace (Alberti & Iannuzzi, 2020), the effect of sexuality on travel motivations (Prayag et al., 2024), and the influence of religion on tourist experiences (Nisha et al., 2025). When translated into the context of women's participation in climbing in Kazakhstan, insights from intersectional theory can enable an understanding of the motives to climb alongside the experiences of female

climbers. The patriarchal society of Kazakhstan discourages female participation in serious leisure as this comes in conflict with the societal vision of traditional women's roles (Galiakbarov et al., 2024). However, participation in climbing can exemplify resistance as it enables women to understand who they truly are, thus laying the foundation to becoming resistant, as per above. This is confirmed, albeit indirectly, by literature which has established the need to stay one to one with nature, disconnect and rethink the day-to-day activities as the core motives to climb (Burke et al., 2010). It is argued that these motives may in fact be instrumental for another core motive to occur among female climbers i.e. to develop a sense of resistance. Further, it has long been established that repeated participation in climbing contributes to the development of self-esteem (Iso-Ahola et al., 1989) which can eventually aid women in withstanding the male domination in the Kazakh society as a whole and in climbing as a serious leisure activity in particular. This calls for a better understanding of climbing as an act of resistance.

Climbing as an act of resistance

The concept of resistance is not new in serious leisure studies, and it has been a cornerstone of research on how individuals negotiate the constraints of time and space required for participation in serious leisure activities (Stalp, 2006). Indeed, considering the rapid pace of life and various job-related and family commitments, people may find it difficult to allocate enough time for climbing (Davidson, 2015). Likewise, given that climbing can be expensive and because it takes place far from home, individuals have to resist the temptation of not participating in it despite personal interests and aspirations (Galiakbarov et al., 2024). In other words, resistance has been identified as a mechanism encouraging participation in serious leisure in modern societies whereby such activity as climbing, for instance, provides individuals with the opportunity to escape from or resist the values of the increasingly rationalised world (Kiewa, 2002).

The concept of resistance has also been featured in research on the motives and experiences of female climbers, but, again, mostly from the perspective of personal negotiation. Shaw (2001) was the first to highlight the importance of resistance in the context of serious leisure participation among women. More specifically, this study emphasized the need to better understand how women navigated throughout various societal and cultural challenges, including gendered ideologies and inequalities, and how they negotiated these constraints to empower themselves for engaging in serious leisure. However, this study and subsequent research which was grounded on its propositions (see Gillespie et al., 2002; Raisborough, 2006) were primarily concerned with how women negotiated and claimed time for serious leisure, such as by balancing family and job commitments. In other words, research focussed on how women negotiated their *access to* serious leisure (Brace-Govan, 2004); however, while acknowledging that such resistance could empower women and advance the discourse on gender-related inequalities in serious leisure activities, this research did not examine resistance *during* the women's *experience* of serious leisure.

The line of research on resistance among female climbers was advanced by Dilley and Scraton (2010). Their study explored women's climbing experiences, revealing how repeated participation in climbing could foster active, although often unconscious, resistance to societal considerations of limited physical abilities of female climbers. Their study also shown how climbing enabled women to resist traditional notions of femininity, such as those where the societal role of women was associated with household duties and childcare. Despite the pioneering insights provided by Dilley and Scraton (2010) into the topic of resistance as a motive of climbing among women, their study was conducted in the western context with its arguably weaker societal prejudices and stereotypes over female participation in serious leisure. Further, their study focused on the physical capabilities of female climbers and indicated how participation in climbing could prompt women to re-think and re-negotiate their societal roles. Their study did not explore in detail the concept of resistance from the perspective of intersectionality and

the women's inner dissent from dominant cultural norms and public expectations which are likely to strongly affect female participation in climbing in patriarchal societies. This is where the concept of domination and the arts of resistance proposed by Scott (1990) can provide a novel perspective.

Domination and the arts of resistance

Scott (1990) explored how marginalised groups, referred to as 'subordinates', living in societies where other groups dominated, could resist the power structures dominating and oppressing them. Scott (1990) argued that, despite their visible conformity with the order set by the power structures, marginalised groups often developed invisible resistance which they practiced privately. Scott (1990) introduced the concept of 'hidden transcripts' which described the forms of resistance that were kept in private and disguised from those in power to express their discontent and challenge the dominant narratives. For example, hidden transcripts could include everyday forms of resistance invisible to the oppressor, such as delaying work or doing this work slowly (known as foot dragging) or even sabotaging this work knowing that it will cause damage or, at least, irritation to the oppressor (Oslender, 2007). Hidden transcripts could also be seen in the form of cultural resistance whereby the oppressed would demonstrate their disagreement with the dominant power in folklore, such as by making poems and fairy tales featuring the oppressed as heroes fighting with the oppressors (Levi, 1999). As a more relevant to the context of Kazakhstan example, in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), hidden transcripts were represented by the re-prints of western books privately made by members of the public and disseminated among each other, so-called 'samizdat' [self-published] (Oushakine, 2001).

The ideas of Scott (1990) have been applied in various study contexts, including religion (Horsley, 2004), sociology (Bonilla-Silva, 2021) and political science (Tarrow, 2022). However, they have not been fully exploited in tourism and hospitality. The study by Murphy (1998) is an exception as it examines how flight attendants resist the power structures, such as excessive customer requests and hard working conditions, to foster a sense of meaning in their job. To our knowledge, there are no other studies that would have used the ideas of Scott (1990) to understand how/if different tourism and hospitality stakeholders resist various external and internal pressures, including the serious leisure context.

The ideas of Scott (1990) can aid in understanding if female climbers consider climbing an act of resistance and if such resistance may therefore represent one of the motives or even conditions to climb among women, especially in patriarchal societies with their oppressing power structures. In such societies, resistance can serve an important boundary condition (i.e. a factor which can be considered a motive in itself, but which can also contribute to the occurrence of other motives) motivating women to participate in climbing as a means of withstanding the domination of social norms and cultural prejudices. Aligned with intersectional theory, resistance can represent a factor which explains why women are self-determined to escape day-to-day activities in pursuit of understanding the inner 'self' and their societal role and position. Resistance can also enable female climbers to develop a sense of self-esteem, not only for climbing, but also for living in a patriarchy with its dominant masculinity. Resistance can therefore explain why women participate in climbing in pursuit of self-efficacy and autonomy, again, not only when climbing, but also in a day-to-day life. Accordingly, women can develop the hidden transcripts to dissent from traditional gender identities and cultural prejudices towards the female role in society in pursuit of climbing aspirations. These hidden transcripts can be obvious: for example, participation in climbing expeditions together with men can already signal women's resistance. These hidden transcripts can also be invisible, and, exactly because of their invisibility, these require a nuanced understanding of what they are and how they become manifested. Participation in climbing can be a hidden transcript in itself as it

challenges the societal status quo; therefore, it is important to understand how/if the ideas of Scott (1990) can be capitalised upon to explore the motives of female climbers in a patriarchal society of Kazakhstan.

Conceptual framework

The literature review has indicated that female climbers may be self-determined to challenge their gender identities and resist traditional roles assigned to them in (patriarchal) societies. Although the concept of resistance has repeatedly occurred in extant studies on the climbing motives of women, it has not been put into their focus. Insights from intersectional theory can aid in conceptualising resistance when examining motives to climb among women. The ideas on domination and the arts of resistance alongside the related concept of hidden transcripts by Scott (1990) can further provide an interesting perspective on how female climbers (in patriarchal societies) develop resistance in pursuit of their personal interest in serious leisure and intention to withstand the dominant societal structures. To this end, the current study has developed a conceptual framework (Figure 1) which will guide an empirical investigation on this topic.

The conceptual framework consists of three elements marked with different colours. Blue colour highlights the role of self-determination grounding on self-determination theory. Aligned with this theory, multiple internal motives can explain why women participate in climbing, including the need to experience a sense of flow and autonomy. A desire to resist may represent one of the motives or boundary conditions which can be explained through the lens of intersectional theory and the Scott (1990)'s concepts that are marked in green in the framework. The motives and experiences of female climbers in patriarchal societies, such as Kazakhstan, are influenced by the interplay of such intersectional factors as gender identities, cultural norms and societal expectations. These are marked in orange. Women must navigate through these intersectional influences in pursuit of their aspirations to climb. The text in grey exemplifies some of the biases, stereotypes and prejudices that female climbers in Kazakhstan can face and therefore should develop resistance for. The next section explains this study's methodology.

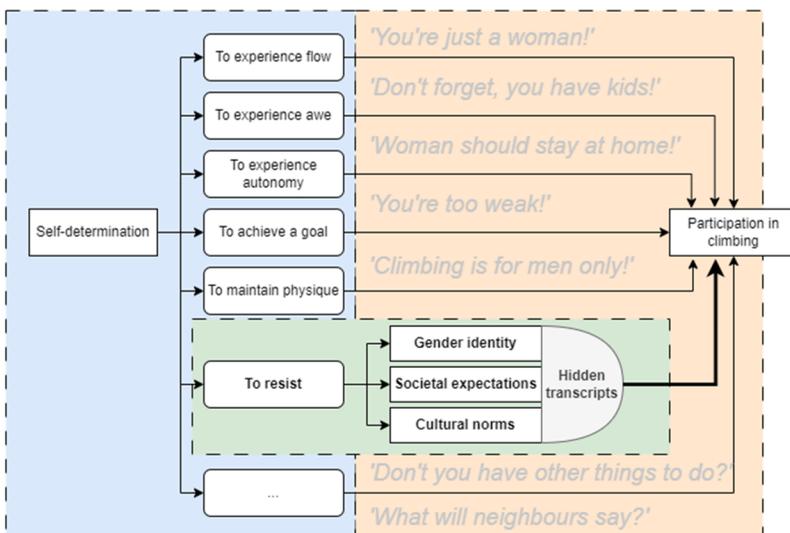


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Legend: Blue colour highlights the elements of self-determination theory.

Green colour highlights the elements of the ideas on domination and the arts of resistance by Scott (1990).

Orange colour highlights the intersections of gender, family status, cultural roles, and socio-economic situation that can shape the motives and experiences of female climbers in Kazakhstan. Herewith, text in grey indicates examples of stereotypes, biases and prejudices that define gender identities, prevent women from participating in climbing, and prompt female climbers to resist by developing hidden transcripts.

Methodology

Study context

While Kazakhstan has formally committed to gender equality, its deeply ingrained patriarchal values and gender stereotypes, both inherited from the Soviet past and reinforced by contemporary social norms, continue to limit women's opportunities and create significant obstacles to achieving true gender parity (UN Women, 2024). This is exemplified by limited female participation in public governance i.e. women are represented by circa 30% in deliberative bodies of local government; they occupy only 18% of seats in single or lower houses of national parliaments; and they represent only 15% of ministers or cabinet members in Kazakhstan (Equal future, 2024). According to data from the Global Gender Gap Index, out of 146 participating countries, Kazakhstan ranks 76th, with this rank going down from 62nd in 2023 and 65th in 2022 (World Economic Forum, 2024). This highlights Kazakhstan as a suitable study context to examine motives and experiences of female climbers in a patriarchal society.

Method

As the perspective of female climbers on their motives to climb remains under-examined and because women continue to be under-represented in academic research on climbing motivations and experiences (Pomfret & Doran, 2015), especially in patriarchal societies, such as Kazakhstan (Galiakbarov et al., 2024), this study collected data with in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research design is suitable for exploratory investigations due to its focus on one's emotions, feelings and experiences, which enables a nuanced understanding of how people perceive and react to specific phenomena occurring in their lives (Hennink et al., 2020).

To enhance credibility, the emic approach was applied in the context of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). As the study focused on lived experiences of female climbers in a patriarchal society, thus being aligned with phenomenology, the use of IPA was justified. IPA enables researchers to better understand the meanings assigned by the study participants to their feelings and behaviours in specific life situations (Finlay, 2014). IPA represents a popular method in research on participation motives in serious leisure and extreme sports (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013), thus being appropriate for the current study.

When applied within IPA, the emic approach advocates an insider's perspective in data collection as it aims to examine emotions, feelings and behaviours of a specific group of people from the standpoint of this group's members (Morey & Luthans, 1984). Aligned with this approach, data were collected by a female climber with extensive (over 10 years) climbing experience who was a member of the research team. She was also involved in the study's conceptualisation, data analysis and interpretation of its findings.

Recruitment and data collection

Data were collected from personal accounts of female climbers in Kazakhstan. The study participants were members of an elite climbing club which was established at the time when Kazakhstan was part of USSR and whose traditions were maintained after the USSR's breakup. In 2024, there were 250 full-time members in the club, including circa 50 women; together with affiliated members and candidates, the club comprised approximately 1000 members, whereby about 250 were represented by women (Federation of Alpinism & Climbing of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024). The club organises regular expeditions of different categories of difficulty in Kazakhstan and beyond and members of both genders can participate in these expeditions, subject to time and budget availability. In May 2024, a female member of the club as part of one of its expeditions conquered the Mount Everest having become

the 1st female representative of Kazakhstan who had successfully completed such a complex ascent.

To become a full-time member, climbers had to meet the following criteria: (1) at least two years of climbing experience (excluding training); (2) climbing on a regular basis (i.e. at least 5 times a year); (3) a record of ascending the peaks higher than 4000 meters above sea level (at least three in total); (4) experience of being a climbing group lead.

Selection of the elite club members for participation in this study as opposed to amateur climbers was justified by their repeated engagement in climbing which was considered by the research team to provide a more solid ground for analysing the motives and experiences of female climbers, especially from the perspective of the factor of potential resistance. This is because of the structured environment of the club which, due to its elite status, may have restricted the ability of its members to deviate from the club's requirements and codes of conduct, thus representing another dominant power structure in addition to cultural and gender prejudices and stereotypes already prevalent in Kazakhstan. Membership in the club necessitates sustained engagement of female climbers in this club's activities, and this may have heightened perceived gendered power dynamics, thus prompting resistance among female members or making this resistance among them more pronounced.

In contrast, amateur climbers participate in climbing irregularly and this could have introduced variability in their experiences. For example, because of its irregular nature, they may consider climbing as an 'escape' opportunity (Kiewa, 2002), potentially shifting the focus away from structural constraints, thus limiting their resistance. Further, amateur climbers may face different challenges compared to members of an elite climbing club. For instance, they may be more concerned with conquering new heights, thus seeking novelty and identifying suitable climbing companions for such novel experiences (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). Again, this could have influenced their views of structured constraints to climbing, such as those represented by gendered stereotypes. It is recognised however that the inclusion of amateur climbers into analysis of potential resistance represents a promising avenue for future research.

Study participants were recruited by purposive sampling. The research team member who collected data was a member of the elite club and used their personal contacts with its other members to reach for prospective interview participants. When recruiting, to obtain a diversity of views and experiences, thus ensuring the richness of data, female climbers of (1) different age; (2) family/marital status; and (3) climbing experience were invited to participate.

The researcher's position as an active climber and climbing club member provided insider knowledge, facilitating rapport with participants and eliciting data, as suggested by the literature (Ross, 2017). In the study, all participants were informed about the research objectives and purpose. Most participants knew the researcher personally through shared climbing experiences or club interactions, which aided in interpreting the "natural" experiences with the participants (Dilley & Scraton, 2010).

For interviewing, a guide consisting of 29 main questions was developed based on the literature review (see [Supplementary material, Appendix 1](#)). The guide was developed in English and back translated in Kazakh and Russian, the two main languages spoken in Kazakhstan. For face and content validity, the guide was pre-tested with two academics majoring in serious leisure management and outdoor recreation studies. It was also piloted with two female climbers. After interviews commenced, the guide was constantly updated to account for any new insights provided by preceding interviews.

Interviewing took place in January-April 2024. Interviews were conducted in person, in locations chosen by the study participants, such as coffee shops, to avoid disruptions. Interviewing during climbs was considered to maintain the freshness of the study participants' experience and ensure their better recall. However, following its discussion within the research team, this interviewing strategy was abandoned due to time and budget related constraints.

In total, 16 interviews were conducted producing over 1300 minutes of recordings. Phenomenological research, due to its in-depth insights extracted from carefully selected datapoints, operates datasets as small as 10 (Smith et al., 2021). Theoretical saturation was used to determine the number of datapoints in the current study, and interviewing was drawn to a close when no additional insights were found to be emerging from the data collected. Table 1 lists the study participants. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Professional translation was applied to interview transcripts.

The emic perspective was integral to the research, requiring the lead researcher to become an active and participating member of the climbing culture being studied (Doran & Pomfret, 2019). While not central to the study as in autoethnography, the researcher's lived experience as a climber with over a decade of experience and membership in the elite climbing club was combined with other qualitative methods, such as observations during past climbs, to authenticate participants' experiences and behaviours. This dual perspective necessitated a dynamic switch between an emic insider and an etic outsider, enabling the lead researcher to immerse in the group while maintaining analytical distance (Bausch et al., 2024). Reflexivity was key in guiding this process, as the lead researcher continuously examined their viewpoints as a cultural group member (Berger, 2015) by maintaining a reflective diary and engaging in discussions with an independent coder, as explained below.

Data analysis and interpretation

Data were analysed thematically following the guidelines of IPA provided by Jeong and Othman (2016). Aligned with these guidelines, a researcher should carefully examine the particular details provided by each study participant carefully considering the phenomenon under review from various perspectives and investigating it within each individual context (Pringle et al., 2011). A researcher should position themselves as close to the studied experience as possible striving to understand how the study participant feels about their experience, how they describe it and what they mean by it while concurrently attempting to stay neutral and unbiased (Smith et al., 2021).

IPA was operationalised as follows. First, each interview transcript was carefully read and re-read enabling an outline of initial notes subsequently aggregated in initial codes. Second, the initial codes were solidified and connected under initial themes. Third, the themes were solidified and connected with one another. These steps were repeated for each interview transcript with common patterns sought across all datasets examined.

Table 1. Study participants ($n=16$).

Participant code	Age	Family status	Climbing experience, years	Total number of ascents	Average frequency of climbing, times per year
P1	35	Married, 3 children	8	100+	10–15
P2	45	Married, 2 children	13	100+	5–10
P3	31	Married, 1 child	11	100+	15–20
P4	67	Married, 5 children	45	100+	10–15
P5	27	Married, 1 child	12	100+	10–15
P6	28	Married, 2 children	8	50–100	5–10
P7	22	Single, no children	4	50–100	10–15
P8	54	Married, 4 children	12	100+	10–15
P9	42	Married, 2 children	3	0–50	10–15
P10	36	Married, 2 children	6	0–50	5–10
P11	36	Married, 3 children	4	50–100	15–20
P12	32	Married, 1 child	8	0–50	10–15
P13	53	Married, 5 children	14	100+	5–10
P14	26	Single, no children	3	0–50	5–10
P15	44	Married, 3 children	13	50–100	10–15
P16	31	Married, 2 children	10	50–100	10–15

To ensure trustworthiness, as recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1994), interview transcripts were analysed independently by two members of the research team. Aligned with the emic approach, one of the data coders was the research team member who conceptualised the study, recruited and interviewed its participants. To provide an independent, unbiased perspective, the second data coder was a research team member who participated in the study’s conceptualisation but was detached from data collection. To maintain the emic perspective, this data coder was a retired climber who possessed direct knowledge of the studied phenomena.

The results of analysis undertaken by both data coders were cross compared and the discussions were held around the points of disagreement in data interpretation. Following these discussions, patterns emerged from the data which enabled visualisation with the aid of computer software for qualitative data analysis, NVIVO, version 13. Figure 2 presents the results of data coding.

Several reflexive strategies were employed to address potential biases stemming from the insider’s position of the lead researcher. During data collection, the researcher maintained a reflective diary to identify and manage any assumptions or preconceptions that could influence interactions or interpretations (Lim, 2024). In the analysis phase, the IPA process was supplemented by an independent data coder—a retired climber with knowledge of the phenomenon but no direct involvement in data collection. This dual-coding approach and collaborative discussions to reconcile differing interpretations ensured that the findings reflected true participants’ experiences rather than the lead researcher’s biases in data collection and analysis. The next section discusses the study’s findings.

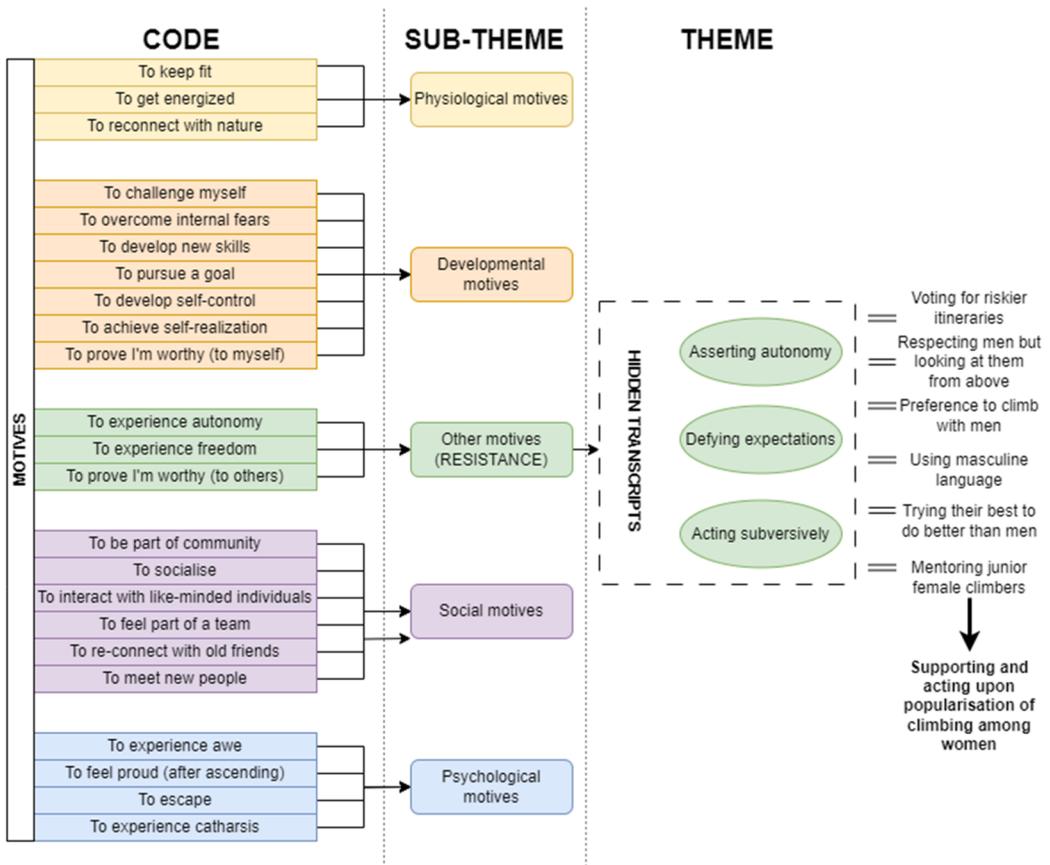


Figure 2. Results of thematic analysis.

Findings

Motives to climb

The interviews revealed a broad range of climbing motives. These motives could be categorised as physiological (for example, *'I'm no longer young, but I'm still able to climb. So, my key motivation is to improve my endurance, to probe the limit of my physical abilities'*, P8), developmental (for instance, *'I climb because I want to conquer new peaks, I want to challenge myself, my mind and my body'*, P1), social (for example, *'The motive [to climb]? Well, I think normal people won't understand it [laughter]. It's about meeting old friends, messing around with them, remembering good old days. It's all about being in good company, isn't it?'*, P16) and psychological (for instance, *'It's about the fight with yourself, but it's also about a strong desire to climb up the peak, it's about that satisfaction that you feel when you have reached it and when you hear 'с ГОРОЙ!¹ in the base camp'*, P11), (Figure 2). There were certain differences in how female climbers perceived these motives, depending on their age and experience, as discussed below.

The physiological motives were most frequently mentioned by younger and older female climbers who needed to improve or maintain their physique, respectively. The psychological motives were considered important by all, regardless of their age or experience; however, they were often referred to by female climbers as 'given' unless a climb had to be cancelled, and a peak would not be conquered, thus causing dissatisfaction: *'I think everyone will tell you that it's that feel of 'wow, I've made it!' when you're on the top that pushes us all to climb. I think this motive is the same for everyone, no?'* (P3).

The developmental motives were considered important by all although there was a clear differentiation between development opportunities sought by female climbers of different age and climbing experience. Younger and less experienced climbers pursued to obtain new skills and learn new climbing techniques while older and more experienced climbers aimed at achieving self-control and proving their worthiness to themselves. Often this latter motive was prevalent, especially among those women who had experienced issues in their day-to-day life and who therefore wanted to reinstate the internal balance by participating in climbing: *'Sometimes so many things fall onto you at once that you can't wait to go to climb. This is when climbing becomes that moment of revelation when you restore your inner control by releasing negative emotions. After a climb you can say, once again, I did it, I mastered it, so I'm worthy!'* (P15).

The social motives were important for all, and the study participants frequently referred to these motives as a key differentiator in what motivated them to climb compared to men. More specifically, the study participants argued that women were more drawn towards the social element of climbing. Men were seen as more attracted by the developmental and physiological motives, thus being more egoistic, fitness-driven and demonstrating stronger self-interest. Contrarily, women were considered focusing more on communal values, thus being more altruistic: *'Men are keener on demonstrating power, courage and skills during the ascent. Women are more prone to collaborate and be empathetic; they [women] are also more cold-minded in critical situations... Women are more likely to balance out physical challenges and internal, spiritual growth'* (P7).

Resistance as a motive

The study participants revealed a set of other motives which, at a closer analysis, would not fit directly into the four categories discussed above. These motives contained evidence that some women considered their participation in climbing as an opportunity to resist against dominant, masculine, power structures of the patriarchal society. These structures would restrict the freedom of women to participate in climbing as a serious leisure activity but also

question their ability to climb as effectively as men: *'I've been climbing for years, so I'm used to it, I guess, but Kazakhstan is really conservative, women are mostly assumed to do the housework. When you get to buy the climbing gear, you often get these looks 'oh, what is she doing here?... Similarly, I've been climbing with our men for years, so they know me well and they don't do silly things as they know how I'd react to some nonsense [laughter]. But, still, you sometimes get this kind of attitude from men, especially the newcomers 'oh, she is a woman, can she really do that [an ascent]?' (P4).*

Resistance was observed in the climbing motives which enabled women to experience autonomy and freedom during ascents, but also which provided them with the opportunity to prove their worthiness, especially to others as opposed to themselves, [Figure 2](#). This underlined the occurrence of resistance from the perspective of intersectionality which argued that building an understanding of who women were and how different they were from men represented the first step to become resistant. According to the intersectional analysis, this first step could eventually enable female climbers to develop the feeling of self-esteem whereby they would acknowledge that they were different and, yet, that they were entitled to the same opportunities and rights as male climbers.

Female climbers spoke about the autonomy and freedom which they experienced when climbing as something they had missed or did not have access to in full in their day-to-day lives, predominantly due to routine family and job commitments. Climbing was therefore seen not only as a mere opportunity to run away from the troubles of a day-to-day life, thus being aligned with the psychological motive ([Figure 2](#)), but increasingly as an activity enabling a much deeper 'escape'. The study participants claimed that, by participating in climbing, they would run from the suppressing traditional norms and obligations which they faced at home. Accordingly, mountains were seen as a place where societal rules would stop applying, at least temporarily, thus giving women the moment to (re-)gain freedom and experience independence. Mountains would also enable women to purify their mind by highlighting the importance of aspirations that would have been overpowered by societal expectations in their day-to-day life: *'At first, when I'd be leading a route, I'd get a lot of unsolicited advice from the guys [male climbers]. Clearly, they didn't think that I knew how to lead, or I was good enough to be a group leader. So, I began to, calmly, explain my vision and plan for the route. Say, I'd explain the history of the first ascent, or the key challenges of the route that we'd need to overcome and how to overcome these. After a while, they [guys] stopped. I'd shown them that I knew what I was doing, perhaps better than them' (P8).* This quote illustrates how, by using her expertise of climbing, this participant subtly demonstrated to her male counterparts who were prone to gendered stereotypes that she was competent and did not need help. This indicated resistance to the dominant power structures in climbing as well as in the Kazakhstani society as a whole where men would traditionally dominate decision-making.

Resistance was also observed in the motive which enabled women to prove to others their worthiness. Similar to the motive of 'escaping' which had a potential overlap with a similar psychological motive, as discussed above, the motive 'to prove' was categorically different from a similar developmental motive. In that aforementioned motive, female climbers considered ascents as an opportunity to show *themselves* that they were capable of conquering (new) mountains and reaching (new) peaks ([Figure 2](#)). The resistance-related motive provided female climbers with the scope to demonstrate that they were equally good, if not better, than their male counterparts, thus enabling women to challenge the gender ideologies widespread in the Kazakhstani society: *'We must admit that our society is full of stereotypes about women, right? A man is a chief, and a woman's role is to cook. Men can go to the mountains; women should stay at home. That is why so few women are climbers in Kazakhstan. So, by climbing, I can signal all, especially men, that I'm [swear word] as good as they are. I can prove to myself but, most importantly, to the others that I can do it too. I know men change their opinion of women when they see we can climb, they start respecting us more...' (P13).*

Hidden transcripts

The study participants revealed several hidden transcripts, or invisible to an outsider actions, used by female climbers to privately challenge dominant power structures, thus showcasing subtle resistance. These actions were designed to assert autonomy and independence when climbing, defy (societal) expectations and demonstrate subversive attitude and behaviour (Figure 2). Interestingly, albeit all study participants argued that, during ascents and, especially, in critical situations, effective teamwork was paramount with equal engagement required of women and men, female climbers nevertheless adopted certain behavioural acts which would enable them to resist the masculine hegemony in climbing.

Some study participants argued that, when selecting a climbing route, they would often vote for a riskier option. Although, at times, it could genuinely be their preferred route, sometimes they opted for it just to demonstrate that they were equal to their male counterparts, thus challenging their authority: *'I'd sometimes go for a bumpier ride, so to say, just to show them [men in the group] that I don't fear the difficulties. Funny is that, if the bumpier option would indeed be chosen, my soul could shake [laughter]'* (P12).

Some study participants claimed that, if they were given the choice of who to ascend with, they would often choose to climb in a group with men rather than women. This way they would signal their fearlessness and equality: *'I honestly prefer climbing with men. When we're all tired, they can see that I'm going through the challenges together with them, being no weaker, but probably even stronger, often emotionally rather than physically, than they are'* (P2). Interestingly, this hidden transcript may showcase a certain degree of internalised sexism in that some female climbers develop gender-related beliefs about (weaker) women's abilities, thus subconsciously and temporarily considering themselves as men rather than women during ascents.

Some study participants argued they would use masculine language or technical terms, including swearing, slang and jargon, when climbing (for example, see a quote of P13 above). This would give them the opportunity to be seen as equal to men and, arguably, even lead to a better understanding by men, especially in a time of hardship, such as during risky ascents. Further, the use of masculine language or terminology would enable female climbers to adopt a more 'manly' style of communication, thus asserting their authority and challenging gender stereotypes: *'I've noticed that, when climbing, I start swearing like hell. You see what I've just said, exactly like this [laughter]. When they [men] see me swearing, they stop seeing me as a woman. Even the tone of my voice changes when I shout at them [laughter]'* (P7).

Some study participants argued that they would try outperforming men in routine situations during climbing journeys. This outperformance concerned, for example, the speed of setting a tent, packing the equipment, but even such things as punctuality and the speed of eating: *'When we climb, I'm always the first one to wake up. I'm always the first to finish eating. I can show them [men] that I'm better. Funny is that, when I'm back home, it's nothing like this, I'm always the last one to finish my meal, for example'* (P10).

Further, some study participants spoke about respecting men as their climbing companions but seeing them from 'above'. This attitude was largely attributed to the perception that men had rather simplistic, or even primitive, motives to climb compared to women: *'Most men just want to reach a goal, such as to get to the top of the peak. For us, women, it's more important to enjoy the whole process [of climbing]. Women think about eternity, men are much simpler in this regard [laughter]'* (P3). This hidden transcript indicates how female climbers defy male authority in climbing assigning them (more) basic roles and feelings.

Lastly, some study participants spoke about how they mentored younger/junior female climbers. By engaging in this mentorship, experienced climbers envisaged to aid in dissolving barriers to climbing and creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for future generations to participate in climbing, thus dissenting from societal norms and expectations on the role of women in the Kazakhstani society in general and their participation in climbing in

particular: *'When I get to see that a new girl joins the team, I always take care of her. Not as a mother, but as a more experienced colleague, a senior friend or even an older sister, if you wish. Girls need to know what climbing is like, what to expect of it. They should be encouraged to climb because we [women] are so few in this sport, especially in Kazakhstan'* (P4).

Aligned with their mentorship experience, the study participants discussed the need to support participation of women in climbing and popularize it among younger generations in Kazakhstan. Accordingly, they spoke about promoting an image of female climbers in the Kazakhstani society and presenting them as celebrities or the individuals who could be considered role models as a means of sparking interest and engaging (younger) girls. The study participants argued that women were always respected in Kazakhstan in the past, partaking in hunting and even warfare equally with men, and it would be important to reinstate this status quo in modern society using climbing as an exemplary activity: *'Women used to be fearless warriors in ancient Kazakhstan, think, for example, about the queen Tomyris²... They'd ride a horse; they'd master archery... We ought to go back to our roots and show that women are equal to men and encourage them to go climbing. At the end of the day, they can do it as well as men if no better'* (P9).

Discussion and concluding remarks

This study aimed to explore how elite female climbers in Kazakhstan navigated and negotiated the constraints of the complex intersection of traditional gender roles and cultural prejudices towards women in a patriarchal society in pursuit of their aspirations in climbing. The study provided empirical evidence on climbing motivations among women, thus reinforcing literature on this important topic which remains under-explored (Lee et al., 2020), especially in developing and transitional economies (Galiakbarov et al., 2024). More specifically, the study revealed evidence of subtle forms of resistance developed by female climbers towards dominant masculinity in climbing as a serious leisure activity. By using this resistance, female climbers strove to challenge and dissent from societal expectations assigning women in Kazakhstan a primary role of a family and household caretaker.

Theoretical implications

The study made four theoretical contributions. First, as a minor contribution, it reconfirmed the utility of self-determination theory in disclosing the motives to climb among women. More specifically, aligned with the literature, the study revealed the important role of various physiological (Pomfret & Bramwell, 2016), developmental (Lee & Ewert, 2019), social (Dilley & Scraton, 2010) and psychological (Apollo et al., 2023) factors as the determinants of participation in climbing. Further, the study identified social motives as prevalent among female climbers compared to their male counterparts, thus reconfirming the literature (Ewert et al., 2013). Lastly, the study provided evidence opposite to that of Lee et al. (2020) who argued that women preferred climbing with other women in search for interaction and to avoid an intra-group conflict. The current study shown that some female climbers could in fact prefer to climb with men because this would enable women to demonstrate their resistance and challenge societal norms and expectations, as discussed below.

Past research has primarily examined women's motives to climb in western contexts; thus, the unique contribution of the current study is in extending the scope of empirical investigations towards other, non-western climbing markets and, more specifically, Kazakhstan. Although the motives to participate in climbing in Kazakhstan were explored by Galiakbarov et al. (2024), their investigation did not differentiate between women and men. Concurrently, their study acknowledged the under-representation of female climbers in their research and called for a

dedicated investigation of their motives and experiences. The contribution of the current study is, thus, in highlighting the intersectionality of factors determining participation of women in climbing in the non-western, patriarchal society of Kazakhstan. The findings of the current study showcase that these determinants are largely aligned with those that have previously been revealed for western contexts, thus suggesting the universality of women's climbing motives. This also potentially indicates the strength of individual aspirations to climb aiding women in navigating the complex socio-cultural landscape of prejudices and stereotypes that can prevent them from climbing in patriarchal societies. This complements the literature on how women negotiate constraints in the context of serious leisure (Llewellyn & Sanchez, 2008) providing further empirical evidence of a complex dynamic of this negotiation in the context of a patriarchal society.

Second, as a more important contribution, the current study demonstrated how motivation to climb among women in Kazakhstan could be explained from the perspective of intersectionality. Although literature has started recognizing that the motives of female climbers can be affected by the intersection of various factors, including those where women have to negotiate their family roles and societal status (Flynn et al., 2024; Hewitt & McEvilly, 2022; Wigglesworth, 2022), to our knowledge, little research has investigated the effect of intersectionality on female climbing motivations empirically. Further, to our knowledge, no research has approached this topic from the perspective of female climbers in non-western, patriarchal societies where the oppression against women's participation in serious leisure is arguably higher than in the west (Henderson & Gibson, 2013). As the findings of the current study show, intersectionality can aid in explaining how female climbers in the patriarchal society of Kazakhstan navigate the complexity of social and cultural prejudices. More specifically, resistance, as the core concept of intersectional theory, can help understand how women withstand the dominant masculine structures of modern life in Kazakhstan in general and in climbing as a serious leisure activity, in particular.

Third, as another important contribution, the current study outlined resistance as a potentially new motive determining the participation of women in climbing. The study demonstrated that the ideas of domination and the arts of resistance by Scott (1990) could aid in understanding how female climbers may have developed subtle forms of resistance from dominant power structures in masculine societies and male-dominated serious leisure activities. By drawing upon Scott (1990)'s conceptualisation and complementing it with self-determination theory and insights from intersectional theory, the study highlighted a potentially novel factor, and/or a boundary condition, motivating female climbers to participate in serious leisure. Although past research has pinpointed the presence of unconscious resistance among women participating in various serious leisure activities (Gillespie et al., 2002; Raisborough, 2006; Shaw, 2001), including climbing (Dilley & Scraton, 2010), these investigations (1) only considered western contexts where the influence of the patriarchy could be less significant; (2) did not conceptualise resistance from the theoretical perspective; and (3) did not identify specific patterns of resistance that could indicate subtle, private women's acts of defying gender-related and cultural stereotypes. The current study added to knowledge by conceptualising resistance as a potential, stand-alone factor or as a boundary condition in climbing motivations based on the ideas of Scott (1990) and insights from intersectionality, exploring how it occurred among female climbers in the patriarchal society of Kazakhstan, and outlining specific examples of its occurrence in the form of hidden transcripts.

Importantly, although the current study examined the role of resistance among female climbers, its theoretical implications might extend beyond climbing. Resistance may represent an important boundary condition contributing to the motivation of women's participation in other serious leisure activities, including whitewater kayaking, triathlon and marathon running, as examples. Female participants in these activities can also exhibit subtle forms of resistance, thus calling for a better understanding of how they form and evolve, if at all. Extant research

has approached the topic of resistance in these serious leisure activities from the perspective of endurance building and sports therapy (see, for instance, Bentley et al., 2002; Sheykhloovand et al., 2022). It is argued that resistance in these serious leisure activities should also be considered from the viewpoint of defying cultural stereotypes and societal norms, thus extending the scope of analysis towards widening participation among minority groups, such as women.

Fourth, as a major contribution, the current study highlighted that hidden transcripts could also take the form of female climbers disguising themselves by adopting masculine traits to be accepted in such male-dominated serious leisure activity as climbing. This demonstrates the contribution of the current study to the emerging academic discourse in tourism and hospitality on the complex dynamics of masculinity versus femininity beyond biological sex. For example, Ashton et al. (2024) argue that female chefs may develop masculine traits to withstand the high pressures of work in professional kitchens. Similarly, Denizci Guillet et al. (2019) indicate that women occupying managerial positions in tourism and hospitality organisations need to possess and display masculine traits to be seen as effective leaders. Extant research on the role of masculinity versus femininity in tourism and hospitality has however been largely concerned with individuals in senior, managerial positions. The current study shows that these dynamics can also be observed among serious leisure's participants. Further, the current research suggests that women may wear a temporary 'mask' of masculinity when participating in climbing, with this mask signifying their subtle resistance. This proposition needs further, empirical validation in the climbing context as extant research has only pinpointed the potential effect of 'masking' and 'disguising' masculine and feminine traits in investigations focusing on organisational behaviour (see, for instance, Costa et al., 2017).

Managerial implications

The study highlighted several implications for the management of climbing as a serious leisure activity. First, it demonstrated that (more experienced) female climbers used mentoring (of younger, less experienced female climbers) as a subtle act of resistance, a hidden transcript. This suggests that, to encourage the participation of women in climbing, thus capitalizing upon this subtle resistance, measures are necessitated to encourage transmission of knowledge from more experienced to less experienced female climbers. This can be achieved by inviting women to conduct master classes for younger climbers on climbing skills and techniques, but also on leadership of climbing groups. Mentoring provided by a female 'role model' to less experienced climbers can encourage them to consider climbing as a serious leisure activity where opportunities are equal for all genders. Such mentoring and role modelling can be especially effective in patriarchal societies where it can defy gender related stereotypes, cultural norms and societal expectations.

The value of mentorship as a means of empowering women and encouraging their participation in climbing is gaining recognition as demonstrated by several initiatives. For example, in the UK, the women's mountaineering mentorship programme was launched in 2023 providing junior female climbers with the opportunity to spend time, discussing their aspirations and learn from their more senior colleagues (Trek & Mountain, 2023). Similar initiatives exist in USA (Upward Transitions Institute, 2023) and Canada (Alpine Club of Canada, 2015). Senior female climbers in Kazakhstan mentor their junior counterparts informally, and this mentorship should be formalised to promote such initiatives and open them to amateur climbers, thus increasing women's engagement and empowerment in climbing.

Further, to encourage women's participation in climbing, female climbers should be invited to present in various media channels. To reach younger generations, female climbers' engagement in such social media platforms as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube can be instrumental. Given that these media platforms rely on high-quality, visual content which climbing has access to, they may represent powerful instruments for popularization. For example, videos and photos

can be taken in real life during climbing routes and ascents, thus showcasing viewers and followers the romantic, yet challenging, nature of climbing and encouraging participation. There are examples of successful social media influencers represented by female rock climbers who, as of January 2024, have over 20000 followers each (Modash, 2024). This highlights social media as an effective platform to popularise climbing among younger women. Positioning climbing as a popular activity can aid in increasing its recognition, especially among younger generations, and promote it as an opportunity to strive for gender equality.

Lastly, when considering the specific context of Kazakhstan, historical personalities can be used to encourage the participation of women in climbing. Although the patriarchy and its gender stereotypes remain strong in modern Kazakhstani society, using analogues from the past, when women shared many duties with men, and promoting particular female characters, such as the queen Tomyris, can increase women's engagement. This approach can be effective given that Kazakhstan is gradually moving away from its Soviet past striving to reinforce the long-standing traditions of a secular state and gender rights equality grounded in the country's rich history (Buribayev & Khamzina, 2019).

Limitations and future research directions

This study collected data in a single patriarchal society of Kazakhstan, and its findings may therefore be most representative of female climbers in this particular country. Future research should aim at understanding the climbing motives and the potential role of resistance among women in other patriarchal societies, such as those in East-Central Europe, the Middle East, South Asia and Latin America. Likewise, future research can examine if resistance plays a role in the motives to climb among women in western, non- or less patriarchal societies. It is argued that resistance may be present in these societies too, but it can take the form of different hidden transcripts, thus calling for a better understanding of their main forms and occurrences. Next, in the current study, the gendered dimensions were examined from self-reported female narratives. Future research should supplement such narratives with an analysis of historical data on climbing in Kazakhstan (for example, investigating statistical trends in participation of women and men) and in-situ, observational analysis. Such research can enable data triangulation, thus making analysis more rigorous. Further, the study focused on elite female climbers and future research should aim at providing a nuanced perspective on the motives and experiences of those women who do not belong to the club of elite, experienced climbers, such as amateur climbers or aspiring climbers. Next, this study only considered a women's perspective on climbing as a means to resist gender identities, cultural norms and societal expectations. Future research can collect data among male climbers to understand how they see their female counterparts and if they can observe any evidence of resistance. Besides, a study of the role of sexuality in climbing motives is also warranted as it can shed light on the motivations and experiences of such minority groups of climbers as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning. A perspective of other stakeholders, such as policymakers and managers in the field of serious leisure, on resistance as a climbing motive and experience can also be sought. Lastly, families of female climbers can be engaged in future research to examine the effect of women's participation in climbing, including resistance as a climbing motive and experience, on intra-family interactions and relationships.

Notes

1. This expression can be translated from Russian as 'congratulations on [conquering] the mountain!', which is a traditional greeting used in Russian-speaking climbing communities to welcome the climbers who have just conquered a peak upon their return back to a base camp.
2. Tomyris was a legendary queen of Central Asian states in the 6th century BC who was famous for her leadership and military successes. Her image is often romanticized in modern Kazakhstani history and arts.

Acknowledgments

Yermek Galiakbarov Conceptualization, Data collection, Data analysis, Writing—final draft. Ordenbek Mazbayev Conceptualization, Data analysis, Writing—final draft. Baldyrgan Onayeva Conceptualization, Data collection, Data analysis, Writing—final draft. Botakoz Bolatova Conceptualization, Data analysis, Writing—final draft. Viachaslau Filimonau Conceptualization, Data analysis, Writing—initial draft. Hakan Sezerel Conceptualization, Writing—final draft.

Author contributions

CRedit: **Yermek Galiakbarov**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing – review & editing; **Ordenbek Mazbayev**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing – review & editing; **Baldyrgan Onayeva**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing; **Botakoz Bolatova**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing; **Viachaslau Filimonau**: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Supervision, Writing – original draft; **Hakan Sezerel**: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Yermek Galiakbarov is a Lecturer at the Department of Design, Service and Tourism in the School of Business and Information Technology, Turan-Astana University, Republic of Kazakhstan. He is interested in the development of youth tourism, sports mountaineering, and rock climbing in tourist activities.

Ordenbek Mazbayev is a Professor in the Department of Tourism at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Republic of Kazakhstan. He is also an Independent Director of the Institute of Geography and Water Security in the Republic of Kazakhstan. He is interested in studying the problems of territorial organisation of tourism alongside tourism geography and pedagogy of tourism education.

Baldyrgan Onayeva is a PhD candidate in the Department of Tourism at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Republic of Kazakhstan. She studies ecological tourism, conditions for the formation of soft tourism infrastructure, implementation of tourist routes in mountainous and extreme geographical zones.

Botakoz Bolatova is a Docent in the Department of Economics and Management at the K. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University. She studies women entrepreneurship, organisational resilience and operations management.

Viachaslau Filimonau is a Reader in the Business School at the University of Surrey, UK. He is interested in improving sustainability and resilience of tourism and hospitality operations.

Hakan Sezerel is an Associate Professor in the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Anadolu University, Turkey. He is interested in the ontology of tourism and sustainability.

ORCID

Hakan Sezerel  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1521-8638>

References

- Abdikadyrova, Z., Kadyrov, Z., Talaspayeva, Z., & Sharypkazy, N. (2018). The role of women in Kazakh Nomadic Society. *Turkish Online Journal of Design, Art & Communication*, 8,p.2404-2419.
- Alberti, G., & Iannuzzi, F. E. (2020). Embodied intersectionality and the intersectional management of hotel labour: The everyday experiences of social differentiation in customer-oriented work. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(6), 1165–1180. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12454>
- Alinia, M. (2015). On Black feminist thought: Thinking oppression and resistance through intersectional paradigm. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(13), 2334–2340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.1058492>
- Alpine Club of Canada. (2015). *Women's Mountain Mentorship Group*. Retrieved January 10, 2025, from <https://www.accalgary.ca/womens-mountain-mentorship-group/>

- Apollo, M. (2021). There is greater gender equality in mountaineering research. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(22), 3121–3126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2021.1880376>
- Apollo, M., Mostowska, J., Legut, A., Maciuk, K., & Timothy, D. J. (2023). Gender differences in competitive adventure sports tourism. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 42, 100604. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2022.100604>
- Appleby, K. M., & Fisher, L. A. (2005). Female energy at the rock': A feminist exploration of female rock climbers. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 14(2), 10–23. <https://doi.org/10.1123/wspaj.14.2.10>
- Ashton, M., Sezerel, H., Filimonau, V., & Gunay, S. (2024). Gender dynamics and sustainable practices: Exploring food waste management among female chefs in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 2024, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2024.2397655>
- Bausch, M., Barmeyer, C., & Guttormsen, D. S. (2024). An outsider's insights from the inside: Implications of emic concepts on qualitative international management research. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, 19(4), 256–281. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-04-2024-2716>
- Bentley, D. J., Millet, G. P., Vleck, V. E., & McNaughton, L. R. (2002). Specific aspects of contemporary triathlon: Implications for physiological analysis and performance. *Sports Medicine*, 32(6), 345–359. <https://doi.org/10.2165/00007256-200232060-00001>
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219–234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2021). What makes systemic racism systemic? *Sociological Inquiry*, 91(3), 513–533. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12420>
- Brace-Govan, J. (2004). Weighty matters: Control of women's access to physical strength. *The Sociological Review*, 52(4), 503–531. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2004.00493.x>
- Brymer, E., & Schweitzer, R. (2013). The search for freedom in extreme sports: A phenomenological exploration. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 14(6), 865–873. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2013.07.004>
- Bui, H. T., Kuan, A., & Chu, T. T. (2018). Female entrepreneurship in patriarchal society: Motivation and challenges. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 30(4), 325–343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2018.1435841>
- Buribayev, Y. A., & Khamzina, Z. A. (2019). Gender equality in employment: The experience of Kazakhstan. *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*, 19(2), 110–124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1358229119846784>
- Burke, S. M., Durand-Bush, N., & Doell, K. (2010). Exploring feel and motivation with recreational and elite Mount Everest climbers: An ethnographic study. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 8(4), 373–393. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2010.9671959>
- Caber, M., & Albayrak, T. (2016). Push or pull? Identifying rock climbing tourists' motivations. *Tourism Management*, 55, 74–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.02.003>
- Chambers, D. (2023). Are we all in this together? Gender intersectionality and sustainable tourism. In *Gender and tourism sustainability* (pp. 133–148). Routledge.
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 785–810. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669608>
- Clinch, H., & Filimonau, V. (2017). Instructors' perspectives on risk management within adventure tourism. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 14(2), 220–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2016.1204360>
- Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2020). *Intersectionality*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Costa, C., Bakas, F. E., Breda, Z., & Durão, M. (2017). 'Emotional' female managers: How gendered roles influence tourism management discourse. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 33, 149–156. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jht.2017.09.011>
- Crockett, L. J., Murray, N. P., & Kime, D. B. (2022). Self-determination strategy in mountaineering: Collecting Colorado's highest peaks. *Leisure Sciences*, 44(7), 939–958. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2020.1738968>
- Davidson, L. (2015). The narrative construction of self through a commitment to mountaineering. In *Mountaineering tourism*. (pp. 147–163). Routledge.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Self-determination theory. *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, 1(20), 416–436.
- Deci, E. L., Olafsen, A. H., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). Self-determination theory in work organizations: The state of a science. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 4(1), 19–43. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032516-113108>
- Denizci Guillet, B., Pavesi, A., Hsu, C. H., & Weber, K. (2019). Is there such a thing as feminine leadership? Being a leader and not a man in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 31(7), 2970–2993. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-06-2018-0486>
- Dilley, R. E., & Scraton, S. J. (2010). Women, climbing and serious leisure. *Leisure Studies*, 29(2), 125–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614360903401927>
- Doran, A., & Pomfret, G. (2019). Exploring efficacy in personal constraint negotiation: An ethnography of mountaineering tourists. *Tourist Studies*, 19(4), 475–495. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797619837965>
- Doran, A., Schofield, P., & Low, T. (2018). Women's mountaineering tourism: An empirical investigation of its theoretical constraint dimensions. *Leisure Studies*, 37(4), 396–410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2018.1452283>

- Doran, A., Schofield, P., & Low, T. (2020). Women's mountaineering: Accessing participation benefits through constraint negotiation strategies. *Leisure Studies*, 39(5), 721–735. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2020.1763439>
- Eger, C., Munar, A. M., & Hsu, C. (2022). Gender and tourism sustainability. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 30(7), 1459–1475. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1963975>
- Equal future. (2024). Kazakhstan. Retrieved January 10, 2025, from <https://www.equalfuture-eurasia.org/womens-representation-in-politics-and-public-administration/kazakhstan>
- Evans, K., & Anderson, D. M. (2018). 'It's never turned me back': Female mountain guides' constraint negotiation. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 21(1), 9–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2016.1250649>
- Ewert, A. (1985). Why people climb: The relationship of participant motives and experience level to mountaineering. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 17(3), 241–250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.1985.11969634>
- Ewert, A., Gilbertson, K., Luo, Y. C., & Voight, A. (2013). Beyond "because it's there" motivations for pursuing adventure recreational activities. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 45(1), 91–111. <https://doi.org/10.18666/jlr-2013-v45-i1-2944>
- Federation of Alpinism and Climbing of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2024). *Mountaineering and climbing federation of Republic of Kazakhstan*. Retrieved January 10, 2025, from <https://mountain.kz/en/>
- Filimonau, V., Matyakubov, U., Matniyozov, M., Shaken, A., & Mika, M. (2024). Women entrepreneurs in tourism in a time of a life event crisis. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 32(3), 457–479. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2022.2091142>
- Finlay, L. (2014). Engaging phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(2), 121–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2013.807899>
- Flynn, J., Carter, D. P., Hernández, L. H., & Hutson, G. (2024). Examining attitudes towards inclusion and social justice among US climbers: Analysis and findings from a national survey. *Leisure Studies*, 43(5), 769–785. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2023.2256028>
- Galiakbarov, Y., Mazbayev, O., Mutaliyeva, L., Filimonau, V., & Sezerel, H. (2024). When the mountains call: Exploring mountaineering motivations through the lens of the calling theory. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 45, 100743. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2024.100743>
- Gambino, E. (2020). "A More Thorough Resistance"? Coalition, Critique, and the Intersectional Promise of Queer Theory. *Political Theory*, 48(2), 218–244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591719853642>
- Garrido-Palomino, I., & España-Romero, V. (2023). Fear of falling in women: A psychological training intervention improves climbing performance. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 41(16), 1518–1529. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2023.2281157>
- Gillborn, D. (2015). Intersectionality, critical race theory, and the primacy of racism: Race, class, gender, and disability in education. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(3), 277–287. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414557827>
- Gillespie, D. L., Leffler, A., & Lerner, E. (2002). If it weren't for my hobby, I'd have a life: Dog sports, serious leisure, and boundary negotiations. *Leisure Studies*, 21(3-4), 285–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0261436022000030632>
- Gouws, A. (2017). Feminist intersectionality and the matrix of domination in South Africa. *Agenda*, 31(1), 19–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2017.1338871>
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2(163-194), 105.
- Hall, J. (2018). Women mountaineers and affect: Fear, play and the unknown. In *Affective geographies of transformation, exploration and adventure* (pp. 147–163). Routledge.
- Hall, J., & Brown, K. M. (2022). Creating feelings of inclusion in adventure tourism: Lessons from the gendered sensory and affective politics of professional mountaineering. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 97, 103505. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2022.103505>
- Hardie-Bick, J., & Bonner, P. (2016). Experiencing flow, enjoyment and risk in skydiving and climbing. *Ethnography*, 17(3), 369–387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138115609377>
- Henderson, K. A., & Gibson, H. J. (2013). An integrative review of women, gender, and leisure: Increasing complexities. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 45(2), 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.18666/jlr-2013-v45-i2-3008>
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative research methods*. Sage.
- Hewitt, J. R., & McEvilly, N. (2022). 'I didn't realise the variety of people that are climbers': A sociological exploration of young women's propensities to engage in indoor rock climbing. *Leisure Studies*, 41(4), 559–572. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2021.2006280>
- Horsley, R.A. ed., (2004). *Hidden transcripts and the arts of resistance: Applying the work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul*. (Vol. 48). Brill.
- Ionel, M. S., Ion, A., & Visu-Petra, L. (2023). Personality, grit, and performance in rock-climbing: Down to the nitty-gritty. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 21(2), 306–328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2022.2044368>
- Iso-Ahola, S. E., La Verde, D., Graefe, J., & A., R. (1989). Perceived competence as a mediator of the relationship between high risk sports participation and self-esteem. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 21(1), 32–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.1989.11969788>
- Jackman, P. C., Hawkins, R. M., Burke, S. M., Swann, C., & Crust, L. (2023). The psychology of mountaineering: A systematic review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 16(1), 27–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2020.1824242>

- Jeong, H., & Othman, J. (2016). Using interpretative phenomenological analysis from a realist perspective. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(3), 558–570. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2300>
- Kiewa, J. (2001). Control over self and space in rockclimbing. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 33(4), 363–382. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2001.11949949>
- Kiewa, J. (2002). Traditional climbing: Metaphor of resistance or metanarrative of oppression? *Leisure Studies*, 21(2), 145–161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614360210158605>
- Kuzhabekova, A., & Almukhambetova, A. (2021). Women's progression through the leadership pipeline in the universities of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 51(1), 99–117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2019.1599820>
- Lee, K., & Ewert, A. (2019). Understanding the motivations of serious leisure participation: A self-determination approach. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 22(1), 76–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2018.1469420>
- Lee, K., Rutkowski, L., & Ewert, A. (2020). Testing the associations between climbers' characteristics and motivations with various levels of self-determination. *Leisure/Loisir*, 44(1), 27–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14927713.2020.1745672>
- Legault, L. (2020). Self-determination theory. In *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences* (pp. 4694–4702). Springer International Publishing.
- Levi, J. M. (1999). Hidden transcripts among the Rarámuri: Culture, resistance, and interethnic relations in northern Mexico. *American Ethnologist*, 26(1), 90–113. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1999.26.1.90>
- Lim, W. M. (2024). What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 2024, 14413582241264619. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>
- Little, D. E. (2002). Women and adventure recreation: Reconstructing leisure constraints and adventure experiences to negotiate continuing participation. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(2), 157–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2002.11949967>
- Liu, S., Gong, X., Li, H., & Li, Y. (2022). The origin, application and mechanism of therapeutic climbing: A narrative review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(15), 9696. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19159696>
- Llewellyn, D. J., & Sanchez, X. (2008). Individual differences and risk taking in rock climbing. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 9(4), 413–426. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2007.07.003>
- Lykke, N. (2010). *Feminist studies: A guide to intersectional theory, methodology and writing*. Routledge.
- Mazel, D. ed., (1994). *Mountaineering women: Stories by early climbers*. Texas A&M University Press.
- Modash. (2024). *Top 20 Rock Climbing Influencers on Instagram (2024)*. Retrieved January 10, 2025, from <https://www.modash.io/find-influencers/rock-climbing>
- Morey, N. C., & Luthans, F. (1984). An emic perspective and ethnoscience methods for organizational research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 9(1), 27–36. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258229>
- Moscoco-Sánchez, D. (2008). The social construction of gender identity amongst mountaineers. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 5(2), 187–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16138171.2008.11687819>
- Muñoz-Puig, M. (2024). Intersectional power struggles in feminist movements: An analysis of resistance and counter-resistance to intersectionality. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 31(3), 1133–1147. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12995>
- Murphy, A. G. (1998). Hidden transcripts of flight attendant resistance. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 11(4), 499–535. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318998114001>
- Ng, J. Y., Ntoumanis, N., Thøgersen-Ntoumani, C., Deci, E. L., Ryan, R. M., Duda, J. L., & Williams, G. C. (2012). Self-determination theory applied to health contexts: A meta-analysis. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(4), 325–340. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691612447309>
- Niemiec, C. P., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom: Applying self-determination theory to educational practice. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(2), 133–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878509104318>
- Nisha, F., Cheung, C., & Tung, V. W. S. (2025). Intersectional marginalisation of female Muslim tourists. *Tourism Management*, 108, 105099. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2024.105099>
- Oslender, U. (2007). Revisiting the hidden transcript: Oral tradition and black cultural politics in the Colombian Pacific coast region. *Environment and Planning D*, 25(6), 1103–1129. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d82j>
- Oushakine, S. A. (2001). The terrifying mimicry of samizdat. *Public Culture*, 13(2), 191–214. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-13-2-191>
- Pomfret, G. (2006). Mountaineering adventure tourists: A conceptual framework for research. *Tourism Management*, 27(1), 113–123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.08.003>
- Peretz, T. (2021). Locally specific matrices of domination: Towards a global theory of Intersectionalities. In *Women's Studies International Forum*, 89, 102540. (Pergamon). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2021.102540>
- Pomfret, G., & Doran, A. (2015). Gender and mountaineering tourism. In *Mountaineering tourism* (pp. 164–181). Routledge.
- Pomfret, G., & Bramwell, B. (2016). The characteristics and motivational decisions of outdoor adventure tourists: A review and analysis. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 19(14), 1447–1478. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2014.925430>

- Prayag, G., Lewis, C., & Pour, S. (2024). Intersectional examination of travel well-being and activities of LGB travellers. *Tourism Geographies*, 26(3), 498–519. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2023.2222684>
- Pringle, J., Drummond, J., McLafferty, E., & Hendry, C. (2011). Interpretative phenomenological analysis: A discussion and critique. *Nurse Researcher*, 18(3), 20–24. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2011.04.18.3.20.c8459>
- Ryan, R. M., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2023). Self-determination theory. In *The Oxford Handbook of Self-Determination Theory*. (pp. 3–30). Oxford University Press.
- Qiu, Y., Tian, H., Zhou, W., Lin, Y., & Gao, J. (2020). 'Why do people commit to long distance running': Serious leisure qualities and leisure motivation of marathon runners. *Sport in Society*, 23(7), 1256–1272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2020.1720655>
- Raisborough, J. (2006). Getting onboard: Women, access and serious leisure. *The Sociological Review*, 54(2), 242–262. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2006.00612.x>
- Rasoolimanesh, S. M., Ramakrishna, S., Hall, C. M., Esfandiari, K., & Seyfi, S. (2023). A systematic scoping review of sustainable tourism indicators in relation to the sustainable development goals. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 31(7), 1497–1517. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1775621>
- Robinson, V. (2008). *Everyday masculinities and extreme sport: Male identity and rock climbing*. Berg.
- Ross, L. E. (2017). An account from the inside: Examining the emotional impact of qualitative research through the lens of “insider” research. *Qualitative Psychology (Washington, D.C.)*, 4(3), 326–337. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qp0000064>
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. Yale University.
- Settles, I. H., & Buchanan, N. T. (2014). Multiple groups, multiple identities, and intersectionality. *The Oxford Handbook of Multicultural Identity*, 1, 160–180.
- Settles, I. H., Warner, L. R., Buchanan, N. T., & Jones, M. K. (2020). Understanding psychology's resistance to intersectionality theory using a framework of epistemic exclusion and invisibility. *Journal of Social Issues*, 76(4), 796–813. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12403>
- Shaw, S. M. (2001). Conceptualizing resistance: Women's leisure as political practice. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 33(2), 186–201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2001.11949937>
- Sheykhlovand, M., Arazi, H., Astorino, T. A., & Suzuki, K. (2022). Effects of a new form of resistance-type high-intensity interval training on cardiac structure, hemodynamics, and physiological and performance adaptations in well-trained kayak sprint athletes. *Frontiers in Physiology*, 13, 850768. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fphys.2022.850768>
- Smith, J. A., Larkin, M., & Flowers, P. (2021). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. SAGE.
- Stalp, M. C. (2006). Negotiating time and space for serious leisure: Quilting in the modern US home. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 38(1), 104–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2006.11950071>
- Statista. (2024a). *Number of participants in climbing in the United States from 2006 to 2021*. Retrieved October 1, 2024, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/191233/participants-in-climbing-in-the-us-since-2006/>
- Statista. (2024b). *Number of people participating in climbing and bouldering in England from 2016 to 2023*. Retrieved October 1, 2024, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/899270/mountaineering-participation-uk/>
- Statista. (2024c). *Distribution of climbers and boulderers worldwide as of 2020, by gender*. Retrieved October 1, 2024, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1311405/distribution-climbers-boulderers-gender/>
- Tarrow, S. (2022). *Power in movement*. Cambridge university press.
- Trek & Mountain. (2023). *Calling all female mountaineers!* Retrieved January 10, 2025, from <https://trekandmountain.com/2023/11/09/mtnwmn/>
- Tsaur, S. H., Yen, C. H., & Hsiao, S. L. (2013). Transcendent experience, flow and happiness for mountain climbers. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 15(4), 360–374. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.1881>
- UNDP. (2024a). *Gender Inequality Index (GII)*. Retrieved October 2, 2024, from <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index#/indicies/GII>
- UNDP. (2024b). *Under 40 percent of Kazakhstan citizens know what 'gender equality' is: analytical report on women's rights and opportunities in Kazakhstan*. Retrieved October 2, 2024, from <https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/press-releases/under-40-percent-kazakhstan-citizens-know-what-gender-equality-analytical-report-women-rights-and-opportunities-kazakhstan>
- UN Women. (2024). *Kazakhstan*. Retrieved October 10, 2025, from <https://data.unwomen.org/country/kazakhstan>
- UNWTO. (2020). *Global Report on Women in Tourism*. Second edition. UNWTO.
- Upward Transitions Institute. (2023). *Women's Mountain Mentorship*. Retrieved October 10, 2025, from <https://upwardtransitionsinstitute.com/womensmountainmentorship>
- Werbner, P. (2013). Everyday multiculturalism: Theorising the difference between 'intersectionality' and 'multiple identities'. *Ethnicities*, 13(4), 401–419. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796813483728>
- Wigglesworth, J. (2022). The cultural politics of naming outdoor rock climbing routes. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 25(5), 597–620. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2021.1949736>
- World Economic Forum. (2024). *Global Gender Gap Report 2024*. Retrieved October 10, 2025, from <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/in-full/>

- Woodman, T., MacGregor, A. L., & Hardy, L. (2020). Risk can be good for self-esteem: Beyond self-determination theory. *Journal of Risk Research*, 23(4), 411–423. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2019.1588913>
- Yousafzai, S., Aljanova, N., & Omran, W. (2024). Masquerade of power: Women entrepreneurs reshaping gender norms in Kazakhstan's male-dominated sectors. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 2024, 28. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-02-2024-0028>
- Zhou, L., Chlebosz, K., Tower, J., & Morris, T. (2020). An exploratory study of motives for participation in extreme sports and physical activity. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 51(1), 56–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2019.1627175>