The influence of the social well-being of the population on the sustainable development of the region

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Abstract. The study of problems of interethnic and interfaith relations is particularly relevant in the modern conditions of development of Kazakhstan. Practice shows that, despite most Kazakhstanis' commitment to interethnic stability, integration and harmony, any society has destructive elements that do not agree with the existing order and are ready to violate the fragility of outstanding values. In this regard, the priority of studying this issue is determined, first of all, by the possibility of timely identification of the main trends in the dynamics of society to develop new approaches and solutions for the further preservation and strengthening of social harmony, which are inextricably linked with the prospects for the development of the state in the global world. This article contains the results of quarterly sociological measurements to study the interethnic situation in the Mangistau region in 2022. In particular, the article examines issues of interethnic attitudes in the context of social well-being, migration sentiments of the region's population in the context of the modern geopolitical situation and the main transformation processes taking place in the country and the world. The "ethnosocial situation" concept was highlighted as the primary operational concept. Social well-being, interethnic integration, and migration sentiment were used as variables.

1 Introduction

As a multiethnic state, Kazakhstan pays considerable attention to studying interethnic relations. During the analysed period, events and processes in the country and the world that caused significant changes in the social interaction of people and influenced the interethnic situation in the government and the Mangystau region were noted.

According to the Bureau of National Statistics ASPR RK, at the beginning of 2022, the population of the Mangystau region was 740,893 people, of which Kazakhs - 678,432 (91.5%), Russians - 35,522 (4.8%), Azerbaijanis - 6663 (0.9%), Karakalpaks - 4,238 (0.6%), Uzbeks - 3,038 (0.4%), Lezgins - 2,076 (0.3%), Ukrainians - 1,660 (0.2%), Tatars - 1,644 (0.2%), Armenians - 1,053 (0.1%), Chechens - 710 (0.1%). Also, in the region live

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representatives of the following ethnic groups: Koreans, Belarusians, Germans, Kyrgyz, Ossetians, Udnians, and Georgians, with a total number of 5857 (0.8%) people [1, 2].

It should be noted that the geopolitical situation in the world remains complex and tends to worsen [3]. In particular, sanctions confrontations between the most significant states of the world, individual conflict situations in the countries of the historical origin of ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan, and the Mangystau region. Including events on the Azerbaijani-Armenian border, protests in border Karakalpakstan, as well as the deterioration of Russian-Ukrainian relations, and provocative statements of individual foreign politicians, one way or another, have a particularly negative impact on interethnic relations in Kazakhstan.

Of particular note is the geopolitical tension created by the Russian Federation in connection with the Ukrainian-Russian conflict caused a price collapse worldwide. Firstly, this situation led not only to the disruption of transport and logistics routes through Russia, to higher prices for imports and an increase in the shortage of goods but also spurred a new increase in inflation, which created additional severe problems associated with the deterioration of the country's socio-economic situation.

By November of this year, inflation reached 23.8%—a record high since July 2016. A significant price increase for goods and services has been observed since March 2022, after Russia’s “special military operation” in Ukraine.

Secondly, a new migration wave was associated with the announcement of partial mobilisation in the Russian Federation on September 21. From that moment on, many Russians began to travel outside their country to nearby states, including Kazakhstan. The Mangystau region is no exception. At the same time, the situation with Russian migrants gave rise to numerous hysterics and provocative xenophobic statements.

In addition to external circumstances that negatively affect the interethnic situation in the region, several local problems negatively affect the well-being of residents.

Internal factors include the language problem and hate speech on social networks [4]. Thus, interethnic relations require constant study of the interethnic situation to identify the main problems and find solutions.

As researchers point out, a crisis leads to the permanent emergence of hotbeds of tension at all levels of the world order: in states and macro-regions facing major political, economic and social crises; in multiethnic and multicultural open societies, forced to develop new mechanisms for integrating increasingly more clearly expressed qualitatively and increasingly more quantitatively represented differences; in local, ethnically and culturally homogeneous communities, caused, in turn, to process changes introduced from outside into the content of their internal space, adapting group structures, avoiding the threat of destructive transformations, or developing temporarily effective models of demonstrative rejection of these changes and forceful, mobilisation, reactionary its nature of maintaining the intragroup status quo [5, 6]. Despite the predominant homogeneity of the ethnic structure of the Mangistau region, except the city of Aktau, the identified crisis trends have an impact on the socio-cultural situation of the region and do not exclude the possibility of the emergence of ethnically marked factors of tension in the area under study.

In this context, it should be noted that a feature of the region is the significant presence of ethnic repatriates, who are characterised by isolated settlements. According to statistics, during the years of independence, 132.3 thousand repatriates, 19% of the region's total population, immigrated to the area for permanent residence. Repatriates mainly live in Aktau, Munaily and Beineu districts. Most of them are from Uzbekistan (46%), Turkmenistan (44%), Iran (5.4%), as well as from other countries (4.5%). Notably, the total number of repatriates from Uzbekistan (46%) also includes repatriates from the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan. Despite such a significant presence, integrating
repatriates into local communities needs to be more cohesive and limited to contacts of a ritual and event nature [7]. Thus, studying the state, dynamics and factors influencing the region's interethnic situation is vital for determining the effectiveness of the changes being carried out in the country and regions in the designated area and developing practical recommendations for maintaining social harmony for the relevant structures.

2 Material and methods

The study was conducted using a sample population survey and a formalised questionnaire. The study surveyed 3,000 respondents in the second, third and fourth quarters of 2022. The authors used three districts and two cities of regional significance in the Mangystau region to model the general population and fulfil the main goals and objectives of the study, a representative sample. The following criteria were fundamental for determining the sample population: socio-demographic criterion, gender and age of the respondent; geographical criterion: place of residence, urban or rural resident; and ethnicity of the respondent.

To analyse the level of the interethnic situation, we used indicators relating to the subjective perception of various aspects of the current socio-economic situation, such as respondents' assessment of satisfaction with their lives in general, as well as the level of material well-being and the level of migration sentiment of the population. The results of public opinion studies demonstrate that, more often than others, attitudes of hostility towards representatives of other ethnic groups are shown by respondents with low satisfaction with their lives, aggravated by a general alarming information agenda [8]. An important indicator of social well-being, especially in terms of interethnic relations, is the level of migration sentiment.

The reliability of the results of the sociological survey was ensured by using statistically significant volumes and relevant sampling models, pre-tested survey instruments, correct statistical and mathematical processing, and data analysis using the capabilities of the SPSS software and analytical complex.

The article presents data for the second, third, and fourth quarters 2022. The analysis was carried out in a comparative phased manner with the results of the last measurement.

3 Research results

Social well-being is an important parameter that reflects a person’s perception of his material well-being, self-esteem, success in work and business, and socio-economic conditions, including rising prices in stores and markets, the level of utility tariffs, job prospects, the nature of interactions with neighbours and colleagues, and other realities of everyday life.

A significant decrease in social well-being negatively affects interethnic relations and, together with other factors, can contribute to the growth of interethnic tension. The survey showed that in the 4th quarter, 34.7% of the region's population were delighted with life, and the rest of the respondents gave ambiguous answers: "Rather satisfied" - 33.7% of respondents. 22.6% of respondents are not satisfied with their lives. 9% of respondents found it difficult to answer (Fig. 1)
In a comparative analysis with measurements from previous periods, the increase in doubters who are not so clearly confident in their position and prospects by 7.3% (26.6% in the third quarter) may be associated with alarming expectations regarding the general socio-economic situation in the country (protests, rising prices) and in neighbouring countries, etc.

In the context of the research topic, the indicator of life satisfaction by ethnic groups is paramount - among citizens and representatives of different nationalities (Table 1).

Table 1. Life satisfaction in Kazakhstan by ethnic group (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Three quarter</th>
<th></th>
<th>Four quarter</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am pretty happy with life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakh</td>
<td>30,3</td>
<td>49,0</td>
<td>42,0</td>
<td>20,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>24,9</td>
<td>31,0</td>
<td>36,0</td>
<td>24,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijani</td>
<td>21,0</td>
<td>20,0</td>
<td>15,0</td>
<td>17,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not happy with life at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakh</td>
<td>11,6</td>
<td>7,0</td>
<td>15,1</td>
<td>10,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>12,3</td>
<td>22,5</td>
<td>15,0</td>
<td>13,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijani</td>
<td>12,3</td>
<td>22,5</td>
<td>15,0</td>
<td>13,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in answers to other questions, the most significant are unambiguous assessments—“quite satisfied with life” and “not at all satisfied with life.” In contrast, the answer option “rather satisfied” or “rather dissatisfied” reflects less firm confidence, reflecting some doubts and hesitations.

Regarding ethnicity, there is a high level of life satisfaction among representatives of the Russian ethnic group (34%). In comparison, among the Kazakhs, a small proportion of citizens were found to be somewhat satisfied with their lives - 17.5%. 15.1% of Kazakhs, 10% of Russians, and 8% of Azerbaijanis are entirely dissatisfied with life.

Thus, Russians rank first in optimistic perceptions of satisfaction with their lives. In the 4th quarter, compared with the results of previous measurements, there was a slight increase in those utterly dissatisfied with their lives across all ethnic groups.

The survey confirmed this pattern, as the level of material well-being generally directly correlates with the level of life satisfaction.
They are pretty satisfied with life: among the most affluent – 40.0%, people of average income – 28.1%, and low-income – 18.5% of respondents in these groups. Thus, a survey of the population in the Mangistau region shows that the wealthier people are, the more satisfied they are with their standard of living, and vice versa, the lower the level of security, the less happy people are with their lives.

The research program included clarifying questions on quality of life, where an important indicator is the amount of income per family member and the most pressing problems of our time, to provide a more detailed analysis of the main components of the social well-being of the population.

According to the Statistics Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in October 2022, the cost of living in Kazakhstan amounted to 48,121 tenge - 17.3 per cent more than a year earlier. Regionally, the highest price of living has traditionally been established in the Mangistau region: 60,798 tenge. The average monthly nominal salary of one employee in the area was 458,680 tenge [7]. The data obtained indicate that most respondents, 42.9%, have incomes of over 100 thousand tenge per family member per month, and every third (36%) region resident earns from 80,000 to 100,000. In a comparative context, there are no significant differences between previous quarters (Figure 2).

Fig. 2. Income level per family member (%).

Regarding ethnicity, the Kazakhs have the highest income of over 100,000 or more per family member (47.0%), representatives of the Azerbaijani ethnic group have less - 42.0%, and the lowest figure belongs to Russian respondents - 32.0%.

Based on previous studies in the Mangystau region, it was established that the area shows signs of ethnic differentiation in the labour market. According to their results, representatives of the Armenian ethnic group are mainly involved in the construction sector, while Azerbaijanis are represented in the restaurant business and trade. Representatives of the Uzbek and Karakalpak ethnic groups act as hired workers in the trade and construction sectors. Representatives of the Slavic ethnic group are involved in the main areas that ensure the city's life, such as water supply, gasification, electricity, etc. It is also well-known that they have a high migration potential, especially among young people. The Kazakh population is predominantly employed in state and quasi-state structures and oil and gas production enterprises.

These conclusions entirely correlate with the results of our research; Azerbaijanis who concentrate on trade and the restaurant business develop businesses with entire families throughout the year, and representatives of the Russian ethnic group are mainly represented by the older generation, who are in the pre-retirement or retirement age groups. Consequently, their incomes are more modest.
The study examined the current problems that are most acute for the place of residence. For 48.5% of respondents, rising prices, tariffs, and inflation are triggers that cause them concern. The increase in crime and arbitrariness in the law enforcement and judicial system is scary for 20.8% of respondents. Unemployment and difficulties in finding employment can negatively affect the lives of 12.2% of respondents. 3.1% of respondents in the 4th quarter found it challenging to identify the most pressing problem in the region (Figure 3).

Fig. 3. The most pressing problems in places of residence (city/rural), according to respondents.

Compared to the indicators of previous quarters, in the latest measurement, the number of people concerned about rising prices and tariffs (+2.3) and arbitrariness in the law enforcement system (+3.3) increased. It is known that the increase in crime and arbitrariness in the system of law enforcement and judicial bodies is no less pressing problem in society. Overcoming the low level of trust in the current government, law enforcement, and judicial authorities is one of the essential tasks of modern Kazakh society and other states experiencing transformation processes. Facts of unpunished crime circulated on social networks have become one of the main reasons for the emergence of psychological discomfort, insecurity, and constant danger in society.

As presented in the diagram, the priority problem factor is associated with the deterioration of the country's economic situation. Against the backdrop of inflation and rising prices for food, housing, and cars, the narrative that we will no longer live as before has intensified. The main concern is the possible loss of the consumption standards that people already have today.

Population migration is a reality of the modern development of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Different forms of migration (external, internal and transit) [9] are associated with the openness of the country and the implemented policies aimed at integrating the Republic of Kazakhstan with modern global migration trends.

Compared to other regions of the country, the Mangystau region has neither intensive migration potential nor a high migration sentiment among the local population. According to statistics, there is a positive balance in the area. Since the beginning of 2019, 11,991
people have arrived in the Mangistau region, and 8,799 have left. The main migration occurs within the country. The external migration balance amounted to 1965 people [10].

The actors of external migration are two groups: immigrants from Uzbekistan (Karakalpakstan) and the Russian Federation. The motives of external migration actors are different. For example, for immigrants from Uzbekistan, including Karakalpakstan, the motive for their migration to the Mangystau region is economic interests. Economic problems and unemployment in Uzbekistan are factors forcing migration [11]. In other words, migrants from Uzbekistan come to the area to earn money. They are mainly employed in construction and trade. The large flow of migrants from the Russian Federation is associated with the announcement of partial mobilisation in the Russian Federation on September 21 [12]. From that moment on, many Russians began to travel outside their country to nearby states, including Kazakhstan. The Mangystau region is no exception. It should be noted that the situation with Russian refugee dodgers gave rise to numerous hysterics and provocative xenophobic statements [13].

Labour migration in the region has territorial characteristics. According to the study's results, most labour migrants from Uzbekistan live in the Munaily district and the city of Zhanaozen, as well as in the city of Aktau. Emigrants of the Armenian, Azerbaijani and Russian ethnic groups are characterised by tourist and educational migration [15]. Most Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani ethnic groups maintain contact with relatives and friends living in their historical homeland. Thus, for them, their historical homeland is a country for spending summer holidays and vacations [14]. In addition, many migrants work in rural areas [16].

The study results showed that most of the population of the Mangystau region plans to keep their residence (No, I am not planning to move anywhere under any circumstances - 66.9%). Only 3.2% of respondents plan to move very shortly. In total, those who wanted to emigrate and those who had yet to decide and found it challenging to answer made up 29.9% of respondents (Figure 4).

![Fig. 4. Prospects for changing the place of residence of the population of the Mangistau region shortly (%).](image)

The ethnic profile of emigration sentiments is of particular importance. The survey showed that in the 4th quarter, the number of people wishing to emigrate significantly decreased. There is a uniform distribution of responses among all ethnic groups.

The majority of those planning to move shortly or not ruling out this in the future indicate moving to another region of the Republic of Kazakhstan (36.7%), to another country (21.1%), or to another city/village within the area (11.1%).

Compared to the previous measurement, the number of people wishing to move to another region of Kazakhstan increased (+6.1%), and the number of respondents wanting to
move and return to the country from which they came to Kazakhstan decreased (-14.2%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Planned places of relocation of the population of the Mangistau region (this question was answered only by those respondents who plan to leave shortly or do not exclude this in the future)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Two quarter</th>
<th>Three quarter</th>
<th>Four quarter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To another city/village within the region</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To another region of Kazakhstan</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To another country</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan to return to the country from which I came to Kazakhstan</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to answer</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common reasons for respondents to leave are the search for work, income, and higher-paid work (44.3%), the poor environmental situation in the region (15.1%), and reunification with family (16.5%) (Figure 5).

Fig. 5. Reasons for changing the place of residence of the population of the Mangistau region (%).

4 Conclusion

The study shows that, in general, the interethnic situation in the region remains stable. When analysing the level of life satisfaction among the population in the context of the stages of conducting surveys, we observe an increase in doubters who need to be more confident in their prospects. The most pressing problems include rising prices and tariffs, inflation, arbitrariness in the law enforcement and judicial authorities’ system, unemployment, and difficulties finding employment. It must be emphasised that the problems noted are not widespread but are gradually projected onto the social well-being of the population. The level of migration sentiment in the region remains stable. Among the reasons that prompted respondents to leave, the most common are the search for work, income, higher-paying work, the poor environmental situation in the region, and reunification with family.

The authors believe that the stable quarterly dynamics towards an increase in the number of those who doubt the stability of their situation and well-being is associated with alarming expectations in connection with the general socio-economic situation in the
country (protests, rising prices) and neighbouring countries, Etc. However, in the context of a changing economic crisis and a complex international agenda, pockets of latent social tension can be translated into the sensitive sphere of interethnic relations, which requires further close study of this area and the introduction of effective methods of working with the population to relieve social tension and increase civil trust and social solidarity on the part of the relevant structures.

References

