Article

Value Priorities of Student Youth in the Multi-Ethnic Space of Kazakhstan and Their Influence on Intercultural Communications

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Abstract: This article aims to describe the value priorities of Kazakhstani student youth and explore their relationship with traditions, the culture of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, state ideological attitudes, and the influence of external cultures. This paper addresses the impact of the multinational environment and globalization on the formation of values among students in Kazakhstan. This article analyzes empirical data collected through a mixed-methods questionnaire, developed in accordance with the well-known value measurement methodologies of M. Rokeach and Sh. Schwartz. The results show that although traditional values remain significant, the growing exposure of young people to global influences and socio-political changes indicates a dynamic evolution of their value system, reflecting both continuity and changes in the cultural landscape of Kazakhstan. The key value for Kazakhstani students is family, which suggests sufficient harmony in the life models chosen by these students. The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the establishment of a system of relations in which different cultures can engage in dialogue, preserve their historical trajectories, and maintain mutual respect among representatives of diverse ethnicities and social groups. This study also holds implications for the development of legislative mechanisms aimed at respecting Kazakhstan's national interests in international communication.

Keywords: intercultural communication; multi-ethnic space of Kazakhstan; value priorities of student youth; socio-cultural identity; intercultural adaptation

1. Introduction

In the context of global transformations, understanding the formation of value orientations among young people is increasingly relevant. Young people's attitudes towards the environment, their life goals, and shifts in their worldview provide insights that can aid in predicting their responses to social changes and potentially in shaping the future of society itself. Value orientations serve as a critical social mechanism, influencing life strategies and guiding young people's choices about their personal and professional paths. Developing mechanisms to reinforce fundamental human values among young people is essential for fostering harmonious inter-ethnic relations and for preserving the language and culture of each ethnic group. Consequently, this issue is strategically important as a socio-political objective, with significant implications as a scientific problem—particularly

for multinational, multilingual countries. In this regard, the ethnic diversity of Kazakhstan, home to 124 ethnic groups, offers a unique context for research on ethnic, linguistic, social, and cultural dynamics.

This study addresses the complexity and urgency of understanding youth and their values, a topic that has garnered substantial interest in recent scholarly discourse. Previous research on youth issues (e.g., Suleimenova & Sinyachkin, 2019; Ahmad et al., 2013; Biyekenova et al., 2016; Greenfield, 2018; Karipbayev, 2021; Maylykutova, 2023; Kropiewnicka-Mielko, 2023; Freires et al., 2024) has provided valuable insights into the dynamic processes shaping youth environments. Although these studies cover a broad range of questions, some areas remain underexplored, limiting a comprehensive understanding of this complex field. While there is growing interest in youth value systems, few studies address variations in values across ethnic groups. For example, the ways different ethnic communities in a polyethnic society interpret concepts such as family, religion, or success remain under-examined. These areas warrant deeper investigation to capture the full cultural diversity of society. Additionally, the influence of digitalization on the value priorities of young people is an especially pressing area of study today.

This article represents a segment of a larger research project that investigates the formation of various identities among Kazakhstani youth, drawing on contemporary linguistic, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic data. The primary aim of this study is to identify, compare, and analyze the value priorities of Kazakhstani students within the country's multi-ethnic environment and to examine how these values influence intercultural communication.

To achieve this aim, the authors of the article put forward the following queries:

(1) What value priorities prevail among student youth in the multi-ethnic environment of Kazakhstan?
(2) What impact do differences in the value orientations of Kazakhstani youth have on their participation in intercultural communication?
(3) Does ethnicity affect the perception of fundamental human values and the strategies employed in interactions with individuals from other cultural groups?

As a hypothesis, the authors posit a correlation between the degree of linguistic proficiency, value orientations and the dynamics of intercultural communication among Kazakhstani students studying in a multicultural and polylingual environment. It is hypothesized that the higher the level of language competence, the broader the individual's social contacts and adaptive capabilities, which contributes to the formation of tolerance, a greater sense of orientation to personal achievements and more harmonious relations between ethnic groups.

A thorough examination of these issues will enhance our understanding of societal changes in Kazakhstan and support the development of more effective social, educational, and cultural programmes.

2. The Key Factors Influencing the Formation of Value Orientations Among Modern Youth

In the context of globalization, digital innovation, and ethno-cultural diversity, studying the values and preferences of young people has become increasingly relevant. As active participants in contemporary social phenomena, young people act as a unifying force that will influence the norms and development trajectories of tomorrow's society (Sikevich & Skvortsov, 2020, p. 278). According to Paltore et al. (2023), young people experience dual processes: on one hand, "socializing under conditions of intercultural encounter and the uncertainty caused by it, they simultaneously internalize various patterns intertwined in their consciousness"; on the other, through active engagement with cultural challenges,

they expand their spiritual needs and interests (p. 117). Thus, understanding the worldview and value priorities of young people, especially in a multicultural setting, offers insights into the future directions of multi-ethnic societies.

Modern research emphasizes the dynamic and flexible nature of identity in response to globalization and social change, underscoring the central role of values in the formation and expression of identity. In culturally diverse settings, individuals and groups engage in various forms of self-identification and self-presentation, shaping identity both individually and collectively (Sh. K. Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022a, p. 785). Throughout life, identity evolves in alignment with value priorities, which act as essential guides.

Values are understood as a set of positive qualities with varying significance (Schwartz, 1992; McDonald et al., 2015; Anspoka, 2020) and serve as internal guides for behaviour and its justification (Fraj & Martinez, 2006). These values underlie social and cultural norms, directing behaviour and decision-making as the foundation of "normal" behaviour within society (Blackwell et al., 2007; McDonald et al., 2015). Initially formed within the family and further influenced by relationships, experiences, and lifestyle, values are shaped by the broader socio-cultural environment (Wu et al., 2020; Anspoka, 2020; Sihombing, 2014). Freires et al. (2024) stress the importance of the school years in shaping an individual's value system, while Suleimenova and Sinyachkin (2019, p. 32) highlight the social conditioning of values, encompassing both personal (subjective) and collective significance. The ideal values are represented by a triad of truth, ethics, and esthetics (Suleimenova & Sinyachkin, 2019).

The value system, combining individual and social experiences, is characterized by its dual nature, which supports its dual functionality. On one hand, values establish the basis for forming attitudes within an individual's consciousness, influencing their assessment of situations, conditions, and events, as well as their expression of personal viewpoints. On the other hand, as values transform, they become motivators for action and behaviour (Erenchinova et al., 2019). Schwartz (2012) describes values as "critical motivators of behaviour and attitudes" (p. 17).

Wu et al. (2020) emphasize the increasing importance of fostering a sense of belonging and identity in young people within a rapidly changing environment, identifying this as one of the most pressing social needs. Sociocultural identity is understood as the alignment of an individual's core culture with the broader society's norms, values, and traditions (Yakovlev, 2024, p. 57). At the foundation of all social identities is an individual's basic value system (Ozerina & Ulyanina, 2023), which includes universal values (such as love, prestige, respect, security, nationality, freedom, and health), intra-group values (political, religious), individual (personal) values (Tkacheva & Baymukhametova, 2016, p. 134), and culture-specific values, such as collectivism in Eastern cultures and individualism in Western cultures.

The formation of sociocultural identity is an ongoing process (Freires et al., 2024, p. 3), influenced by diverse factors as it bridges personal and public realms and evolves within particular cultural and political discourses (Hall, 1996). Language, acquired through sociocultural practise, plays a key role in identity formation (Sh. K. Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022b, p. 474). For young people, identity formation occurs "within the context of existing old and newly forming social relations" (Tkacheva & Baymukhametova, 2016, p. 134). Giddens (1991) argues that modern identity is reflexive, continuously reinterpreted in response to shifting social and cultural contexts, while Bauman (2000) highlights the need for constant rethinking and adaptation of one's identifications and values in an era marked by volatility and uncertainty. Sihombing (2014) underscores the significance of understanding changes in values, stating that "a shift in values means a shift in one culture or nation." Such shifts, as explained by Sihombing (2014), lead to the

emergence of new values, reordering of value hierarchies, and the disappearance of older values, following the Windhorst model.

In the 21st century, global migration, advances in digital technology, and the effects of multiculturalism and cultural blending are driving significant transformations in the world's value landscape. The Internet and digital communications are especially influential in shaping value hierarchies and civic identity among youth (Nusubalieva et al., 2023), enabling the formation of new social and cultural identities and allowing individuals to experiment with different aspects of their personalities (Castells, 2010). However, as Turkle (2011) cautions, while virtual spaces offer opportunities to craft and manage online identities, they can also complicate social interactions and self-understanding.

In the context of global migration and strengthening transnational ties, migrants and their families, actively interacting across borders, create transnational social spaces that shape their multilayered social identities (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Nedelcu et al., 2023). Freires et al. (2024) explore the value dimensions of European youth identities, identifying three meta-values: structural, fundamental, and procedural. While they emphasize the importance of procedural values, such as human rights, freedom, equality, and solidarity, they conclude that contemporary European youth approach values in a pluralistic manner (Freires et al., 2024).

The pluralization of self-realization patterns is similarly reflected among Kazakhstani youth, whose value orientations are influenced by diverse factors, including Westernization, market psychology, state ideology, and the revival of spiritual and cultural traditions (Tkacheva & Baymukhametova, 2016, p. 138). According to Tkacheva and Baymukhametova (2016), Kazakhstani youth exhibit contradictions in their value orientations, balancing traditional values such as family and respect for elders with an emerging trend toward extreme individualism. A growing emphasis on pragmatism, material wealth, paternalism, and social infantilism is observed, though success and high social status are often perceived as detached from individual work ethic (Tkacheva & Baymukhametova, 2016, p. 136). Biyekenova et al. (2016) further indicate that young people prioritize personal well-being and private life over civic and patriotic values, which are relegated to a peripheral position in the value hierarchy.

Pragmatic motives—such as high income potential, employment prospects, and the prestige of specific professions—significantly impact young people's career choices. Career decisions are shaped not only by personal aspirations but also by the educational and professional models within their social environments, particularly those of relatives (Shnarbekova & Abdiraiymova, 2016, p. 177). Sadyrova (2016) observes that material well-being has gained precedence over freedom, with financial compensation now prioritized over fulfilling work. This shift toward consumer-oriented values has profoundly influenced the life strategies of youth. Traditional negative phenomena such as opportunism, indifference, lack of principles, and consumerism are increasingly met with acceptance (Sadyrova, 2016, p. 186), reflecting a move from collectivist to individualistic life orientations (as cited in Sadyrova, 2016).

Kazakhstani youth demonstrate a blend of global and traditional influences, showing an outward orientation, rationality, and tolerance while maintaining a conventional perspective on marriage (Kaldybayeva & Kaldybayev, 2018). The contradictory impact of globalization on Kazakhstani youth is further evidenced by their attraction to global values like individualism, innovation, and freedom of choice, alongside the growth of neo-traditionalist attitudes that underscore ethno-cultural and religious values (Karipbayev, 2021). Consequently, values exist as models within individual consciousness and as components of public, supra-personal consciousness, highlighting the complexity and multifaceted nature of socio-cultural identity (Molodychenko, 2015). This intricate value system, shaped by

socio-political contexts and the dynamic exchange between local and global cultures, underscores the importance of examining sociocultural identity through values, particularly in the realm of intercultural communication.

The value orientations of Kazakhstani youth, including global (with an emphasis on personal interests, freedom, and integration) and local (with a traditional view of family and religion) approaches, as highlighted by the aforementioned researchers, are also confirmed by our findings. However, our study makes a significant contribution to this aspect by addressing similarities and differences in the value priorities of different linguistic groups of Kazakhstani youth: (a) Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs, (c) Russian-speaking Kazakhs, (d) Russians, and (e) other ethnicities. The value orientations of each linguistic group are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, historical, social, and religious contexts, which may in turn influence the communication styles of these groups. This may affect the dynamics within the group and the nature of relations with other ethnic groups, including the preservation of identity, the degree of tolerance, and the readiness for integration. These factors may ultimately influence the patterns of interaction with other cultures and approaches to the resolution of intercultural differences and the prevention of conflicts.

2.1. The Role of Value Priorities Among Student Youth in Intercultural Communication

In contemporary contexts, where cultural boundaries shift toward a more integrative, communicative networked identity, the value dimension of intercultural communication has become increasingly significant. This dimension is shaped by individuals' evolving perceptions of the self, encompassing both independent (a unique personality with personal feelings, cognitions, and motivations) and interdependent aspects (emphasizing in-group obligations and connectedness) (Ting-Toomey, 2010, p. 16).

Values are foundational in shaping how individuals perceive, interpret, and engage with social norms, expectations, and behaviours in interactions, playing a pivotal role in intercultural communication. When individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds interact, they bring distinct sets of values, which can foster understanding or, conversely, lead to conflict. Hofstede's (1980, 2001) research on cultural values and their influence on behaviours and organizational structures reveals that cultures differ along dimensions such as power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence (Hofstede, 2001). Similarly, Schwartz's (1992) theory of core values identifies ten universally recognized values, which, while universally present, vary in motivational priorities across cultures. His research highlights that these values, though universally shared, are prioritized and hierarchized differently, affecting behaviours, interpersonal interactions, and intercultural communication (Schwartz, 2012). Inconsistencies in value-based cultural behaviors, however, can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts in intercultural communication (Goodenough & Murdock, 2000; Lidell & Williams, 2019). Jackson (2020) underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in navigating these differences, noting that emotional awareness of cultural variations is essential in conflict management and building successful intercultural relationships.

Voinea (2012), on the other hand, emphasizes the role of societal characteristics in shaping an individual's perception of their value system, suggesting that intercultural education—conceived as "education in the spirit of values"—is vital for fostering this system (Voinea, 2012). Torkos and Egerău (2022) expand on this, describing intercultural education as an approach that views the educational process through the lens of cultural diversity, focusing on the phenomenon of cultural interaction (p. 103). This multicultural educational framework, which advocates mutual respect and intercultural dialogue (Kostyukova et al., 2017), helps young people in multicultural contexts embrace a broader spectrum of values (Kropiewnicka-Mielko, 2023). In the European context of intercul-

tural education, values such as tolerance, freedom, openness, acceptance of differences, appreciation of diversity, pluralism, and cooperation are particularly emphasized as key components (Torkos & Egerău, 2022, p. 90).

Intercultural communication issues arising from value differences extend beyond distinct communication contexts and varying perceptions of time and emotion; they also encompass stereotypes, prejudices, and cultural conflicts (S. Zharkynbekova & Aimold-ina, 2023). Stereotypes and prejudices can create preconceived expectations that foster misunderstandings or even negative perceptions of other traditions and norms, serving as obstacles to effective communication (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013). Additionally, a mismatch in cross-cultural values—such as a conflict between ancestral values and those of a new, dominant culture—can complicate young people's adaptation to new social environments, potentially impacting their sense of belonging and identity (Greenfield, 2018). Thus, understanding an ethnic group's core values, sociocultural preferences, and behavioural responses is essential for fostering intercultural communication (Artykbayeva et al., 2024).

Equally important are understanding, accommodation, respect, and integration, which lay the groundwork for harmonious interethnic relations and successful intercultural dialogue (Ahmad et al., 2013). The interaction between cultures facilitates the formation of shared values, a critical factor for peaceful coexistence and positive intercultural communication (Gadakchyan et al., 2020). Today's youth, particularly in urban multicultural settings, are fostering inclusive forms of belonging, developing hybrid identities, and promoting more inclusive societies, making them key to the future of multiculturalism (Harris, 2012).

In this context, studying the value priorities of student youth is particularly valuable. The student environment is instrumental in shaping future leaders, making it crucial for students to cultivate respect for other cultures and an understanding of diverse traditions and perspectives. While traditional values remain significant, Kazakhstan's youth are increasingly exposed to global influences and socio-political changes, leading to an evolving value system that reflects both continuity and change within Kazakhstan's multicultural landscape. Many young Kazakhstanis recognize ethnicity and religiosity as intrinsic values, yet also see the importance of preserving inter-ethnic peace and harmony in the country (Karipbayev, 2021).

Considering intercultural communication within the diverse student environment of multi-ethnic Kazakhstan is vital for fostering a harmonious society, reinforcing national identity, and preparing students to thrive in a globalized world. These competencies contribute not only to the personal and professional development of young people but also to the sustainable development of Kazakhstan's multiethnic society as a whole.

Value orientations, which form the basis of intercultural communication, are of paramount importance in understanding the nature of interpersonal and intergroup relations. The presence of disparate priorities among representatives of different ethnic groups can influence their social and educational strategies. In the context of student populations, where cultural diversity becomes a significant factor, these differences necessitate the development of intercultural competence that fosters mutual understanding and tolerance. Consequently, intercultural communication becomes a crucial skill that enables students to interact effectively, integrating diverse value systems and thus enriching their collective experience.

2.2. Kazakhstan's Model of Multi-Ethnicity and Multilingualism

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic home to representatives from 124 ethnic groups. According to the 2021 Population Census, the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan is as follows: Kazakhs (70.4%), Russians (15.5%), Uzbeks (3.2%), Ukrainians (2.0%), Uyghurs (1.5%), Tatars (1.1%), Germans (1.2%), Koreans (0.6%), Turks (0.5%), Azerbaijanis (0.8%),

Belarusians (0.4%), Dungans (0.4%), Kurds (0.3%), Tajiks (0.3%), Poles (0.2%), Chechens (0.2%), Kyrgyz (0.2%), and others (1.4%). Kazakhs and Russians are the largest groups, with populations of 13.5 million and 3 million, respectively (The Results of the National Population Census of 2021, 2021).

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has experienced significant internal and external migration, which has profoundly shaped its demographic landscape. Between 1999 and 2021, the number of Russians decreased by 33.4%, Ukrainians by 29.2%, Germans by 36%, Tatars by 12.2%, Belarusians by 31.6%, Koreans by 88.1%, and Poles by 25.4%. These declines reflect external migration trends, particularly the outflow of the Russian-speaking population following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In contrast, the population of Turkic-speaking ethnic groups has seen considerable growth. The number of Kyrgyz increased by 214%, Tajiks and Dungans by 94% and 114%, respectively, Azerbaijanis by 86%, Uzbeks by 65.6%, Uyghurs by 38%, Turks by 12.5%, and other ethnic groups by 28% (see Table 1).

Table 1. Statistical data on the demographic situation of select Turkic, Slavic, and other ethnic groups in Kazakhstan.

Ethnic Groups/Years	1999	2009	2021
	Thousands (%)	Thousands (%)	Thousands (%)
Total	14,953.1	16,009.6	19,186
1. Kazakhs	7985.0 (53.4%)	10,096.8 (63.1%)	13,497.9 (70.4%)
2. Russians	4480.6 (30.0%)	3793.8 (23.7%)	2981.9 (15.5%)
3. Uzbeks	370.8 (2.5%)	457.0 (2.9%)	614.0 (3.2%)
4. Ukrainians	547.1 (3.7%)	333.0 (2.1%)	387.3 (2.0)
5. Uighurs	210.4 (1.4%)	224.7 (1,4%)	290.3 (1.5%)
6. Tatars	249.1 (1.7%)	204.2 (1.1%)	218.7 (1.3%)
7. Germans	353.5 (2.4%)	178.4 (1.1%)	226.1 (1.2%)
8. Koreans	999.4 (0.7%)	100.4 (0.6%)	118.5 (0.6%)
9. Turks	76.0 (0.5%)	97.0 (0.6%)	85.5 (0.5%)
10. Azerbaijanis	78.3 (0.5%)	85.3 (0.5%)	145.6 (0.8%)
11. Belarusians	111.9 (0.7%)	66.5 (0.4%)	76.5 (0.4%)
12. Dungan	36.9 (0.2%)	52.0 (0.3%)	78.8 (0.4%)
13. Kurds	32.8 (0.2%)	38.3 (0.2%)	47.9 (0.3%)
14. Tajiks	25.7 (0.2%)	36.3 (0.2%)	49.8 (0.3%)
15. Poles	47.3 (0.3%)	34.1 (0.2%)	35.3 (0.2%)
16. Chechens	31.8 (0.2%)	31.4 (0.2%)	33.6 (0.2%)
17. Kyrgyz people	10.9 (0.1%)	23.3 (0.2%)	34.2 (0.2%)
18. Other ethnic groups	206.9 (1.4%)	157.2 (1.1%)	264.1 (1.4%)

As shown in the table, Kazakhs, who represented just over half of the population two decades ago, now form the majority at 70.4%. In 1999, Kazakhstan's population stood at 15 million, with approximately 8 million Kazakhs and 4.5 million Russians. By the 2021 census, the population had grown to 19.2 million, with Kazakhs numbering 13.5 million and Russians 3 million (The Results of the National Population Census of 2021, 2021).

Kazakhstan is a multilingual country. In addition to the official Kazakh language, Russian holds the status of a language for inter-ethnic communication, as stipulated in the

Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan" (11 July 1997). This policy facilitates communication among representatives of different ethnic groups while allowing them to maintain their cultural and linguistic identities.

The language situation in Kazakhstan has been significantly shaped by historical migration patterns and government policies. Extensive data collected by Kazakh scholars over recent decades, including large-scale sociolinguistic surveys, has provided valuable insights into the current trends in linguistic change within the country. These findings have enabled a comprehensive assessment of the state of language development and the prospects for future language interaction in Kazakhstan.

1. Soviet Russification and Its Aftermath: During the Soviet era, the targeted policy of Russification disrupted the balance between languages. As a result, Russian gradually became dominant across various spheres of communication within Kazakh society (Suleimenova, 2011, p. 117). The decline in the functional use of the Kazakh language led many members of the indigenous population to lose motivation for speaking their native language. However, following Kazakhstan's attainment of independence, the situation has evolved. Kazakh is now the state language, and its use has expanded significantly. Today, Kazakhstan's communicative landscape includes a variety of linguistic identities. An analysis of linguistic competence and behaviour in different communication contexts has revealed the following linguistic profiles in Kazakhstani society: (1) Monolingual Kazakhs who speak only Kazakh, predominantly from rural areas or as repatriates from Turkic-speaking countries; (2) Bilingual Kazakhs with Kazakh as the dominant language; (3) Bilingual Kazakhs with Russian as the dominant language; (4) Russian-speaking monolinguals; (5) Russian-speaking Kazakhs; and (6) Representatives of other ethnic groups residing in Kazakhstan (Suleimenova, 2010).

2. Impact of Globalization and English Language Proficiency: The global rise of English as a "lingua franca" has influenced attitudes toward the language, which is now seen as essential for enhancing personal competitiveness. Surveys conducted between 2014 and 2016 revealed that approximately 83% of Kazakhstanis believe their children should be fluent in English. Among younger respondents, 91.8% associate professional development with English proficiency, considering it a key factor for career advancement (Zharkynbekova, 2012). The demand for proficiency in multiple foreign languages, including English, is driven by neoliberal ideals of global competitiveness (cited by Djuraeva, 2022).

3. Effects of Language Policy Reforms: Recent language policy measures aimed at preserving the state language have produced notable results in various communication domains, including education, media, and business. For example, reforms introducing trilingual education to promote linguistic competence in a globalized context have had significant impacts. In 2023, 68.2% of first graders chose education in Kazakh, up from 64% in 2021 (https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/edu/press/news/details/602530?lang=ru, accessed on 29 June 2024).

The multilingual education model that has been developed in Kazakhstan is the result of a considered approach that has taken into account both the historical factors that have shaped the country's linguistic landscape and the strategic goals that have been set for it. The model of education is defined as innovative, forming a modern, competitive personality with high linguistic competence in the conditions of globalization, informatization and integration. It is designed to provide training of qualified personnel in demand in the professional sphere and social society. Higher education in Kazakhstan is structured in a manner that allows for the concurrent study of Kazakh/Russian and English languages. To illustrate this, during the 2022–2023 academic year, 60.3% (377,467 students) of the total number of university students (626,208) studied Kazakh, 24.7% (155,016 students) Russian, and 7.2% (45,380 students) English (Concept for the Development of Language Policy in

the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029, accessed on 20 June 2024). Furthermore, there is a trend among bilingual Kazakhs to prioritize English alongside Kazakh. A new type of linguistic identity is emerging: the polyglot, fluent in three or more languages, primarily Kazakh, Russian, and English. According to Djuraeva (2022), the status of English is evident in the way Kazakhstani students position English alongside Russian and Kazakh in their meta-linguistic narratives of everyday language practises. These students view all of their languages, including English, as integral to the realization of a trilingual identity at local, national, and global levels (Djuraeva, 2022).

4. Migration Processes: Kazakhstan experiences significant migration flows both in and out of the country. Since 1991, the government has actively promoted the repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs from neighbouring and distant countries. Over the years, 1,137,100 ethnic Kazakhs have resettled in Kazakhstan (https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/enbek/ press/news/details/813142?lang=ru, accessed on 10 July 2024). The transformation of Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape is also linked to ethnolinguistic shifts among immigrants, particularly repatriate Kazakhs.

As Suleimenova (2009) notes, ethno-demographic processes have contributed to an increase in Kazakh language use while maintaining Russian linguistic competence, fostering the development of multilingualism in the country.

3. Materials and Methods

The study utilized a diverse range of sources, including official statistical data from state bodies of the Republic of Kazakhstan, such as the Results of the National Population Census of 2021 (https://stat.gov.kz/ru/national/2021/, accessed on 29 June 2024); normative and legal acts, including the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, on Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan (1997) (https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z970000151_ accessed on 20 June 2024), and the Concept for the Development of Language Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029 (2023) (https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/ sko-sayasat/documents/details/481125?lang=ru, accessed on 20 June 2024); periodicals reflecting the current state of affairs; and online resources, including the websites of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Additionally, the study incorporated findings from recent research conducted by both domestic and international scholars.

To identify the dominant values shaping the contemporary value system of society, a field study was conducted using Rokeach's Value Orientations methodology. The study took place in 2023 and involved 140 participants from various universities in Kazakhstan, including L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Toraigyrov University (Pavlodar), and Mukhtar Auezov South Kazakhstan University (Shymkent). Participants, aged 18 to 23 years, were selected to ensure a representative sample.

The majority of respondents were Kazakhs (80%, or 112 individuals), followed by Russians (11.4%, or 16 individuals). The remaining 8.6% comprised Uzbeks, Uighurs, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles, Chechens, Armenians, and Ingush. The participants' educational backgrounds were varied, encompassing fields such as architecture and construction, veterinary medicine, journalism, engineering, information technology, mathematics, mechanics, pedagogy, psychology, tourism, physics, Kazakh, Russian, and foreign philology, as well as economics. The geographic distribution of the participants spanned across all regions of Kazakhstan: Astana and the Akmola region (27%), Taraz, Shymkent, and Turkestan region (24%), Almaty city and Almaty region (11%), Kyzylorda region (6%),

Pavlodar and North Kazakhstan region (14%), Aktobe (6%), and Semey, Ust-Kamenogorsk, and East Kazakhstan region (12%).

The demographic composition of the sample closely mirrors the ethnic distribution of the country, indicating the representativeness of the sample. To overcome the limitations that may be associated with the representativeness of the sample, the number of respondents, and geographical constraints, the authors of the study have conducted extensive preliminary work to ascertain the general population of students in Kazakhstan. They have also obtained the approval of the management of leading Kazakhstani universities to conduct questionnaires and interviews across various regions within the country.

To analyze the values prioritized by the respondents and to test the study's working hypothesis, the empirical data were categorized based on the subjects' linguistic competence, as determined by their nationality and language of instruction.

All respondents were categorized into four distinct groups based on their language proficiency. The findings of our study revealed that the primary characteristic of the speech activity of students who participated in the survey was the nature of their speech acts, as manifested in their language proficiency:

- **Kazakh-speaking group:** Kazakh students who chose Kazakh as the language of instruction belong to this group. They also possess varying degrees of proficiency in Russian and English.
- **Russian-speaking group:** Kazakh students who opted for Russian as the language of instruction are part of this group. They typically have some proficiency in Kazakh and English.
- **Russian monolingual group:** Russian students, who are mostly monolingual in Russian, speak Kazakh and English to a limited extent.
- **Multi-ethnic group:** Students from other ethnic backgrounds (Armenians, Belarusians, Ingush, Chechens, Poles, Uzbeks, Uyghurs, Ukrainians) generally speak multiple languages, including their native language, Kazakh, and Russian, with varying degrees of proficiency in English. Their speech development meets most social standards.

The study formulated the working hypothesis that young people from different ethnic groups living in the multi-ethnic environment of Kazakhstan may display both similarities and differences in their value priorities.

To empirically study the value preferences of Kazakhstani students, our research group designed a comprehensive mixed-methods questionnaire, which was divided into two primary content blocks: Block 1: Social Characteristics and Block 2: Value Priorities. The methodology for measuring values, developed by M. Rokeach (1973), served as the foundation for creating our own approach to studying students' value systems. Our combined questionnaire includes both a standardized test and a series of open-ended reflective questions.

3.1. Block 1: Social Characteristics

This block consisted of socio-demographic questions that aimed to capture the respondents' objective characteristics, such as gender, age, nationality, mother tongue, and language of instruction. The collected data were analyzed and presented in the section titled **'Ethnic Indicators'**.

3.2. Block 2: Value Priorities

This was the main component of the questionnaire and was divided into three sections:

1. **Open-ended question:** "What values, in your opinion, are the most important in your life?"

2. **Standardized test:** "Evaluate each of the proposed value options on the scale given in the table".

3. **Standardized test:** "Determine the degree of importance (value) of various business and personal qualities in a person's life".

Following Rokeach's methodology (1973), the measured values were classified into two categories:

- **Terminal values:** These values are related to goals, such as family well-being, health, self-development, self-realization, interesting work, education, and independence.

- **Instrumental values:** These are values related to the means of achieving goals, including personal qualities such as education, professionalism, self-confidence, kindness, benevolence, willingness to help others, creativity, risk-taking, entrepreneurship, responsibility, and a sense of duty.

Students were asked to select the values that were most significant to them from the list and rate them on a five-point scale, from "very valuable" to "not valuable at all".

The data from the questionnaires were processed using Excel software, which provided results in the form of percentage distributions. Additionally, standardized open-access content analysis programmes (e.g., miratext.ru) and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 27.0) were used to conduct advanced statistical analyses. These tools enabled comprehensive analysis and allowed for a deeper exploration of the findings.

To explore the relationship between value priorities and the factors influencing their selection, informal interviews were also conducted. The interview questions included the following: "What values in life do you consider the most important? What traditions of national culture do you honor? What role does your family play in your life? What qualities do you value most in others? What goals do you set for yourself? What is more important to you in your relationships with others? What matters more to you—material goods or spiritual well-being? Are there representatives of other ethnic groups in your environment (friends, acquaintances)? What values are determinant for the ethnic group you represent? What would you like to change in the current situation in Kazakhstan?"

A total of 35 students, both Bachelor's and Master's level, participated in the interviews. The majority of participants were Kazakhs (25 students, or 71.4%); 14.3% of respondents were Russians (5 students), and the remaining 14.3% included students from various ethnic backgrounds: Tatars (1), Uzbeks (1), Poles (1), Germans (1), and Ossetians (1). The interview texts were processed manually.

4. Results

4.1. Generalized Results of the Questionnaire on Kazakhstani Students' Value Preferences

In response to the open-ended question, *"What values, in your opinion, are the most important in your life? Formulate your answer in one or two words"*, a total of 1442 words were gathered from 140 respondents, with an average of 10–11 words per participant. Analysis indicates that the most prominent values for Kazakhstani student youth include family, health, material well-being, professionalism and development, education, freedom, and others.

Table 2 presents the most statistically significant values reported by students, ranked in descending order based on frequency.

The table includes values occurring with a frequency of at least 0.5%. Universal values with lower frequencies—such as humanity, tolerance (0.47% each), discipline, patience, and loyalty (0.39% each)—along with gratitude, benevolence, caring, sincerity, and justice (0.31% each), and values like beauty, morality, and decency (0.23% each) have been excluded.

Additionally, values including accuracy, literacy, intelligence, reason, wisdom, optimism, helpfulness, and modesty (0.16% each) were not included in the table.

Table 2. The most significant values and their frequency.

№	Value	Frequency of Use, %
1	Family	7.36
2	Health	7.28
3	Education (knowledge, education, study, etc.)	4.70
4	Freedom, independence	3.60
5	Material well-being (money, finance, wealth, prosperity, material values, etc.)	3.60
6	Professionalism, work, career, growth, development, self-development, self-realization	3.60
7	Love	2.33
8	Honesty	2.33
9	Kindness	2.02
10	Communication, relationships, connections, communication	1.86
11	Mutual understanding	1.10
12	Respect	1.55
13	Happinness	1.48
14	Labour, hard work	1.25
15	Responsibility	0.85
16	Personal, personal life	0.78
17	Rest	0.78
18	Success	0.78
19	Faith, religion, God	0.70
20	Comfort	0.70
21	Creativity	0.70
22	Future	0.62
23	Friendship	0.62
24	Spiritual values	0.62
25	Hobby	0.55
26	Patriotism, country, state, society	0.55

Unique values mentioned only once, such as "altruism", "politeness", "good manners", "unselfishness", "dignity", "culture", "leadership", "reliability", "conscience", and "empathy", were also recorded but are not listed in Table 2.

According to Table 2, *family* is the predominant value among Kazakhstani students, reflecting its central role in students' lives. This is closely followed by *health*, valued for its fundamental importance in building a future family, succeeding academically, and achieving professional aspirations.

Material well-being ranks third, illustrating its importance for a fulfilling life and realizing one's potential. Additionally, values associated with *personal comfort*, such as freedom, independence, love, personal life, recreation, and hobbies, highlight the emphasis

placed on individual well-being. *Education* ranks fourth, underscoring its role in personal and professional growth, while *health* remains a cornerstone, also ranking highly among students' priorities.

The lower emphasis on values like *patriotism*, *country*, and *society* (noted at a frequency of 0.55%) reflects the modern, globally connected environment that influences Kazakhstani youth. Factors like open borders, academic mobility, and exposure to diverse cultural perspectives foster a more cosmopolitan worldview among students. However, many Kazakh students still identify strongly as citizens, aspiring to contribute to their country's progress. Some students shared that *"In the future, I want to develop IT technologies in Kazakhstan"*, *"I want to create a company that positively impacts the national economy"*, and that *"My digital identity merges learning, creativity, and interaction, helping me grow and contribute to both my country and the global community"*.

An assessment of students' values based on importance levels (see Figure 1) reveals a strong emphasis on *health, family well-being, personal freedom, education*, and *opportunities for development*, mirroring findings from the open-ended responses. Less significant for students are values associated with public life, high social status, or engagement in the literature and the arts.
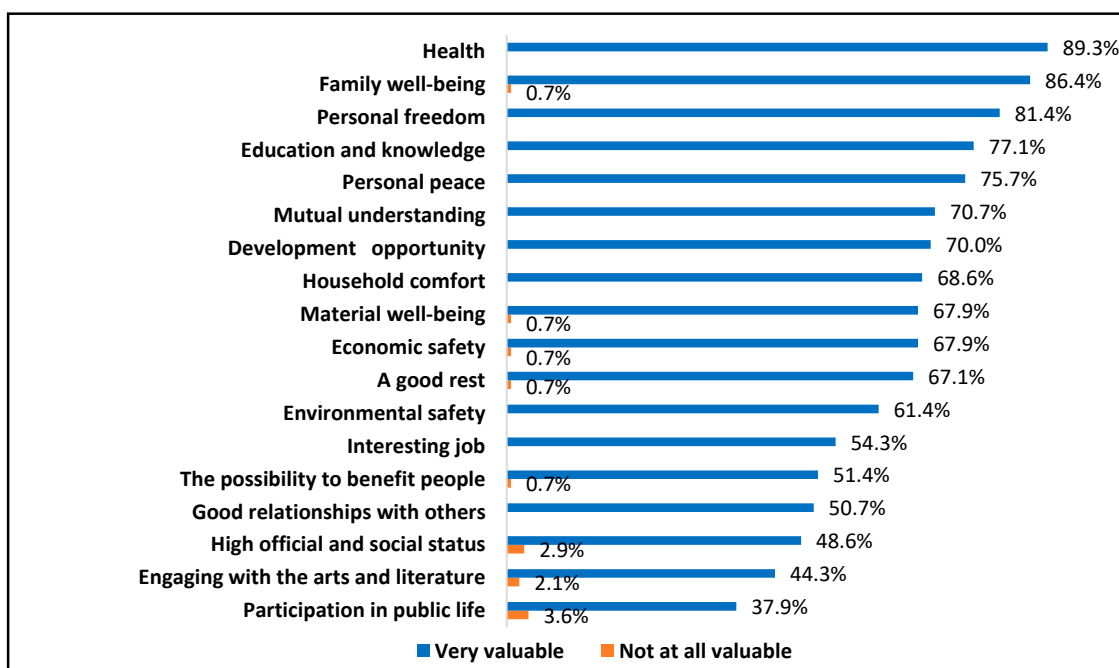

Figure 1. A list of values depending on the degree of their importance to Kazakhstani students.

Responses to questions on interpersonal relationships—"What is more important in your relationships: trust, respect, or something else? What qualities do you value most in others?"—show that, regardless of ethnicity, age, gender, or background, students appreciate qualities such as humanity, honesty, sincerity, openness, and reliability. These personal traits are valued across diverse demographics: "The most important thing for me between people is respect. Respect is the basis of all relationships, without knowing the elementary basics of respect, it will be impossible to build correct and constructive relationships between people" (Kazakh, male, 20 years old); "I consider the following qualities to be the most important in people. Humanity—understanding and compassion in a person. Ability to feel the feelings of the neighbour. Respect for the rights and dignity of everyone, regardless of their status, gender, earnings" (Kazakh, female, 22 years old); "I value in people openness, ability to help, friendliness and respect for another person, as I believe these are basic qualities for human survival in society" (Russian, female, 23 years

old); "What I value most of all in people is sincerity, kindness and responsibility. Sincerity is important to me because it creates trust and allows me to build honest relationships without falsity. Kindness is what makes the world a better place and I like people who show care and consideration for others. Responsibility is valuable because it shows that a person can keep their word and is willing to bear the consequences for their actions. These qualities help to build strong and reliable relationships based on respect and mutual understanding" (Uzbek, female, 21 years old); "I value kindness, sincerity, justice. I love optimists, positive people who can love, believe, dream, go to the goal" (Russian, female, 19 years old).

The responses provided by students can be considered illustrative of this viewpoint: *"There are many values in my life that I consider important. The first of them are family, friendship, support and love of close people. The second value is education, it helps me to develop in life and acquire new skills. Health is very important—the key to physical and psychological well-being. And also such values as responsibility, respect"* (Russian, female, 21 years old); *"I consider my greatest value to be close relations with my family and friends, as emotional ties with people are very important to me, so the opportunity to have people close in blood or spirit is a necessity for me. The second most important value I consider the possibility of self-realisation. I believe that every person should find his/her place in life"* (Polish, female, 19 years old).

Interview responses uniformly reflect the high importance of *family*, with students citing it as a foundational value rooted in their national traditions.

4.2. Results of Data by Groups of Respondents

To further explore value preferences by ethnicity, responses from four groups—*Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs*, *Russian-speaking Kazakhs*, *Russians*, and *other ethnicities*—were analyzed. Values were ranked based on frequency using the "Full Semantic Text Analysis" programme (https://miratext.ru/seo_analiz_text/, accessed on 28 July 2024), and values with a keyword density below 1 were excluded to enhance result reliability. The significant values for each group are listed in tables below.

4.2.1. Kazakh-Speaking Kazakhs

Among the 56 Kazakh-speaking respondents, a total of 596 value-based responses were recorded, with an average of 10–11 values per respondent. Table 3 presents the most significant values for Kazakh-speaking students studying in the Kazakh language.

Table 3. The most significant values for Kazakh respondents studying Kazakh.

№	Word	Density (Frequency of Word Usage), %
1	Family	8.72
2	Health	7.88
3	Education, knowledge	6.88
4	Kindness	2.85
5	Love	2.51
6	Honesty, loyalty	2.34
7	Freedom	2.01
8	Happiness	1.85
9	Man (his self-development, self-realization)	1.67
10	Industriousness	1.67
11	Friendship	1.67
12	Friendship	1.17

The top three values for Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs—*family*, *health*, and *education*—align with the values of the broader student sample. Additionally, Kazakh-speaking students prioritize *kindness*, *love*, *honesty*, *freedom*, *happiness*, *humanity*, *diligence*, *friendship*, and *responsibility*. Notably, 10 out of the 12 values listed are abstract concepts representing spiritual and moral qualities, while the concrete terms *family* and *person* embody complex socio-psychological aspects rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions.

Family emerged as the principal life priority among Kazakh-speaking respondents, who regard it as a core source of socio-cultural strength and guidance. In interviews, respondents highlighted family's significance with statements like *"My family is my wealth"*, *"Family is the most important thing for me"*, and *"Family is my support"*. Young Kazakh-speaking students view family as a central pillar that embodies core values and offers both material and spiritual sustenance: *"I love my close relatives very much and cannot imagine my life without them. My family is the main source of emotional and physical support. Only in the circle of my family I can feel completely free and loved. Family plays a major role in my life. I recognise the experience of older relatives and also feel responsible for my younger siblings and nephews"* (Kazakh, female, 22 years old).

The importance of the value of intergenerational relationships is clear from their response to the question of what national traditions they honour: *"One of the main traditions I honour or adhere to is respect for elders. I value the experience and wisdom of adults. I like to receive the gratitude and support of my parents, the older generation"* (Kazakh, female, 20 years old); *"There is something sacred in the fact that people, by creating a family, create their own cell in society, in history, in the world. Family gives me a certain incentive to live, to be happy, to develop and to achieve goals. I take care of my parents. I try to be a support for them just as they have always been for me. As a sister, I try to be the best example for my siblings. I support them and help them develop and achieve their goals. We are a united team that can always rely on each other"* (Kazakh, female, 23 years old).

Respect for elders, a hallmark of traditional Kazakh culture, is integral to these values. Students, particularly those raised in the context of folk pedagogy, value parental blessing as essential for a fulfilled life: *"My main task is not to let my parents down and fulfil their expectations. This is my destiny and my goal"* (Kazakh, male, 21 years old); *"My main goal is to achieve professional success in a field that I am passionate about, i.e., politics, and to be the pride of my parents"* (Kazakh, male, 19 years old).

In Kazakh culture, the eldest child is often perceived as having certain obligations, forming a distinctive character. Kazakh proverbs also underscore the role of the eldest sibling, who is seen as a source of strength and responsibility within the family: *"He who has an older brother has support"*, and *"An older brother's house is a wide pasture"* (Syzdykova & Husain, 2002).

The values emphasized by Kazakh-speaking Kazakh students—*kindness*, *love*, *loyalty*, *freedom*, *happiness*, *responsibility*, and *friendship*—centre on relationships and emotional well-being. These values often manifest within family, kinship, and work relationships. The frequent mention of the term *human being* as a priority reflects a strong focus on interpersonal relationships and the value placed on individuals as members of a broader community.

Some students also highlighted the importance of faith and religion in their lives. Statements like *"For me, the most important thing in life is iman. Sincere faith protects people from bad deeds and thoughts"* reflect this sentiment. Islam plays a key role in shaping their spiritual and moral values, with religious observances like *Oraza-Ait*, *Kurban-Ait*, and *sundet toi* holding cultural significance. These religious traditions are cherished as essential elements of Kazakh culture, as confirmed in interviews with Kazakh-speaking respondents.

4.2.2. Russian-Speaking Kazakhs

A total of 56 Russian-speaking Kazakh respondents provided 507 responses, averaging nine responses per participant.

Table 4 reveals that Russian-speaking Kazakhs exhibit a slightly different prioritization of values compared to Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs, though there is substantial alignment in core preferences. Among Russian-speaking respondents, health ranks as the most important value, followed by family. Other significant values identified include freedom, honesty, friendship, love, education, respect, kindness, life, money, career, happiness, independence, and well-being.

Table 4. The most significant values for Russian-speaking Kazakh respondents studying the Russian language.

№	Word	Density (Frequency of Word Usage), %
1	Health	8.88
2	Family	8.28
3	Freedom, independence	7.10
4	Honesty	5.13
5	Friend, friendship	5.13
6	Love	5.13
7	Education	5.13
8	Respect	2.36
9	Kindness	2.36
10	Life	2.36
11	Money, prosperity	2.36
12	Career	2.36
13	Happiness	2.36
14	Socialisation	1.38
15	Tolerance	1.38
16	Self-development	1.38
17	Mind, intellect	1.38
18	Travelling	1.00

This list reflects both overlapping values (health, family, freedom, honesty, friendship, love, education, kindness, and happiness) and unique pragmatic values such as life, money, prosperity, career, socialization, self-development, intelligence, tolerance, and travel. In other words, while terminal spiritual values are important, this group also prioritizes pragmatic values, including financial independence and career-oriented well-being.

Unlike the Kazakh-speaking group, which emphasizes collective-oriented values, Russian-speaking Kazakhs focus more on individual development and personal well-being. This divergence may relate to language use, a key indicator of ethno-identity: Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs show stronger adherence to national traditions and cultural values, while Russian-speaking Kazakhs exhibit a more cosmopolitan outlook, often favouring values less traditionally associated with Kazakh culture. Accordingly, values such as "socialization", "self-development", and "travel" are prominent within this group. It is notable that "tolerance", a value of the multicultural world, appears exclusively in this

group's list, highlighting the impact of the multilingual, multicultural environments in which these students study and interact.

Familiarity with multiple languages (this group includes Kazakh students studying in Russian or multilingual settings) broadens communication opportunities, fosters adaptation to foreign-language environments, and promotes tolerance toward others. Many of these students are residents of urban centres like Astana, contrasting with the largely rural backgrounds of the first group, where individualistic values are less prominent. Urban culture tends to emphasize personal goals, achievements, and personal freedom, aligning more with Westernized perspectives.

An interesting dimension emerges when examining responses to the question, "What is more important to you: material benefits or spiritual well-being, and why?"

A minority of students (32%, or 18 respondents) strongly favour spiritual values, as reflected in their responses: *"Undoubtedly, both material well-being and spiritual values are important in the modern world. These two components can go hand in hand, but for me personally, spiritual well-being always comes first. Money and comfort make life more convenient, but they cannot bring true happiness. True joy lies in intangible things: love, support, understanding and fulfilment. These are the things that give life deep meaning, and in the long run are much more valuable than any material achievements"* (Kazakh, female, 21 years old).

In contrast, the majority expressed hesitation in choosing strictly between material and spiritual values: *"I cannot give an unambiguous answer, although I would prefer to answer that spiritual well-being is more important for me. But material well-being is too important, because thanks to it one can count on spiritual growth. It is difficult without it"* (Kazakh, female, 19 years old); *"Material goods and spiritual values are equally important for me. For a decent life for my family it is necessary to earn well and spend properly. But at the same time, you cannot work for money, you need to work to realise your plans, to educate your children, to take care of the health of your loved ones. Spiritual values are also important to instil in children: kindness, generosity, respect for elders"* (Kazakh, female, 22 years old); *"Firstly, it is a good job that will provide me with financial stability and a decent life. Secondly, it is success in my field of activity, recognition and respect from future colleagues. Thirdly, it is travelling—discovering new places, meeting new people and cultures. And fourthly, the opportunity to express myself"* (Kazakh, female, 24 years old).

The interview data further show that ambitious and pragmatic life goals are typical among many young Russian-speaking Kazakh respondents: *"In the context of globalisation, I tend to set practical, achievable goals. These include having my own space, working in a permanent role, developing my career and reaching the top of my profession"*; *"The most important goal in my life is to be proud of myself and to know that I am not living this life in vain. I want to feel that I do what I enjoy and that my actions benefit not only me but also others. I dream of realising my creative ideas, setting ambitious goals and achieving them without being afraid of difficulties"*.

4.2.3. Russians

Russian students, who made up 11.4% of respondents (16 people), gave 188 answers to the question about the most significant values for them, on average 11–12 words for each respondent.

The list of value priorities with density >1 in Russian-speaking students turned out to be impressive—18 words (the same as in Russian-speaking Kazakhs). The data in Table 5 indicate a certain similarity of values of this group of respondents with those of the first two groups. The recurrent values are, first of all, the dominant values of the whole sample of students: health, family, independence, education, love, kindness, respect. It is noteworthy that in detailed answers to questions about the most important thing in life, students of this group often speak about honouring traditions, love for the homeland, which usually distinguishes traditionally brought up Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs: *"Naturally, I consider*

myself Russian, and I am comfortable with that identity. However, I reside in Kazakhstan, where my siblings and parents were born and raised. I believe that, regardless of nationality, when one resides in Kazakhstan, one acquires a Kazakh mentality. All of my colleagues are of Kazakh nationality. I am particularly fond of Kazakh cuisine. I am particularly fond of Toi, Nauryz and Kurban-Ait, which are deeply embedded in my cultural identity. Cultural exchange is for foreigners, but we are indigenous. We are Kazakhs, and despite our different religious affiliations, we share a common homeland" (Russian, male, 20 years old).

Table 5. The most significant values for Russian respondents studying the Russian language.

№	Word	Density (Frequency of Word Usage), %
1	Health	6.38
2	Family	5.85
3	Education	4.79
4	Independence, freedom, personal freedom	3.19
5	Purpose, vision of purpose, clarity of purpose, goal setting	2.12
6	Spiritual development, harmony, harmonious development	1.60
7	Respect	1.60
8	Confidence, strength	1.60
9	Love	1.60
10	Kindness	1.06
11	Patience	1.06
12	Formation, self-development	1.06
13	Workability	1.06
14	Achievement, success	1.06
15	Rest	1.06
16	Responsibility	1.06
17	Well-being, material well-being	1.06
18	Self-discipline, self-control	1.06

Another representative of the Russian ethnos emphasizes the influence of national Kazakh traditions on the peculiarities of the national character of Kazakh Russians: *"If we compare Russians in Kazakhstan and Russians in Russia, since we live surrounded by Kazakhs, we are just as hospitable, we seat the guest in a place of honour, we do not refuse to help"* (Russian, female, 20 years old).

Thus, reflecting on the theme of fundamental values of life, respondents independently draw a conclusion about the intersectionality of value choices in a multi-ethnic society, about the influence of Kazakh state-forming culture on the culture of other ethnic groups.

However, the positions of Russian-speaking Kazakhs and Russians are closer in terms of semantic content of the named concepts. Thus, both demonstrate the values of individualism associated with personal freedom, personal development and growth, as well as comfort (personal freedom, self-development, confidence, strength, achievements, success, travel, recreation). The following opinion is characteristic of this group of respondents: *"In my life, the priority values are comfort and idyll in my own life and in my family. I consider material goods as a resource for achieving my goal. The stronger the material component, the more achievable your goals become"* (Russian, male, 19 years old).

In the group of students of Russian nationality, a value with a significant frequency of use was identified—goal, achievement. However, the goals of this category of respondents differ from the goals of the Kazakh respondents, in whom, as already noted, aspirations are often associated with the declared intention to serve the motherland. In the Russian audience, the goals are usually related to professional self-realization, self-development, aspirations for comfort and harmony: *"My main goal is to become a professional in my chosen field. I work hard at it. Professionalism is the way to success, to prosperity"* (Russian, male, 18 years old); *"My priority now is to study well in order to become a good teacher of Russian language and literature. I want to provide a decent old age for my parents, a nourishing life for myself and my future children. To bring benefit to the world by my professional activity"* (Russian, female, 20 years old).

The value of purpose among young Russian respondents is supported by such associatively close concepts as achievement, becoming, self-development. In addition to these, the list includes a number of words related to personal and professional development: education, spiritual development, efficiency, self-discipline, responsibility and, finally, rest as an opportunity to get away from business and recover strength for further work.

4.2.4. Results of Analyzing the Indicators of Representatives of Other Ethnic Groups

Representatives of non-Kazakh and non-Russian nationalities, making up 8.6 per cent of the total number of respondents (12 people: 2 Belarusians, 1 Pole, 1 Ukrainian, 1 Uzbek and 1 Chechen), indicated Armenian, Ingush, Uzbek, Uigur, Polish, Russian and Kazakh (Chechen) as their native languages. This group gave an average of 12-13 answers each, totalling 151 words.

Table 6 shows that the priority values of the described group of respondents do not differ from the values of other groups: they are family, health, material values, respect, friendship, education, freedom, and others. Family and health are unconditional dominants of the same degree of importance among the values that are the most significant for the informants-representatives of other nationalities.

Table 6. The most significant values for respondents of other nationalities studying the Russian language.

№	Word	Density (Frequency of Word Usage), %
1	Family	6.62
2	Health	5.96
3	Material values, money	3.97
4	Respect, respect for people	3.31
5	Friend, friends, friendship	2.64
6	Well-being	2.64
7	Development	1.99
8	Love	1.99
9	Freedom, independence	1.99
10	Education	1.99
11	Happiness	1.99
12	Creativity	1.99
13	Rest	1.32

The majority of respondents of this group either noted the equivalence of material and spiritual values, or named material well-being as predominant: *"Nowadays one can get a lot of things with the help of money, including health, well-being, large important purchases and small pleasures of life. Therefore, material well-being is very important to me"* (Uzbek, female, 20 years old).

It should be noted that interviewees often have reservations because the choice between material and spiritual values proves to be very difficult for them: *"However, sincerely devoted, close people and psychological stability cannot be bought for money"* (Uzbek, female, 19 years old); *"Spiritual well-being is important to me, because you can't build happiness on material goods. Material goods will never come before spiritual well-being. But ideally, of course, I prefer a balance between the two values"* (Polish, female, 19 years old); *"Without material goods we cannot live in principle, and the lack of spiritual well-being will make our existence unbearable, so it is necessary to keep a balance of these two aspects in life"* (Ossetian, female, 18 years old); *"For me, material and spiritual well-being are equal, because although they are opposites, they are equally necessary for a person to be successfully realised as a person. A person should try not to lose the balance between the spiritual and material components"* (German, female, 18 years old).

5. Discussion

In general, the results of our empirical study partially correlate with the data that are given in the sociological study 'Youth of Kazakhstan', which has been conducted annually, since 2013, by the Research Centre 'Youth' at the request of the Ministry of Information and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan. As can be seen from the Table 7 below according to the analytical report 'Youth of Kazakhstan. 2022', the main values for Kazakhstani youth remain family (72.6%), friendship (32.3%), and health (26.9%) (Akhantaeva et al., 2023).

Table 7. The distribution of answers to the question 'What is the most valuable for you in life?' (%) for 2021–2023 (* Note: the sum is not equal to 100%, as respondents could choose several answers).

Response Options	2021	2022	2023
Family	82.3	83.3	72.6
Friendship	23.1	40.7	32.3
Health	45.6	64.2	26.9
Faith, religion	16.2	18.1	18.7
Peace of mind	8.8	15.3	17.5
Love	12	22.8	9.9
Helping people	3.3	10.3	7.5
Materially secure life	20.7	39.3	7.2
Career, high position in society	5.2	11	7.2
Knowledge, education	11.1	19.5	5.7
Creativity	1.5	3.3	5.1
Self-realisation, self-respect	7.8	17.7	4.8
Opportunity to enjoy, have fun	5.1	11.5	4.5
Power	2.8	5.1	4
Public recognition, fame, reputation	1.4	3.1	3.4
Interesting work, profession	9.1	19.6	2.9

The Spearman correlation coefficient was used to analyze the nature of the relationship between the most significant values for the studied groups. The obtained empirical values of the correlation analysis ranged from 0.615 to 0.998, $p < 0.001$. Thus, with regard to values such as health and family, there is a strong positive relationship ($r > 0.70 \leq 1.00$), and with regard to the values of education, material well-being and friendship, there is a moderate positive relationship ($r > 0.30 \leq 0.69$). The strength of the relationship between the variables has high statistical significance because the p-level of the correlation coefficient is less than the value of 0.001.

Correlation analysis allows us to conclude about the similarity of value priorities of Kazakhstani student youth regardless of their ethnicity and language of education. The top 5 values noted by the entire study sample included such nominations as health, family, education, freedom/independence (for all the studied categories of students without exception), material values/material well-being (for three groups: Russian-speaking Kazakhs, Russians and representatives of other ethnic groups), friendship/friends (for two groups: Russian-speaking Kazakhs and representatives of other ethnic groups).

It is evident that the utilization of language and the value orientations espoused play a pivotal role in the advancement of intercultural communication within a polylingual and multicultural student milieu. The closer the value systems of groups of young people are to each other in terms of their composition and structure, the higher the level of proficiency in the language of communication, the greater the mutual understanding and commonality between them. In other words, the level of quality observed in intercultural communication is higher when a significant degree of similarity in values is present and when a common language is used.

In the sphere of intergroup relations of Kazakhstani students we can state trusting relations based on the commonality of value attitudes. As has been demonstrated through the analysis of questionnaire responses and subsequent interviews with students, there is a greater degree of similarity in the values espoused by the multilingual groups of student youth in Kazakhstan, although each of the groups offers a distinctive interpretation of the values in question.

With respect to interethnic communication, Russian and Kazakh are the primary languages employed, whereas English is increasingly utilized among the younger generation. The active interaction of languages gives rise to the formation of specific Kazakh slang and distinctive speech constructions in the speech of students. To illustrate, the urban street-food chain 'Salam bro' has achieved considerable popularity in Kazakhstan. The term "salam" is a traditional greeting among Kazakhs, with its roots in Arab-Muslim culture. The term 'bro' is a neologism derived from the network jargon, which is a shortened form of the English word 'brother'. It is used to convey the meanings of 'brother', 'friend', and 'person'. The term is used to refer to both genders. The expression is employed as a greeting by students of all ethnic groups.

Students readily employ such phrases in their everyday discourse, including "Qudai zhazsa" (a Kazakh expression analogous to the Russian "If God gives"), "I will be there on Thursday", and "Oh my God, aitqandy uqpaisyn goi" (literally, "you don't understand words").

The utilization of a set of language means deemed appropriate in certain circumstances enables students to communicate successfully with each other. For young people in Kazakhstan, regardless of ethnicity, the ability to greet, say goodbye, express gratitude, and express sympathy in times of grief in ways that are accepted in traditional Kazakh culture is typical. These include expressions such as "Sələm!/Salam!" (Hello!), "Sau bol!" (Be well!), "Rakhmet!" (Thank you!), and "Koep rakhmet" (Thank you very much!). In

the context of the loss of loved ones, mourners are told "Imandy bolsyn!" (May he rest in peace).

Based on the interviews, it is possible to identify the features of key values and qualities of representatives of different ethnic groups of Kazakhstan, conditioned by their traditions and culture. In order to identify such values, two questions were asked: "Are there representatives of other ethnic groups in your environment (friends, acquaintances)?", "What do you value in them?" and "What do you think are the defining values of the ethnic group you represent?". Formulated in this way allowed respondents to analyze their own value system both 'from the inside' and 'from the outside': *"For my ethnos, above all, preservation of honour, decent behaviour in society. respect for elders, parents and all those around me. love for the motherland, faith in God. Gratuitous help is also on the list of values of my ethnos"* (Ossetian, female, 18 years old); *"Germans are known for their punctuality and reasonable frugality. This is about me"* (German, female, 18 years old); *"As a representative of Polish ethnicity, I think that our main value is patriotism, because Poles are very proud to be Polish. Our Catholic faith is also a determining factor of our identity. And, of course, family"* (Polish, female, 19 years old); *"Fortunately, I have a lot of close friends and acquaintances of different nationalities. I appreciate them simply for what they are, they are all very open, respectful, wise and the qualities of a person never depend on the colour of their passport or nationality... I think it is very important for Kazakhs to respect their elders, to honour traditions and customs in order to preserve their identity"* (Kazakh, female, 19 years old); *"I am just amazed by the Kazakh culture, especially their hospitality. I really like the national cuisine of Kazakhs, their attitude to people"* (Kazakh, female, 20 years old); *"In my neighbourhood, the majority of people are of Kazakh nationality. I appreciate in them hospitality, ability to support with a kind word, to help in a difficult moment. Besides, there are representatives of Russian nationality in my neighbourhood. In them I appreciate straightforwardness, honesty. In Poles I appreciate humour and ability to cheer up and listen. The defining values of Uzbeks are hospitality, family and kinship ties, traditions and customs, respect for elders, following religion"* (Uzbek, female, 20 years old); *"I think Russians really appreciate openness in people, as well as the absence of hypocrisy or duplicity in communication. I read once the opinion of foreigners about Russians: they often mention that Russians are a bit rude because they say what they think—without polite wrapping, without smiling, straight and to the face. I think this is the case"* (Russian, female, 23 years old).

Thus, in their statements the respondents name the values inherent, according to their observations, to the representatives of certain ethnic groups. The perceptions of students of different ethnic groups about the national traits of people of their own and other people coincide in many respects. It seems to reflect, firstly, the unity and even stereotypicality of opinions about positive national qualities, and secondly, the fact that representatives of different ethnic groups live in the country as a single society. In interviews, almost all respondents noted that in Kazakhstan one can observe, in general, tactfulness in interethnic relations, respect for traditions, customs and values, despite the breadth of their spectrum.

In the collective monograph 'Eurasian World: Values, Constants, Self-Organisation (2011)' provides interesting information about the values of young representatives of different ethnic groups. For example, it is noted that only 37.4% of Russians find it important to live among people of their own ethnicity (whereas among Kazakhs the share of such people was 63.0%).

A noticeably smaller share of Russian respondents than Kazakh respondents consider it important to have their own business, to be interested in politics, to know English, which creates an impression of higher passionarity (strong aspiration for something, obsession) of Kazakhs compared to Russians. One can note the difference in the attitude of young Kazakhs and Russians to education and career goals. For Kazakh youth, education is a tool for career advancement and strengthening their position in society. Knowledge of

the Kazakh language helps them in this, as career goals are often linked to the desire to work in government structures. Young Russians are more often oriented towards career prospects related to technology and freelance work. Russian-speaking and polylingual youth more often choose directions that provide opportunities for work outside Kazakhstan (international relations, information technology, computer science, etc.).

In separate interviews, students pay attention to the qualities of personality, which, in their opinion, are actualised in the modern world: *"In modern society people who are able to acquire knowledge independently are valuable. And for this purpose it would not hurt to have information literacy, the new generation should be able to manage gadgets"* (Kazakh, male, 20 years old); *"I have always admired educated, erudite people. Operating a colossal amount of information is a whole art, a perfected technique and a major skill in the eleventh century. In my eyes, being highly educated is a superpower. I think it is a key factor of success not only in career but also in personal growth"* (Kazakh, female, 18 years old).

The attitudes of young Kazakhs and Russians towards ethno-identity and patriotism are also different. For young Kazakhs, patriotism is often associated with supporting national traditions and strengthening Kazakh culture and language. Russian youth in Kazakhstan understand patriotism as support for the stability and well-being of the country.

As for the attitude to intercultural tolerance, it is demonstrated by young representatives of different nationalities. A distinctive feature is that Kazakhs show a high degree of intercultural tolerance and openness to international experience, actively learning English and Russian (in addition to their native Kazakh), while striving to preserve their own cultural roots. The cosmopolitanism of Russian respondents is expressed in their openness to international trends, culture and education mainly through Russian-language media and internet platforms.

Thus, the way individuals and groups perceive and interpret reality, and on the basis of their interpretation interact with the world, is transmitted through value priorities. Studying the values of Kazakhstani student youth within the framework of concepts established in the field of intercultural communication (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1992, 2012; Ting-Toomey, 2010, etc.) has enabled the observation of the evolution of their value orientations. The results obtained serve to corroborate the veracity of the initial hypothesis. Despite the existence of certain discrepancies in the value priorities of representatives of different ethnic groups among Kazakhstani students, a correlation can be observed between the level of proficiency in several languages, value orientations (such as family, respect, tolerance and individualism) and the dynamics of intercultural communication. The multilingual and multi-ethnic environment of Kazakhstan, coupled with language policy reforms that have been directed towards expanding the scope of the state language, Kazakh, while simultaneously preserving Russian and promoting English, have facilitated the development of successful intercultural communication. This enables students to interact with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds within the country and to integrate into the global cultural and professional space. Learning multiple languages enhances cognitive abilities, fosters tolerance and encourages the formation of a hybrid identity that combines elements of different cultures. Such conditions create a unique context for studying the influence of language and cultural environment on the value orientations and behavioural patterns of Kazakhstani youth.

6. Conclusions

The values of Kazakhstani student youth reflect a complex interaction of traditional cultural norms, modern influences and the socio-political context. Kazakh youth often adhere to traditional values, considering them necessary for success in life (Maylykutova, 2023). Factors such as urban and rural background and religiosity significantly influence

students' commitment to cultural values. Youth's values are influenced by a combination of global and local cultural elements, resulting in different views of identity and ethics (Maylykutova, 2023).

Recent socio-political events, such as the January protests, have raised awareness of Kazakhstani patriotism and the need for educational reforms that reflect national values. Youth participation in these events indicates a shift towards greater political participation and a reassessment of their value orientations (Konyrbaeva, 2022).

This study has shown that Kazakhstani student youth prioritize both moral qualities and socio-economic success. This multifaceted value system is shaped by historical events and the ongoing dialogue between local and global cultures.

A distinctive model of language policy has been devised in Kazakhstan with the objective of reinforcing tolerance and fostering effective intercultural communication. This model is founded upon the principles of polylingualism and multi-ethnicity, which enables the consideration of the historical, cultural and social idiosyncrasies of the country. The parallel development of Kazakh, Russian and English provides the foundation for the formation of polyglots, individuals capable of effective interaction in both local and global contexts. The implementation of educational reforms, such as the introduction of trilingual education, has the dual benefit of enhancing language proficiency and reinforcing the sense of collective identity within society.

In contrast to other post-Soviet countries, Kazakhstan has not experienced ethnic confrontations among its student population. This can be attributed, at least in part, to the country's language policy and its long-standing efforts to strengthen inter-ethnic dialogue. The increasing proficiency in the state language among individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the pervasive command of Russian, and the promotion of English as a language of global integration facilitate the creation of a harmonious environment for cultural exchange. This model demonstrates that the development of a multilingual identity and the consideration of the interests of all ethnic groups can be effective strategies for strengthening intercultural interaction and social harmony.

The findings of the study can serve as a basis for the development of effective social and cultural policies that foster mutual understanding, promote successful cultural dialogue, and strengthen ties between different ethnic groups and communities living in the same region and sharing common historical roots and cultural heritage. Future research potential lies in conducting extensive studies of a crucial phenomenon of the modern world—the transformation of human values, especially among young people. The results of such research will provide society with valuable insights into the significant processes occurring in this demographic group.

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