

R.Sharipova¹*, D.Shormanbayeva¹, E.Ivleva¹, A. Sivodedova¹
NPJSC «Abylkas Saginov Karaganda Technical University», Karaganda, Kazakhstan;
*e-mail: atkchild@gmail.com

INTERETHNIC RELATIONS AND ETHNO-CULTURAL IDENTITY OF STUDENTS IN A MULTIETHNIC SOCIETY

Abstract

The development of interethnic relations is considered one of the principal factors underpinning the progressive democratic development of a modern state. Within the context of the Republic of Kazakhstan, interethnic concord, the strengthening of mutual understanding, and the maintenance of ethnocultural diversity constitute foundational principles of state policy. The entire socialization apparatus of Kazakhstani society is oriented toward the ideal of «unity in diversity», fostering a culture of mutual respect, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence among disparate ethnic groups.

The aim of this study is to examine and analyse value orientations in an interethnic context, as well as the level of knowledge concerning the culture, traditions, and customs of respondents' own ethnic groups within a polyethnic student environment. The research was conducted in accordance with established methodological approaches to sociological surveying and is grounded in both domestic and international literature on interethnic relations, ethnicity, ethnic identity, traditional cultural practices, tolerance, and intolerance.

The research instruments comprised a standardized questionnaire administered in the state (Kazakh) and Russian languages; empirical data were collected via an online survey. The analysis reveals a stable relationship between educational attainment and the degree of knowledge about one's ethnic culture, traditions, and customs: one quarter of respondents rate their knowledge as excellent, while one half judge it to be good. This positive dynamic manifests across the principal social and ethnic subgroups of the sample. The significance attached to ethnocultural norms and values is likewise high: for approximately one third of participants these norms are of priority importance, and for another half they play a substantial value role. Over fifty percent of respondents indicate a need for regular contact with members of their ethnic group, a need they predominantly satisfy through family ties, communication in their native language, and participation in ethnocultural centres. Moreover, an overwhelming majority express pride in their ethnic affiliation, indicating a high level of positive ethnic identity, continuity of cultural transmission, and emotional attachment to their ethnic community.

Keywords: interethnic relations; ethnoculture; education; values; attitudes; interethnic concord; conflict; cultural diversity.

*Р.М. Шарипова¹, Д.Г. Шорманбаева¹, Е.Н. Ивлева¹, А.В. Сиводедова¹
«Әбілқас Сағынов атындағы Қарағанды техникалық университеті» КеАҚ, Қарағанды қ.,
Қазақстан Республикасы*

ПОЛИЭТНИКАЛЫҚ ҚОҒАМ ЖАҒДАЙЫНДАҒЫ СТУДЕНТТЕРДІҢ ЭТНОМӘДЕНИ БІРЕГЕЙЛІГІ ЖӘНЕ ЭТНОСАРАЛЫҚ ҚАТЫНАСТАРЫ

Аңдатпа

Межэтникалық қатынастардың дамуы заманауи мемлекеттің демократиялық әрі ілгерінді дамуының негізгі факторларының бірі ретінде қарастырылады. Қазақстан Республикасының жағдайында этносаралық келісім, өзара түсіністікті нығайту және этномәдени әралуандықты сақтау мемлекеттік саясаттың базалық қағидаттары болып табылады. Қазақстан қоғамын

элеуметтендіру жүйесі «алуан түрліліктегі бірлік» идеясын жүзеге асыруға, өзара құрмет, толеранттылық және әртүрлі этностардың бейбіт қатар өмір сүру мәдениетін қалыптастыруға бағытталған.

Зерттеудің мақсаты - полиэтникалық студенттік орта жағдайында этносаралық контексте құндылықтық бағдарларды, сондай-ақ өз этносының мәдениеті, дәстүрлері мен әдет-ғұрыптарын білу деңгейін зерделеу және талдау. Зерттеу социологиялық сауалнамалардың классикалық әдістемелік тәсілдеріне сәйкес жүргізілді. Оның негізіне этносаралық қатынастар, этникалылық, этникалық бірегейлік, дәстүрлі мәдени практикалар, толеранттылық пен интолеранттылық мәселелерін қарастырған отандық және шетелдік ғылыми әдебиеттерде тұжырымдалған қағидалар алынды.

Зерттеу құралы ретінде мемлекеттік және орыс тілдерінде әзірленген стандартизделген сауалнама қолданылды. Эмпирикалық деректер онлайн-сауалнама арқылы жиналды. Талдау нәтижесінде білім деңгейі мен өз этносының мәдениеті, дәстүрлері мен әдет-ғұрыптарын білу деңгейі арасында тұрақты өзара байланыс бар екендігі анықталды. Респонденттердің әр төртіншісі өзінің осы саладағы білімін жоғары деңгейде деп бағаласа, жартысы - жақсы деңгейде деп бағалады. Мұндай оң динамика іріктеменің барлық негізгі элеуметтік және этникалық ішкі топтарында байқалады.

Этномәдени нормалар мен құндылықтардың маңыздылығы да жоғары деңгейде көрініс тапты: сауалнамаға қатысушылардың әр үшіншісі оларды басымдық ретінде бағаласа, тағы жартысы оларды елеулі құндылық рөлге ие деп санайды. Сауалнамаға қатысқандардың 50%-дан астамы өз этникалық тобының өкілдерімен тұрақты қарым-қатынас қажеттілігін атап өтті. Бұл қажеттілік, негізінен, отбасылық байланыстар, ана тілінде сөйлесу және этномәдени орталықтардың қызметіне қатысу арқылы жүзеге асырылады. Сонымен қатар, респонденттердің басым көпшілігі өзінің этникалық тиістілігіне мақтаныш сезімін білдірді. Бұл позитивті этникалық бірегейліктің жоғары деңгейін, мәдени сабақтастықтың сақталуын және этникалық қауымдастыққа эмоционалдық байланыстылықты айғақтайды.

Түйін сөздер: этносаралық қатынастар; этномәдениет; білім беру; құндылықтар; ұстанымдар; этносаралық келісім; қақтығыс; мәдени әралуандылық.

Шарипова Р.М.¹, Шорманбаева Д.Г.¹, Ивлева Е.Н.¹ Сиводедова А.В.¹

¹НАО «Карагандинский технический университет имени Абылкаса Сагинова»

г.Караганда, Республика Казахстан

МЕЖЭТНИЧЕСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ И ЭТНОКУЛЬТУРНАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ СТУДЕНТОВ В УСЛОВИЯХ ПОЛИЭТНИЧЕСКОГО ОБЩЕСТВА

Аннотация

Развитие межэтнических отношений рассматривается как один из важнейших факторов демократического поступательного развития современного государства. В условиях Республики Казахстан межэтническое согласие, укрепление взаимопонимания и поддержание этнокультурного многообразия являются базовыми принципами государственной политики. Вся система социализации казахстанского общества ориентирована на идею единства в многообразии, формирование культуры взаимного уважения, толерантности и мирного сосуществования различных этносов. Цель исследования - изучение и анализ ценностных установок в межэтническом контексте, а также уровня знания культуры, традиций и обычаев своего этноса в условиях полиэтнической студенческой среды. Исследование проводилось в соответствии с классическими методологическими подходами социологических опросов. В его основу легли положения, сформулированные как в отечественной, так и в зарубежной научной литературе по вопросам межэтнических отношений, этничности, этнической идентичности, традиционных культурных практик, толерантности и интолерантности. Инструментарий

исследования включал стандартизированную анкету, разработанную на государственном и русском языках. Сбор эмпирических данных осуществлялся посредством онлайн-опроса. По результатам анализа установлена устойчивая взаимосвязь между уровнем образования и знанием культуры, традиций и обычаев своего этноса. Каждый четвертый респондент оценивает уровень своих знаний в данной сфере как высокий, половина - как хороший. Такая положительная динамика прослеживается во всех ключевых социальных и этнических подгруппах выборки. Значимость этнокультурных норм и ценностей также представлена на высоком уровне: для каждого третьего участника опроса они имеют приоритетное значение, ещё для половины респондентов - существенную ценностную роль. Более 50% опрошенных отмечают потребность в регулярном общении с представителями своей этнической группы, которую они реализуют преимущественно через семейные связи, общение на родном языке и участие в деятельности этнокультурных центров. Кроме того, доминирующее большинство респондентов выражают чувство гордости за свою этническую принадлежность, что свидетельствует о высоком уровне позитивной этнической идентичности, сохранении культурной преемственности и эмоциональной привязанности к этническому сообществу.

Ключевые слова: межэтнические отношения; этнокультура; образование; ценности; установки; межэтническое согласие; конфликт; культурное многообразие.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic identity among Kazakhstani student youth is shaped by family socialization, the educational environment, and the broader society's cultural diversity. Differences are observable in ethnocultural self-identification between Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking youth. Overall, young people's value orientations are characterised by a high level of tolerance: 80% of respondents expressed respect both for their own people and for the cultures of other ethnic groups. Ethnocommunicative activity - including the need for interaction with one's ethnic group, proficiency in the native language, and participation in ethnocultural events - is a crucial factor in sustaining ethnic identity. Educational institutions influence students' tolerant attitudes through programmes and initiatives, though coverage and motivation remain insufficient. Risks of declining ethnocultural awareness are most pronounced among Russian-speaking youth and students aged 22-25, highlighting the need for targeted educational and cultural integration policies.

In the context of rapid social transformations and the growing ethnocultural diversity of society, the study of interethnic relations acquires particular significance as one of the key factors of sustainable and democratic development. An urgent problem is the necessity of finding a balance between the preservation of ethnocultural identity and the creation of integrative mechanisms conducive to the formation of a unified national identity. In this regard, the preservation and development of the positive aspects of ethnic diversity become a priority condition for ensuring the long-term stability and progressive development of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Moreover, under these circumstances, the study of ethnic socialization processes among youth-who are especially receptive to transformations and constitute a social group capable of both strengthening and potentially destabilizing interethnic communications - assumes particular importance.

The contemporary system of socialization in Kazakhstan is oriented toward cultivating attitudes of «unity in diversity». However, the degree to which these values are internalized among young people, the level of their ethnocultural awareness, and the depth of interethnic interaction remain subjects of scholarly debate. Student youth, being in an active phase of personal and civic formation, represent a particularly valuable and representative group for analysing the current state of interethnic attitudes and identities. The aim of this study is to analyse value orientations and the level of ethnocultural awareness among students within Kazakhstan's multiethnic educational environment. The research addresses such aspects as knowledge of the culture, traditions, and customs of one's own ethnic group; the significance of ethnic norms and values; and the degree of need for ethnic belonging and interethnic interaction. Questions in the field of interethnic relations have been examined by both domestic and international scholars. A review of the literature

encompassed research on interethnic relations, ethnicity, ethnic identity, traditions, tolerance, and intolerance. The research tasks were formulated as follows: to identify the nature of value orientations in the educational process among student youth (levels of tolerance/intolerance; ethnocultural specificity of value orientations; attitudes toward other ethnic groups, etc.); to reveal the relationship between ethnic identity and the value orientations of student youth; to establish the influence of the educational environment (universities and colleges) on the formation of value orientations. The methodological basis of the study includes sociological surveying using a quantitative data collection method (online questionnaire), which makes it possible to identify stable trends and correlations between educational level, ethnic self-identification, and attitudes toward interethnic interaction. The research instrument was a standardized questionnaire prepared in both the state and Russian languages. Data collection was carried out through an online survey (Google Forms) among student youth in the Republic of Kazakhstan aged 18 to 34. The study tested four hypotheses: the institutional orientation of the educational environment contributes to the formation of positive value orientations; familial socialization patterns influence the level of interethnic tolerance; voluntary participation in ethnocultural initiatives is associated with value-based engagement; interest in interethnic interaction influences student's educational and social adaptation.

The sampling framework was based on official data regarding the student population of higher and secondary vocational educational institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The results of the study reveal a consistent relationship between educational level and knowledge of the culture, traditions, and customs of one's ethnic group. One in four respondents rated their knowledge of their ethnic culture, traditions, and customs as excellent, while one in two rated it as good. This dominant trend was observed across most of the social groups studied. For one in three respondents, the norms and values of their ethnic group are of paramount importance, while for one in two they are significant. More than half of the respondents reported a need for regular communication with members of their ethnic group, which they primarily fulfil through family ties, interaction in their native language, and participation in ethnocultural centres. The overwhelming majority of respondents expressed pride in their ethnic affiliation.

The analysis conducted has not only scientific but also applied significance, as it allows for an assessment of the effectiveness of existing mechanisms of interethnic socialization among youth, as well as the identification of problem areas requiring institutional intervention and the improvement of educational and cultural strategies.

Literature review

Contemporary research on ethnic identity and interethnic relations in Kazakhstan is predominantly oriented toward macro-level analysis and addresses issues of state policy, ideological strategies, and collective historical memory. Several key theoretical approaches are evident within the domestic scholarly tradition, each proposing distinct interpretations of the mechanisms responsible for identity formation and interethnic communication.

First, the state-regulatory approach is widely represented; it concentrates on analysing institutional mechanisms for the governance of interethnic relations within the so-called «Kazakhstani model» (e.g., Babakumarov[1]; Kusherbaev[2]; Ileuova[3]). Studies in this vein primarily delineate the normative framework and conceptualise the principle of “unity in diversity” as an instrument for ethnopolitical stability.

Second, within the politico-modernisation discourse (e.g., D'yachenko[4]), attention shifts to the challenges of democratization, the transformation of national identity under conditions of globalization, and political modernisation. Ethnocultural identity is here framed as an element of modernisation-related tensions or conflict.

A value-idealist perspective also occupies an important position- notably within religious-studies and philosophical traditions (e.g., Baitenova [5]; Nysanbaev and Bizhanov[6]) - emphasising the spiritual and moral foundations of interethnic concord and national self-determination. While these contributions establish important conceptual orientations, they are

frequently deficient in empirical substantiation at the level of everyday practices. Research employing the concept of multiple identity (e.g., Kadyrzhanov [7]), which posits the coexistence and potential tension of several identity layers within a single individual, is likewise significant; nonetheless, its empirical application in the Kazakhstani context remains limited.

Some authors (e.g., Zharkynbekova [8]) have undertaken empirical attempts to document the value orientations of student youth in a polyethnic environment; however, such studies are commonly geographically constrained (mostly situated in large cities) and insufficiently account for the influence of the digital environment, new media, and transnational cultural patterns on identity formation.

The foregoing analysis highlights several substantive gaps in the domestic literature: insufficient empirical investigation of microsocial mechanisms of ethnic identity formation (family influence, peers, online contexts); a paucity of comparative regional studies (urban/rural, north/south, etc.); a lack of longitudinal research capable of tracking dynamics in value orientations; and weak operationalisation of constructs such as «ethnic tolerance», «ethnocentrism», and «cultural alienation» into valid indicators and scales.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to address these lacunae by offering an empirically grounded account of student youth value orientations within a polyethnic setting. Special attention is given to regional diversity, educational attainment, the role of educational institutions, and the influence of digital media on ethnocultural self-identification. The data obtained provide an important resource for the refinement of educational and youth policies aimed at strengthening interethnic tolerance and preventing cultural alienation.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in accordance with standard procedures for rapid sociological research. At the preparatory stage a research programme was elaborated in which the objectives, tasks, hypotheses, operationalization of key concepts, and the logic of data collection and processing were defined. On the basis of this programme a bilingual questionnaire (Kazakh - state language and Russian) was developed.

Data were collected via an online survey implemented through the Google Forms platform. The survey targeted student youth of the Republic of Kazakhstan aged 18 to 34 years. Sampling frame and procedure: the empirical universe comprised young people enrolled in higher education institutions and secondary vocational schools across various regions of Kazakhstan. The sample was formed using a combined approach that integrated route, random, and quota sampling techniques, thereby allowing the researchers to account for relevant socio-demographic characteristics of the youth population. Quotas were established for the following independent variables: sex (male/female), age (age group breakdowns), ethnic affiliation (Kazakh, Russian, other), marital status (single/married, etc.), type of educational institution (university/college), and region of residence. Representativeness was ensured on the basis of official statistical data on the composition of the student contingent in the Republic of Kazakhstan (data provided by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan). At a 95% confidence level and a permissible margin of error of $\pm 5\%$, the sample size comprised 1,200 respondents, which meets the requirements for representative quantitative analysis. Statistical processing and analytical rationale: data were processed using SPSS Statistics v.23. Descriptive statistics and correlational analysis were applied. Correlational analysis was selected to establish statistical relationships among variables reflecting (inter alia) the level of value orientations; institutional and familial orientations toward tolerance; motivation to participate in interethnic activities; and the degree of social and educational adaptation. This approach permitted quantitative testing of the stated hypotheses and an assessment of the direction and strength of associations among key factors influencing interethnic relations. Control of social desirability bias: to mitigate the influence of social desirability (the tendency of respondents to provide socially approved answers), the following measures were implemented: the survey was anonymous (respondents did not provide names or identifying information);

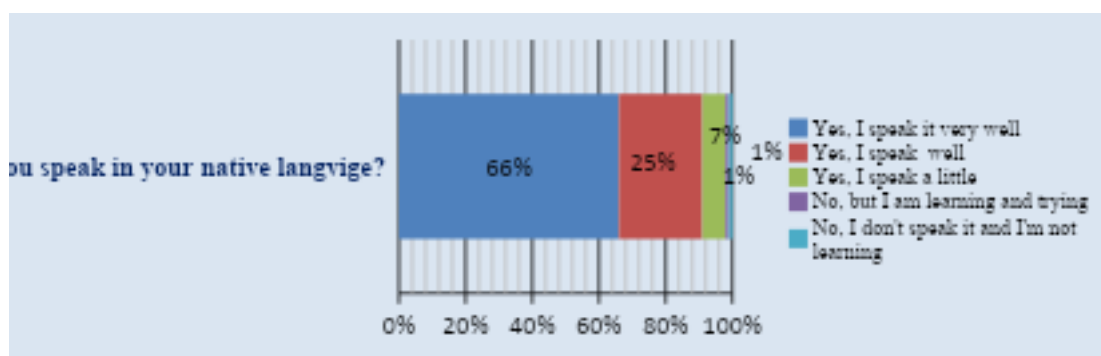
questionnaire items were formulated in a neutral, balanced manner without evaluative wording; and the introductory instructions emphasised voluntariness of participation and the absence of «correct» answers.

RESULTS

1. Linguistic Identification and Knowledge of Ethnic Culture

According to the results of the study, the majority of respondents demonstrated a high level of proficiency in their native language: 66% reported speaking it fluently, while a further 25% indicated good proficiency. Only 7% reported partial proficiency, and 1% each acknowledged either no proficiency with attempts at learning, or complete indifference toward the language. These data suggest a relatively high degree of preservation of native language within the youth cohort, serving as an indicator of the stability of ethnocultural identity. At the same time, knowledge of one's ethnic culture, traditions, and customs was distributed as follows: 25% rated their knowledge as excellent, 50% as good, 20% as satisfactory, 5% as insufficient, and 3% as absent. While positive evaluations predominate, the presence of respondents with low awareness indicates a gradual weakening of cultural transmission in certain social groups. Statistical analysis revealed a significant correlation between educational level and knowledge of ethnoculture, thereby confirming the role of educational institutions in sustaining and transmitting cultural norms, traditions, and values. Higher levels of education are generally associated with broader cultural awareness and more conscious attitudes toward one's ethnic heritage. The results thus highlight the significance of both institutional (educational) and familial contexts as crucial environments fostering not only stable ethnic identity but also the development of intercultural tolerance.

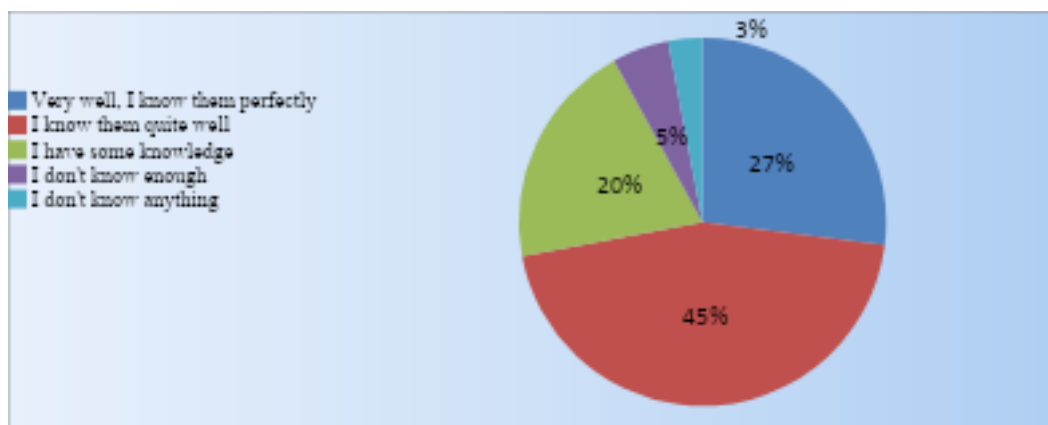
Figure 1. Level of native language proficiency



2. Value Attitudes toward Ethnic Belonging

The majority of respondents (80%) expressed pride in their ethnic affiliation. Conversely, 14% reported an absence of such pride, predominantly among youth aged 22-25 from Russian-speaking and other minority groups. A further 6% preferred not to disclose their ethnicity. These findings point to the existence of a subgroup with weakened ethnic identification, which may signal risks of cultural alienation or assimilation within a polyethnic environment. The evaluation of the importance of ethnocultural norms and values reveals a significant trend: 33% of respondents regard them as “very important,” and 50% as “important.” Only 11% considered them non-essential, with the highest proportion among Russian-speaking and minority youth (15%). This divergence suggests differences in the degree of ethnic involvement and orientation toward one's culture depending on sociocultural context. The results underscore the influence of both family upbringing and institutional environments (schools, media, cultural institutions) on the formation of ethnic identity and value orientations. The decline in ethnic salience among some youth groups requires targeted integration strategies aimed at strengthening intercultural dialogue and preserving cultural diversity.

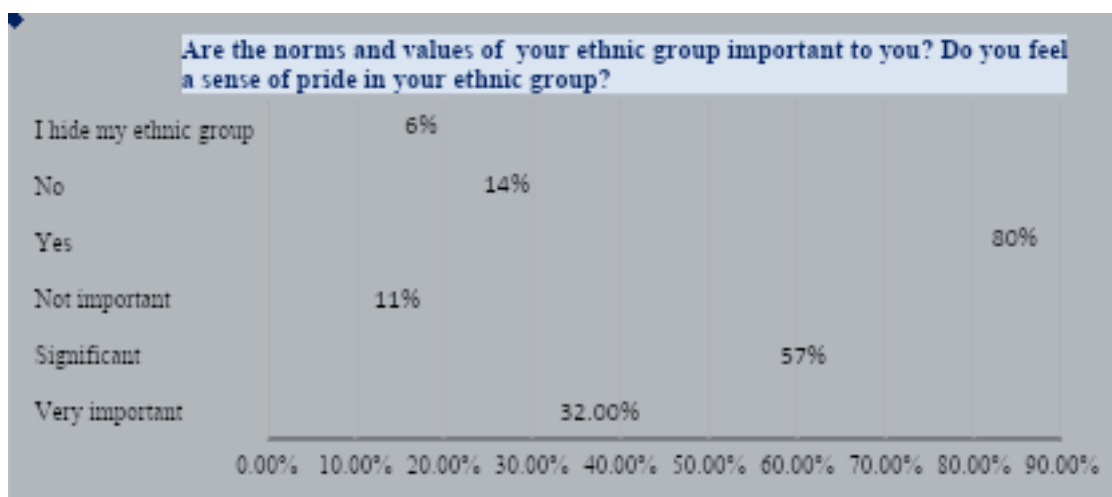
Figure 2. Level of knowledge of ethnic culture, traditions, and customs



3. Need for Ethnocommunication

Analysis of indicators reflecting the need of student youth for communication within their ethnic group revealed varying levels of ethnocommunicative activity, which in turn constitute an important factor in either maintaining or weakening ethnic identity. Specifically, 56% of respondents reported a pronounced need for ethnic communication, indicating strong ethnic identification and a desire to preserve cultural and linguistic belonging. At the same time, 20% reported a deficit of communication in their native language, pointing to insufficient conditions for meeting this need within their social environment. Approximately one quarter (25%) indicated no such need at all, with this tendency particularly pronounced among Russian-speaking youth aged 22-25. This suggests a lower level of ethnic self-identification or an orientation toward universal, supra-ethnic values. Variations in ethnocommunicative activity thus reflect differing degrees of integration into ethnic communities and may serve as indicators of tendencies toward either assimilation or the preservation of ethnic identity.

Figure 3. Significance of ethnocultural norms and values

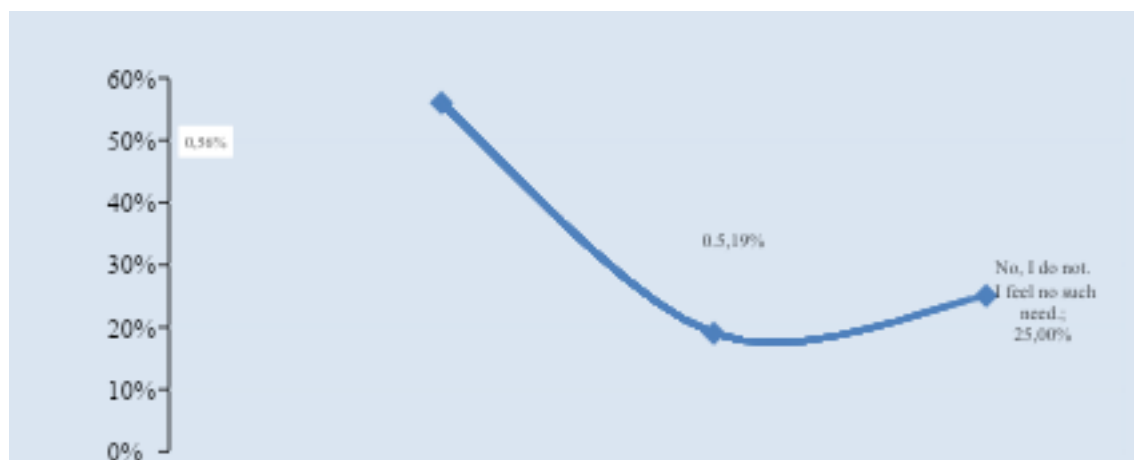


4. Family Context and Ethnic Conflict

Empirical data show that for a significant proportion of student youth (35%), the family environment is free from negative conversations or conflicts related to the ethnic affiliation of one parent. This suggests the presence of stable attitudes of ethnic tolerance within many families. However, 9% reported periodic conflicts of an ethnic nature, indicating latent tensions in interethnic interaction, particularly in mixed families where parents belong to different ethnic groups. Notably,

such conflicts were three times more frequent among Kazakh-speaking youth compared to other mixed families. Persistent negative attitudes, expressed through constant disputes of an ethnic nature, were recorded in 5% of cases, again more prevalent among Kazakh-speaking students. These results suggest that Kazakh-speaking youth more frequently encounter ethnic conflict within the family context, possibly due to the greater salience of ethnic identity for this group, as well as differing perceptions of cultural norms and values in mixed households. Overall, 73% reported no manifestations of hostility toward other ethnic groups in their family environment. Nevertheless, 17% indicated periodic discussions containing ethnic prejudice, particularly common among Kazakh-speaking youth aged 18-22. These findings highlight the heterogeneity of the family environment in relation to ethnic tolerance and its dual potential both to strengthen and to undermine interethnic respect and acceptance.

Figure 6. Level of need for ethnocommunication



5. Influence of Educational Institutions

The analysis of educational institutions' influence on the formation of value orientations among students shows that 37% of respondents acknowledge a strong impact of their university or college. In other words, one in three students recognises the active role of education in shaping personal and social orientations. A further 50% noted partial influence, suggesting untapped potential within educational environments. By contrast, 11% denied any influence of their educational institution, with this position more common among Russian-speaking students, minority groups, men, and youth aged 22-25. In these groups, the rate of denial was 1.5 times higher than the average, pointing to lower levels of engagement or inadequate adaptation of programmes to sociocultural diversity.

The findings demonstrate a positive correlation between the degree of institutional influence and the level of value orientations: the more active and targeted the educational programmes and practices, the higher the students' awareness of personal and societal values. However, the 11% who reported no influence highlight the need to expand and improve the effectiveness of value-oriented components in higher and vocational education.

6. Participation in Interethnic Initiatives

Responses to the question «Do you participate in activities aimed at strengthening interethnic relations held at your university or college?» revealed diverse forms of student engagement in interethnic interaction within the educational environment. Frequent participation was reported by 14% of respondents, occasional involvement by 23%, and rare participation by 22%. At the same time, 31% reported never having participated in interethnic initiatives, which may reflect both low motivation and insufficient informational outreach by educational institutions. Indeed, 10% expressed willingness to participate but were unaware of the existence of such programmes. The data on the nature of participation are also noteworthy: 33% reported voluntary and interested

involvement, 15% indicated formal participation without genuine engagement, and 8% reported administrative coercion. The positive correlation observed between interest and voluntariness suggests the presence of meaningful intrinsic motivation among a portion of students involved in interethnic initiatives. This underscores the effectiveness of approaches oriented toward the cultivation of internal value orientations rather than mere formal compliance. At the same time, the absence of a direct relationship between interest in participation and adaptation to interethnic environments points to the need for further analysis of additional factors such as personal experience of interethnic communication, ethnic affiliation, linguistic environment, and social activity.

Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of informational accessibility, voluntariness, and substantive appeal of initiatives aimed at fostering interethnic tolerance, as prerequisites for increasing student participation in institutionalized forms of interethnic interaction.

Figure 7. Student participation in interethnic initiatives

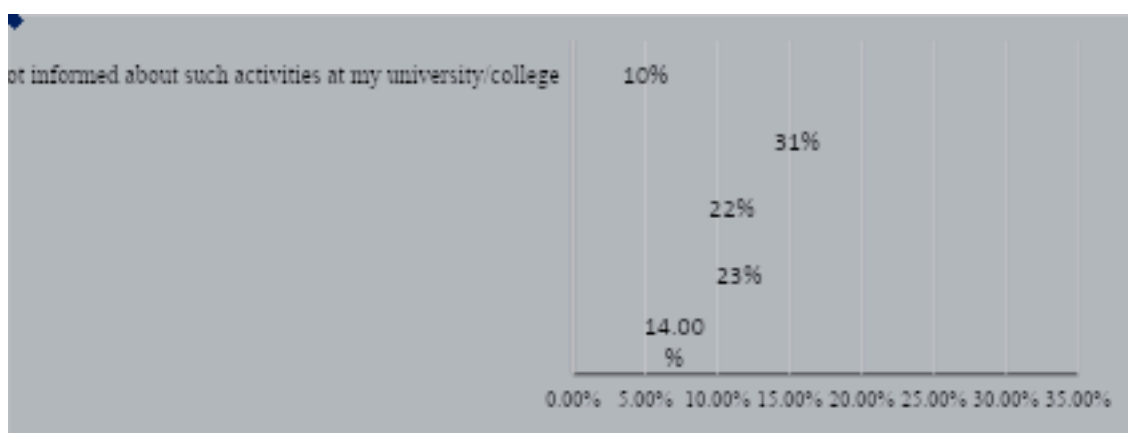
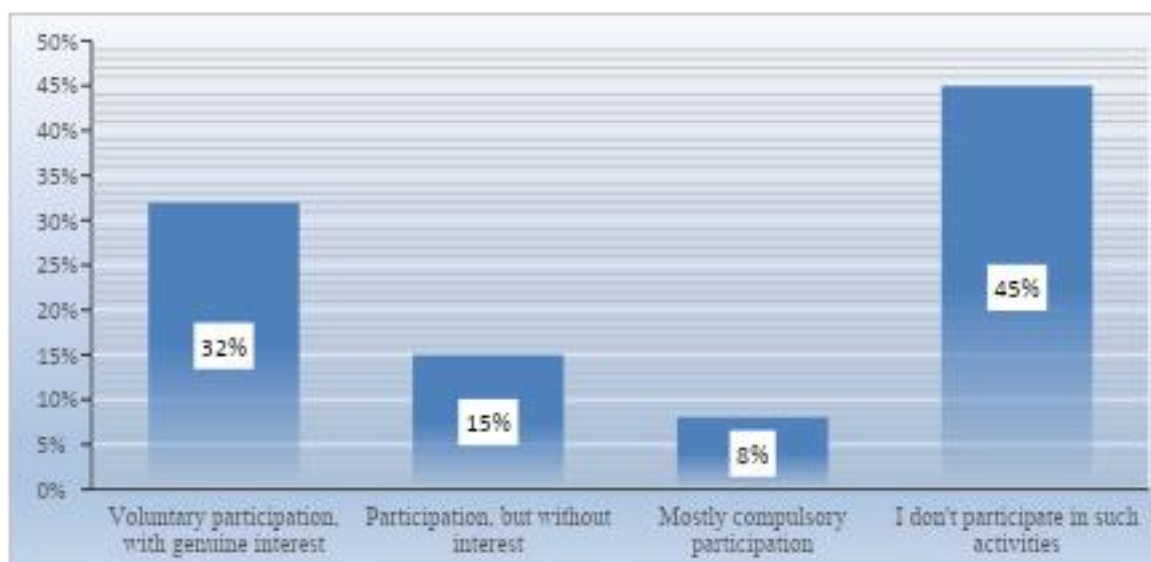


Figure 8. Nature of participation in interethnic initiatives



DISCUSSION

Within the framework of this study, four hypotheses concerning the factors influencing the formation of value orientations, the level of tolerance, and the degree of ethnocultural involvement in a polyethnic student environment were tested.

1. Institutional orientation and value orientations. The findings confirm the hypothesis that the presence of specialized university programmes aimed at promoting interethnic dialogue and intercultural communication positively correlates with higher levels of tolerance among students, as well as with the salience of ethnocultural norms and traditions. These results underscore the role of educational institutions as key conduits of state policy in fostering civic identity and interethnic concord. The evidence supports earlier international research on the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms in multicultural education [9]. Universities that actively implement inclusive strategies play a critical role in strengthening civic identity.

2. Familial orientation, socialization, and tolerance. The data demonstrate a consistent relationship between family-based socialization and the level of interethnic tolerance among students. In families that cultivate respect for other cultures and recognize the value of diversity, youth display higher levels of acceptance of ethnocultural differences and reduced propensity for conflict. This finding highlights the significance of the family as a primary channel of socialization and a foundation for tolerant consciousness, aligning with international research on the influence of familial socialization on values of tolerance [10],[11].

3. Voluntary participation in ethnocultural initiatives and value engagement. The results indicate that voluntary student participation in ethnocultural and interethnic initiatives correlates with stronger positive attitudes toward cultural diversity and greater intrinsic motivation for interethnic engagement. This suggests that both the existence of institutional programmers and the degree of internal motivation substantially affect the depth of value-based involvement in interethnic interaction. This conclusion is consistent with findings emphasizing the importance of individual agency in processes of cultural adaptation [12].

4. Interest in interethnic initiatives and social adaptation. Partial confirmation was obtained for the hypothesis linking interest in interethnic initiatives with educational and social adaptation. While some participants demonstrated high involvement, in other cases participation did not yield significant improvements in integration indicators. This underscores the need for further analysis of the substantive and motivational dimensions of such initiatives, consistent with theoretical frameworks on acculturative stress and cultural fit [13].

Taken together, the findings point to the necessity of adopting a comprehensive, multi-level strategy for cultivating ethnocultural tolerance among youth. The effectiveness of such a strategy is contingent on the synergistic interaction of institutional (educational, cultural, informational) and familial-social mechanisms of socialization, which significantly shape value orientations and models of interethnic interaction. Moreover, the role of students' internal motivation emerges as a crucial dimension, reflecting levels of reflexivity, the internalization of tolerant norms, and readiness to embrace sociocultural diversity as a social resource.

The results also have substantial applied implications. They justify the creation and integration of academic modules focused on interethnic dialogue, tolerance, and respect for cultural diversity (e.g., «Ethnic Diversity and Intercultural Communication in the Republic of Kazakhstan»). The findings further demonstrate the significant influence of the family environment, which can serve as both a source of tolerance and a locus of ethnic conflict. Accordingly, methodological approaches should be developed to work with families in order to prevent the spread of xenophobia and ethnic prejudice. In the domain of youth policy, the study highlights the importance of expanding voluntary ethnocultural programmes that emphasize personal interest and self-development opportunities. The results also point to differential levels of ethnic adaptation and tolerance across linguistic and age-based groups, underscoring the need for integrative strategies such as multifunctional ethnocultural centers at universities, as well as initiatives addressing barriers and conflicts in mixed families and student groups with due regard for ethnic and linguistic specificity.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates a relatively high degree of ethnocultural specificity in the value orientations of Kazakhstani student youth. Eighty percent of respondents exhibited tolerant attitudes, endorsing the statement: «I love my people, the culture of my people, and I respect the language and culture of other peoples». This indicates a predominance of orientations toward interethnic respect and peaceful coexistence in a multiethnic environment. However, it is noteworthy that 17% of respondents expressed ethnocentric views, prioritizing only their own culture while showing indifference to others. Furthermore, 3% declared a lack of affinity for their own people and culture, signalling potential risks of weakened ethnic identity in the context of globalization and cultural standardization. A clear correlation was established between educational attainment and knowledge of one's ethnic culture, traditions, and customs, underscoring the role of educational institutions in developing ethnocultural competence. Comparative analysis with international research (Eurobarometer, World Values Survey) [14], [15] indicates that Kazakhstan occupies an intermediate position globally in terms of ethnic tolerance and identity. However, Kazakhstani youth report higher levels of positive ethnocultural self-identification compared to peers in certain Eastern European countries, likely reflecting the impact of deliberate state policies aimed at interethnic concord. The recommendations derived from this research include: the development and integration of educational modules in universities and colleges aimed at cultivating intercultural competence and tolerance; systematic support for students displaying signs of cultural alienation, social maladaptation, or disengagement from ethnocultural practices; professional development courses for educators, mentors, and youth specialists focusing on ethnocultural sensitivity, prevention of xenophobia, and creation of inclusive educational environments; regular monitoring of students' ethnocultural competence, including the incorporation of ethnocultural indicators into the evaluation of youth and educational policy effectiveness. Future research directions include the study of factors contributing to cultural alienation, particularly the role of social networks and digital media in shaping ethnic identity; analysis of the relationship between ethnic identity and behaviour in crisis situations (including protest activity, migration intentions, and susceptibility to radicalization); and assessments of the effectiveness of existing interethnic programmes in higher education institutions in order to enhance their design and implementation.

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