

ҚАЗАҚСТАН ЖӘНЕ ШЕТЕЛ ҒАЛЫМДАРЫНЫҢ
ОРТАҚ ҒЫЛЫМИ ЗЕРТТЕУЛЕРІ
СОВМЕСТНЫЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ УЧЕНЫХ
КАЗАХСТАНА И ЗАРУБЕЖЬЯ
JOINT RESEARCHES OF SCIENTISTS OF KAZAKHSTAN AND ABROAD

IRSTI: 04.51.53

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51889/2959-6270.2026.93.1.012>

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INDEPENDENT LIVING CHALLENGES AMONG ORPHANAGE GRADUATES
IN KAZAKHSTAN

Abstract

This article offers a theoretically informed and critically grounded analysis of the structural, relational, and psychosocial constraints encountered by orphanage graduates in their transition to independent adulthood. Drawing on qualitative methods including semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with residents, caregivers, social workers, and field experts, the study moves beyond descriptive assessment to interrogate the institutional configurations that shape post-care trajectories. The authors argue that the difficulties experienced by orphanage graduates are not reducible to individual deficits but reflect structurally embedded discontinuities between institutional care and societal integration. Empirical findings indicate persistent deficits in familial and relational capital, limited preparation in practical life competencies (e.g., domestic management, financial planning, legal literacy), and heightened exposure to precarious employment and housing markets, particularly in smaller urban contexts. These material constraints intersect with psychosocial vulnerabilities attachment instability, diminished self-efficacy, and distrust thereby reinforcing patterns of marginalization. This convergence suggests a systemic underinvestment in capability formation within institutional environments, where custodial stability often supersedes developmental empowerment. Although formal social and psychological services are nominally available, their implementation remains fragmented and temporally limited. The resulting policy gap contributes to dependency orientations and misconceptions regarding state support, which, when combined with low financial literacy and weak legal awareness, perpetuate cycles of socio-economic precarity. The authors interpret these patterns as indicative of structural bias within welfare frameworks that prioritize short-term protection over long-term integration. The article advances a policy-oriented framework advocating integrated, multi-disciplinary interventions that embed life-skills education, sustained psychological support, mentorship, and community-based inclusion within a longitudinal support architecture. Such recalibration, the authors contend, is essential for transforming institutional care from custodial provision to emancipatory social integration.

Keywords: social integration, life skills, financial literacy, social services, youth marginalization.

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ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ БАЛАЛАР ҮЙІ ТҮЛЕКТЕРІНІҢ ДЕРБЕС ӨМІР СҮРУІ КЕЗІНДЕ ТУЫНДАЙТЫН МӘСЕЛЕЛЕР

Аңдатпа

Бұл мақала балалар үйі түлектерінің дербес өмірге көшу кезеңіндегі құрылымдық, әлеуметтік және психологиялық сипаттағы қиындықтарын кешенді талдауға бағытталған. Сапалық зерттеу дизайны аясында тәрбиеленушілермен, тәрбиешілермен, әлеуметтік қызметкерлермен және сарапшылармен жүргізілген тереңдетілген сұхбаттар мен фокус-топтар дербес өмірге өтудің тек жеке бейімделу мәселесі емес, институционалдық әлеуметтену үлгісінің шектеулерімен шартталған құрылымдық құбылыс екенін айқындады. Эмпирикалық деректер отбасылық қолдау желілерінің болмауы, тұрақты жұмыспен және баспанамен қамтамасыз етілуіндегі кедергілер, сондай-ақ тәуекелді мінез-құлықтарға бейімділік сияқты факторлардың өзара тоғысып, әлеуметтік маргиналдану тәуекелін күшейтетінін көрсетеді. Сонымен қатар, тұрмыстық және қаржылық дағдылардың жеткіліксіз қалыптасуы (тамақ дайындау, бюджетті жоспарлау, құқықтық сауаттылық) түлектердің автономиялық шешім қабылдау қабілетін шектейді. Бұл жағдай институционалдық қамқорлық жүйесінде қорғау логикасының даму логикасынан басым екенін көрсетеді, яғни қамқорлық бар, бірақ қабілеттілік қалыптастыру жеткіліксіз. Психоэмоциялық деңгейде байланыс орнатудағы қиындықтар, өзін-өзі бағалаудың төмендігі және сенім тапшылығы байқалады. Біз бұл құбылысты жеке әлсіздік ретінде емес, әлеуметтік капиталдың үзілуі мен қатынастық сенімнің институционалдық түрде қайта өндірілмеуінің салдары ретінде түсіндіреміз. Қолданыстағы әлеуметтік қолдау қызметтері көбіне фрагментарлы және қысқа мерзімді сипатта, бұл ұзақмерзімді интеграциялық нәтижелерге жеткізбейді. Мақала ерте жастан өмірлік дағдыларды жүйелі оқыту, үздіксіз психологиялық сүйемелдеу, тәлімгерлік институтын дамыту және қауымдастықтық қолдау желілерін қалыптастыруды қамтитын көпсалалы саясаттық модельді ұсынады. Біз дербестікке көшу процесін әлеуметтік қорғаудан әлеуметтік қабілеттілікке көшу парадигмасы арқылы қайта пайымдау қажет деп пайымдаймыз, өйткені тек осындай тәсіл ғана түлектердің қоғамға толыққанды интеграциясын қамтамасыз ете алады.

Түйін сөздер: әлеуметтік интеграция, өмірлік дағдылар, қаржылық сауаттылық, әлеуметтік қызметтер, жастардың маргиналдануы.

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ПРОБЛЕМЫ САМОСТОЯТЕЛЬНОЙ ЖИЗНИ ВОСПИТАННИКОВ ДЕТСКИХ ДОМОВ В КАЗАХСТАНЕ

Аннотация

В статье предлагается аналитически выверенное рассмотрение проблем, возникающих у выпускников детских домов при переходе к самостоятельной жизни и социальной интеграции. На основе качественного дизайна исследования (интервью и фокус-группы с воспитанниками, воспитателями, социальными работниками и экспертами) выявлены устойчивые барьеры: дефицит семейно-родственных сетей поддержки, вовлеченность в рискованные практики (включая употребление психотропных веществ), а также ограниченный доступ к стабильной занятости и жилью. Мы утверждаем, что указанные трудности следует интерпретировать не как сумму индивидуальных “несформированностей”, а как эффект институционально заданной раскрываемости жизненного курса, когда система опеки обеспечивает базовую защиту, но недостаточно формирует условия для автономии. Результаты показывают выраженный дефицит практических компетенций (приготовление пищи, ведение быта, финансовое планирование), что указывает на структурный перекос в сторону “содержания” вместо “развития способностей”. Параллельно фиксируются эмоционально-психологические уязвимости: нарушения привязанности, сниженная самооценка, дефицит доверия, которые осложняют формирование социального капитала и устойчивых горизонтальных связей. При этом действующие социальные и психологические службы поддержки нередко фрагментарны и краткосрочны, что объясняется нехваткой ресурсов и отсутствием долгосрочных комплексных программ. Отдельно подчёркиваются системные ограничения: жилищный дефицит, узкие рынки труда (особенно в малых городах), низкая финансовая и правовая грамотность, импульсивные траты. Это указывает на институциональный “провал сопровождения”: помощь декларируется, но не превращается в непрерывную траекторию поддержки, вследствие чего воспроизводится зависимое поведение и риск маргинализации. В качестве решения обосновывается междисциплинарная модель, сочетающая раннее обучение жизненным навыкам, длительное психологическое сопровождение, наставничество, юридическую помощь и сети общественной поддержки. Мы полагаем, что переход к самостоятельности требует смены парадигмы от реактивной социальной защиты к проактивному формированию возможностей, позволяющих выпускникам стать ответственными и автономными гражданами.

Ключевые слова: социальная интеграция, жизненные навыки, финансовая грамотность, социальные услуги, маргинализация молодежи.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from institutional care to independent adulthood represents a critical and often fragile turning point for orphanage graduates [1], [2, p. 189–199], [3]. While institutional systems are primarily designed to provide protection, structure, and basic needs during childhood, they frequently fall short in preparing young people for the complex realities of adult life. This gap becomes

especially visible at the moment of leaving care, when institutional support is abruptly reduced and individuals are expected to function autonomously. In this context, the transition is not merely a life stage but a structurally conditioned process shaped by institutional practices, social expectations, and unequal access to resources.

Long-term residence in orphanages and foster care institutions remains a structurally embedded feature of child welfare systems in many countries. Although these arrangements aim to ensure stability and protection, research consistently shows that institutional protection does not automatically translate into developmental empowerment. Care leavers often experience insufficient financial, medical, and social support upon exit, which constrains their capacity to achieve sustainable autonomy [4, p. 23]. Empirical evidence further demonstrates significant disparities between youth involved in child welfare systems and their non-care peers in terms of education, employment, and social integration [5, p. 186], [6, p. 83], [7, p. 1900]. For instance, Williams [8, p. 69] estimates that approximately 500,000 young people in U.S. foster care are at elevated risk of adverse life outcomes, including homelessness and unemployment. Similarly, Landsverk et al. report that between 50% and 75% of children in foster care exhibit behavioral or socio-emotional difficulties [9]. These findings suggest that institutional care may inadvertently reproduce structural vulnerability rather than mitigate it.

A central theme in the literature concerns deficits in life skills acquisition. Institutional environments often limit children's participation in everyday domestic responsibilities, thereby restricting experiential learning and the development of practical competencies [10, p. 6],[11], [12, p. 46], [13]. This reflects a structural displacement of agency: routine tasks are performed by staff, while residents remain passive recipients of care. As a result, many young people leave institutions without basic skills such as cooking, budgeting, or household management.

This study draws on qualitative interviews with orphanage graduates, caregivers, teachers, and social workers to examine how institutional environments shape post-care trajectories. The findings confirm and extend existing research by highlighting multidimensional deficits that hinder successful integration into independent living. Gendered socialization patterns further exacerbate these inequalities: boys are rarely exposed to domestic responsibilities, while girls often lack opportunities to develop financial independence or spatial autonomy.

Emotional and psychological preparedness also remains insufficiently developed. The literature underscores the impact of disrupted attachment and limited relational continuity within institutional settings, which contributes to difficulties in forming trusting relationships and maintaining emotional stability [14, p. 192], [15, p. 762], [16, p. 4]. Although psychological services may be available, they are often episodic rather than continuous, limiting their long-term effectiveness. Without sustained mentorship and stable relational support, resilience cannot be adequately developed.

In addition, financial literacy and housing insecurity represent persistent structural challenges. Despite the provision of stipends or state assistance, many graduates struggle with budgeting and long-term planning, reinforcing patterns of dependency [17, p. 78]. Housing access is often constrained by bureaucratic barriers and limited availability, further complicating the transition to independent living [18].

Overall, the combined evidence suggests a fundamental tension between welfare provision and capability development. While institutional systems succeed in providing basic care, they often fail to equip young people with the skills, resources, and psychological capacities necessary for autonomous adulthood. Addressing this gap requires a shift from custodial models of care toward capability-oriented approaches that emphasize sustained skill formation, relational continuity, and structural integration mechanisms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this study is to critically examine the structural and experiential dimensions of social and household skill deficiencies among orphanage graduates in the Republic of Kazakhstan. While the immediate analytical focus concerns practical competencies such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, budgeting, and personal administration these deficits are conceptualized within a

broader framework of institutional socialization and capability formation. This approach allows the study to move beyond a mere descriptive account of missing skills toward an in-depth exploration of how institutional practices shape trajectories of autonomy and independence. In doing so, the research emphasizes the interplay between structural provisions, relational experiences, and individual adaptation processes, reflecting the complex realities of post-institutional transition.

Research Design and Epistemological Position. This study adopts a qualitative research paradigm grounded in interpretive and constructivist epistemology. The authors posit that the transition from institutional care to independent adulthood constitutes a socially mediated process that cannot be adequately captured through purely quantitative indicators. By focusing on qualitative inquiry, the research can examine lived experiences, institutional routines, normative expectations, and perceived barriers that structure post-care integration. The interpretive stance acknowledges that knowledge is co-constructed between participants and researchers, enabling insights into subjective experiences while simultaneously situating them within broader structural and cultural contexts.

Data Collection Methods. A multi-method qualitative design was employed to ensure analytical depth, methodological triangulation, and robustness of findings.

1. *Semi-Structured Interviews:* Interviews were conducted with orphanage staff, caregivers, teachers, social workers, child development specialists, and orphanage graduates themselves. The semi-structured format allowed respondents to share personal perspectives on skill acquisition, institutional constraints, supervision practices, and systemic barriers to independence. This approach facilitates the identification of institutional logics and routines that may unintentionally reproduce dependency or hinder capability formation.

2. *Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):* FGDs included adolescents aged 14–18, particularly those nearing graduation, as well as caregivers and sector experts. These discussions explored collective narratives about socialization, peer influence, gendered expectations, and preparedness for independent living. The group setting enabled researchers to capture shared discourses, normative tensions, and community-level perceptions that may not surface in individual interviews.

3. *Direct Observation and Document Analysis:* Systematic observation of institutional routines and review of training manuals, policy documents, and educational materials were conducted to assess gaps between formal institutional frameworks and everyday practices. Observational data allowed verification of reported practices, while document analysis provided insight into policy intentions versus practical implementation. This triangulation strengthens analytical validity and supports the identification of structural discontinuities that shape post-care outcomes.

Data Analysis. All interviews and FGDs were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke’s methodology [19]. Coding was conducted both inductively and deductively, identifying recurring patterns related to skill acquisition, institutional dependency, psychosocial vulnerability, and systemic barriers. Thematic convergence was interpreted as evidence of structural continuity rather than mere repetition, reflecting shared institutional constraints and cultural expectations across different orphanage settings. Analytical rigor was enhanced through iterative review, peer debriefing, and reflective memoing to minimize interpretive bias and strengthen credibility.

Research Objectives

The study addresses the following objectives:

1. To analyze socio-demographic characteristics of orphanage residents;
2. To identify systemic and experiential challenges across regions;
3. To examine institutional socialization patterns affecting autonomy;
4. To assess multi-dimensional support needs, including social, psychological, and legal domains;
5. To critically evaluate existing support mechanisms and policy frameworks for post-institutional integration.

Subjects and Objects of Study. The subjects of the study include current residents and graduates of orphanages, as well as professionals in the sector, including psychologists, social workers, educators,

integration specialists, employers, and representatives of support foundations. Objects of analysis comprise institutional socialization processes, practical life skill formation, and policy or organizational structures influencing post-care outcomes.

Sampling and Scope. The study includes a minimum of 100 orphanage graduates from multiple regions, with a concentration in Almaty City due to its demographic and administrative significance. At least five sector experts were interviewed to provide professional perspectives. While the study does not aim for statistical generalization, geographic diversity and inclusion of multiple stakeholder perspectives enhance the transferability of findings and allow for nuanced understanding of systemic and experiential challenges in different institutional contexts.

Overall, this methodological framework seeks to generate empirically grounded yet theoretically informed insights capable of informing structural policy reform. By interrogating institutional practices alongside lived experience, the study emphasizes the development of sustainable, capability-oriented interventions that support autonomous integration and long-term resilience among orphanage graduates.

RESULTS

The qualitative findings reveal a structurally patterned constellation of challenges faced by orphanage graduates during their transition to independent adulthood. Experts consistently identify the absence of close family support as a foundational deficit [1], [4, p. 22]. The authors interpret this not merely as emotional deprivation, but as a disruption in the intergenerational transmission of social capital, normative guidance, and practical modeling of adult responsibility. Without stable relational anchors, many orphanage graduates demonstrate heightened vulnerability to impulsive decision-making, educational disengagement, and unstable employment trajectories [5, p. 185], [6, p. 79].

Employment instability emerged as a recurrent and structurally embedded concern. Experts describe cases where orphanage graduates formally enter the labor market yet struggle to sustain employment due to limited vocational clarity, weak long-term planning capacity, and insufficient perseverance. This pattern reflects not an inherent lack of ability, but rather a deficit in future-oriented agency formation within institutional environments. Previous research confirms that young people leaving care systems often lack career guidance and practical exposure to labor market expectations, which significantly reduces their chances of stable employment [7], [8].

Housing insecurity remains another persistent and critical issue. Long waiting lists for state-provided housing, bureaucratic inconsistencies, and regional registration constraints generate prolonged uncertainty and instability. The authors argue that housing precarity functions as a structural amplifier of vulnerability, reinforcing both economic stress and psychosocial instability. Empirical studies indicate that inadequate housing support significantly increases the risk of homelessness and social exclusion among care leavers [18]. In this context, housing is not merely a material resource but a central condition for achieving sustainable autonomy.

The issue of harmful habits—including smoking, alcohol use, and exposure to substance abuse—was frequently highlighted by experts. While some respondents attributed these behaviors to environmental influences or even “genetic predispositions,” the authors critically reinterpret this perspective through the lens of social learning theory. Behavioral patterns are more accurately understood as outcomes of patterned exposure and environmental normalization rather than biological determinism. Orphanage graduates returning to high-risk social environments often reproduce familiar behavioral scripts, illustrating the cyclical reproduction of marginality [10, p. 8], [11], [12, p. 43].

Financial literacy deficits were repeatedly emphasized as a major structural weakness. Despite accumulating pensions or receiving state support, many orphanage graduates reportedly withdraw and spend funds impulsively. This phenomenon reflects a structural absence of economic socialization, where money is perceived as an entitlement rather than as a resource requiring strategic management. Experts note limited future planning capacity, weak budgeting discipline, and minimal awareness of long-term financial strategies. These findings align with previous research demonstrating that care

leavers often lack basic financial competencies, which increases their risk of long-term dependency [17, p. 76].

Psychological dimensions further compound these material challenges. Experts consistently highlight attachment trauma, distrust, and limited emotional resilience among individuals who have experienced long-term institutionalization. The absence of stable attachment figures contributes to difficulties in forming trusting relationships and maintaining psychological stability. Although psychological services are sometimes available within institutional settings, they are often episodic and lack continuity [15, p. 763]. As a result, emotional vulnerabilities remain unresolved and tend to manifest more acutely during the transition to independent living.

The authors propose that prolonged institutionalization may produce adaptive dependency patterns that become maladaptive in open social environments. Within institutions, structured routines and external control mechanisms regulate behavior and decision-making. However, upon exit, individuals are suddenly confronted with unrestricted autonomy, which often leads to experimentation, risk-taking, and boundary-testing behaviors. This abrupt transition reveals a fundamental contradiction within institutional care systems: while they aim to protect individuals from risk, they simultaneously limit opportunities for developing autonomy and responsibility [13].

Importantly, experts estimate that only a small proportion—approximately ten percent—of orphanage graduates successfully achieve stable integration into education, employment, and family life. This statistic underscores the existence of a structural transition gap rather than isolated cases of individual failure. Comparative studies similarly indicate that care leavers face disproportionately higher risks of unemployment, homelessness, and social exclusion compared to their peers [5, p. 185], [6, p. 82].

Help-seeking behavior remains significantly constrained. Many orphanage graduates report reluctance to seek assistance due to distrust in institutions, prior negative experiences, or lack of awareness about available support mechanisms. This highlights a critical structural gap: although formal support systems may exist, their accessibility, responsiveness, and perceived legitimacy remain insufficient. As a result, available resources are underutilized, further perpetuating cycles of marginalization [4, p. 22].

Collectively, the results demonstrate that the challenges confronting orphanage graduates are multidimensional, interdependent, and structurally conditioned. These difficulties cannot be reduced to individual shortcomings but must be understood as the cumulative outcome of institutional socialization, limited capability development, and structural inequalities embedded within child welfare systems.

Therefore, the authors argue for a paradigmatic shift from custodial protection toward capability-oriented institutional reform. Such reform should integrate long-term mentorship programs, systematic life skills training, comprehensive financial education, housing stabilization mechanisms, and continuous psychological support. Without such systemic recalibration, institutional care risks reproducing dependency rather than enabling autonomous and socially integrated adulthood.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illuminate the structurally embedded and multidimensional challenges experienced by orphanage graduates during their transition to independent adulthood. Central among these challenges is the absence of sustained familial support. This absence represents not merely an emotional deficit but a structural rupture in the transmission of normative guidance, relational security, and intergenerational social capital. Without stable attachment figures, orphanage graduates exhibit heightened vulnerability to impulsive decision-making, relational instability, and fragile identity formation, highlighting the critical role of continuous attachment in fostering resilience and social trust.

Patterns of harmful behavior, including smoking, alcohol use, and substance exposure, were frequently linked by respondents to environmental factors, with occasional references to genetic predispositions. From a critical perspective, these explanations reveal the tension between biological

determinism and social learning theory. Rather than privileging innate explanations, the findings suggest that repeated exposure to risk environments and the transmission of learned behavioral scripts reinforce marginalization, increase interaction with deviant peer networks, and perpetuate cycles of social exclusion.

Employment precarity and housing insecurity further demonstrate the structural nature of post-institutional vulnerability. Limited labor market opportunities, rising living costs, and insufficient economic planning skills constrain graduates' capacity for sustainable independence. Financial dependency patterns are thus not simply individual shortcomings but are also shaped by institutional practices that historically externalized responsibility. Graduates' expectations of prolonged state support reflect systemic gaps in capability-oriented training rather than a sense of entitlement.

Psychological and mentorship infrastructures, although present in some institutions, are inconsistently implemented. The absence of longitudinal relational continuity impedes the development of durable resilience and adaptive coping strategies. Prolonged institutionalization may foster adaptive dependency within closed systems, which becomes maladaptive in open social contexts requiring self-regulation, autonomous planning, and self-sufficiency. Additional systemic barriers including bureaucratic housing procedures, limited healthcare access, and administrative registration requirements compound these vulnerabilities, indicating fragmented welfare provision and insufficient institutional coordination.

The qualitative and quantitative data reveal a paradigmatic tension between custodial protection and emancipatory social integration. Orphanage graduates' struggles with social and household skills, financial literacy, psychological well-being, and relational trust underscore structural deficits rather than personal failings.

Table 1. Current Issues Faced by Orphanage Graduates

Problems	Never	Rarely	Often
1. Material hardships	13,5%	45%	41,5%
2. Violence from close relatives (physical, moral and so on)	75,5%	13,5%	11%
3. Housing difficulties (lack of own residence)	32,5%	25,5%	42%
4. Psychological problems	55,5%	33%	11,5%
5. Substance abuse issues (alcohol, drugs,)	79,5%	13,5%	7%
6. Interpersonal relationship problems	54,5%	37,5%	8%
7. Difficulty securing stable employment	60%	24,5%	15,5%
8. Household management challenges	64%	26%	10%
9. Financial literacy deficits	55,5%	28%	16,5%
10. Lack of education (a lack of formal/advanced education)	66%	21%	13%

Table 1 illustrates the prevalence of these challenges, showing that material hardship (41.5%), housing difficulties (42%), and financial literacy deficits (16.5%) are among the most common issues, alongside psychological problems (11.5%) and difficulties securing stable employment (15.5%).

Despite the availability of support mechanisms, a substantial proportion of orphanage graduates (71%) reported never seeking assistance. Table 2 summarizes the reasons for this, highlighting personal reluctance (42.3%), lack of trust in institutional effectiveness (34.5%), and informational barriers (15.5%) as the primary obstacles. Financial constraints and perceptions that government support is sufficient account for smaller proportions. These findings indicate that even when formal support exists, deficits in institutional legitimacy, accessibility, and communication hinder its activation.

Table 2. Reasons Orphanage Graduates «Do Not Seek Help».

Reasons	Percentage
Personal reluctance / “I don’t want”	42.3%
Lack of trust in effectiveness of available support	34.5%
Uncertainty about where or to whom to seek help	15.5%
Financial constraints	4.2%
Belief that government support is sufficient	3.5%

Orphanage graduates identified multiple interrelated factors contributing to their challenges, including low levels of social and household skills, the need for patient and open caregivers, educational disengagement, and unresolved psychological distress.

Table 3. Core Challenges Identified by Orphanage Graduates

Challenges	Percentage
Lack of social and household skills training	28.1%
Need for patient and open caregivers to foster trust	19.1%
No such problems encountered	13.6%
Resentment toward the world	11.6%
School truancy or low educational attainment	11.1%
Loss of family	10.6%
Absence of support from social workers and psychologists	10.6%
Oppression by elders or peer bullying	10.1%
Lack of independence and motivation to work	9.5%
Absence of leisure activities or hobbies	7.5%
Disobedience and weak discipline	7.0%
Waiting list for housing	7.0%
Financial and material vulnerability	6.5%
Lack of personal freedom and outdoor activity	6.0%
Absence of personal space	5.0%
Poor medical services and low-quality food	5.0%
Lack of family relationship models	4.5%
Low self-esteem due to “orphan” status	4.5%
Lack of state assistance	4.5%
Financial illiteracy	4.5%
Unawareness of rights and legal issues	2.5%
Avoiding harm to children upon leaving the home	2.5%
Addressing pregnancy concerns with girls	2.5%
Not accepting gifts from sponsors	2.0%
Stigma or stereotype of “orphan”	2.0%
Lack of knowledge on laws and benefits	1.5%
Substance use and delinquent lifestyle	1.5%
Assistance in finding employment	1.5%
Habit of expecting others to do everything	1.5%
Placing children in foster or guardianship families	1.5%
Opposition to foster families	1.5%
Non-violent discipline of children	1.0%
Need for mentors to support independent living	0.5%

Table 3 provides a detailed distribution of these factors, showing that lack of skill training (28.1%) and the need for supportive caregivers (19.1%) were most frequently cited, followed by school disengagement (11.1%) and loss of family support (10.6%). Additional challenges include

social stigma, financial vulnerability, lack of personal freedom, and limited mentorship, highlighting the cumulative and intersecting effects of institutionalization.

Based on these findings, eight hypotheses have been formulated to guide future research and targeted interventions:

1. *Social and Household Skills*: Training in household management and social competencies will enhance orphanage graduates' independence and social integration.

2. *Psychological Support and Resilience*: Comprehensive counseling and mentorship will reduce psychological distress, distrust, and resentment.

3. *Financial Literacy and Economic Self-Sufficiency*: Financial education will improve budgeting, saving, and reduce reliance on state support.

4. *Practical Life Skills and Self-Care*: Regular life skills training will facilitate smoother transitions to independent living.

5. *Housing and Socioeconomic Outcomes*: Streamlined housing support will decrease homelessness and housing insecurity.

6. *Social Attitudes and Integration*: Programs reducing stigma will improve social acceptance and interpersonal relationships.

7. *Help-Seeking Behavior*: Increased awareness of available support and institutional trust will encourage timely help-seeking.

8. *Education and Employment*: Early educational and vocational interventions will enhance employment stability and career progression.

In conclusion, sustainable social integration of orphanage graduates requires coordinated, multi-level interventions addressing both micro-level psychosocial needs and macro-level structural constraints. A shift toward capability-oriented policy frameworks emphasizing life skills development, financial literacy, mentorship continuity, and structural reforms is essential to support orphanage graduates in achieving autonomous, resilient, and socially integrated adulthood.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the transition from institutional care to independent adulthood is not merely an individual life stage, but a structurally mediated process shaped by accumulated social, psychological, and economic constraints. Orphanage graduates enter adult life with significant deficits in practical competencies, including financial literacy, household management, and long-term planning. This reflects a systemic emphasis on custodial provision rather than capability formation within institutional care environments.

The absence of stable familial support and sustained mentorship produces long-term challenges in relational trust, emotional resilience, and normative orientation. Employment instability, housing insecurity, and exposure to risk behaviors emerge as interconnected outcomes of disrupted socialization processes and fragmented post-care support systems. Moreover, the episodic nature of psychological and social services reveals a structural misalignment between institutional interventions and the long-term developmental needs of care leavers.

From a theoretical perspective, the study highlights a fundamental tension between welfare protection and emancipatory autonomy. Addressing this contradiction requires a paradigmatic shift in policy orientation—from reactive, short-term assistance toward a capability-based framework that prioritizes agency, resilience, and sustainable independence.

Based on these findings, several key recommendations can be proposed. First, life skills education should be institutionalized as a continuous and practice-based process embedded in everyday routines rather than introduced as a short-term preparatory measure. Financial literacy, vocational readiness, and domestic competencies must be developed through experiential learning to ensure effective autonomy.

Second, psychological support systems require structural strengthening. Long-term counseling, trauma-informed care, and sustained mentorship programs should replace fragmented and time-limited interventions. Emotional stability and relational continuity must become central components of post-care support.

Third, greater institutional coordination is essential. Effective integration requires a comprehensive support framework involving government agencies, educational institutions, NGOs, and labor market actors. Housing access, employment pathways, legal literacy, and healthcare services should be aligned within a unified and accessible system.

Ultimately, the goal of policy reform should extend beyond risk mitigation toward the cultivation of agency. A shift from custodial welfare to capability-oriented institutional design is necessary to enable orphanage graduates to transition from dependency to sustainable autonomy and active participation in social and economic life.

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IRSTI: 11.15.23

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51889/2959-6270.2026.93.1.013>

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POWER TRANSITION AND POST-AUTHORITARIAN REFORMS IN KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN: A COMPARATIVE POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze the institutional nature of the post-authoritarian power transition in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and the substantive logic of the announced political reforms from the perspective of comparative politics. In the post-personalist period, the reforms initiated by Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Shavkat Mirziyoyev have been presented in official discourse as renewal and political modernization. However, evaluating these reforms solely at the level of declared normative commitments is insufficient. This article examines the reforms in a comprehensive manner through the evolution of political discourse, legal and institutional restructuring, and changes in actual governance practices.

The theoretical framework of the analysis draws on the concepts of authoritarian adaptation and elite reproduction. The study demonstrates that the substance of the power transition has been oriented more toward the reconfiguration of regime stability than toward democratic institutionalization.