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Sectoral Value-Normative Context of Youth Pre-Vocational Preparation in Kazakhstan

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ABSTRACT
This study is devoted to the analysis of value-normative representations of employed adults in Kazakhstan as an external sociocultural context for the socialization of youth work and pre-vocational preparation. The empirical basis of the study is a national survey of adults aged 18 and older conducted in May–June 2025 (N = 3,123). The analysis draws on respondent-level data for the employed subsample (n = 2,314) and on contractor-provided sectoral cross-tabulations. Since sampling weights and design parameters were unavailable, the results are interpreted as unweighted descriptive and adjusted associations. The analysis enables identification of an intersectoral normative core centered on responsibility, decency, diligence, honesty, and the expectation of decent work, while also revealing zones of sectoral variability in perceptions of cultural-policy orientations. The findings reveal that adults' expectations for youth value education focus on national and universal values, including health, responsibility, cultural heritage, and respect for nature. The study does not claim causal sector effects or provide direct evidence of learner outcomes. Its contribution is to provide a contextual map for subsequent design-based research on pre-vocational support, including inclusive educational settings.

KEYWORDS
Pre-vocational preparation; labor market; value-normative representations; youth values education; transversal competencies; Kazakhstan.

INTRODUCTION

Pre-vocational preparation in the contemporary education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan is gaining particular importance in light of the increasing complexity of labor market structures and the accelerated pace of technological and organizational change across economic sectors (OECD, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2023). At the same time, inclusive education practices are expanding, and public demand is growing for the social inclusion and economic self-sufficiency of young people (Butabayeva et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2017). In this configuration, pre-vocational preparation can no longer be considered an additional element of the school curriculum. Substantively, it becomes an early mechanism of socioeconomic adaptation, establishing the parameters of occupational choice, shaping motivation for work, and consolidating the value-normative foundations of future conduct in educational and work environments (Lent et al., 1994; Sarsenbayeva et al., 2024; Savickas, 2005).

Psychological and pedagogical support for pre-vocational preparation, within the framework of humanistic educational policy, is typically oriented toward developing learner agency, adaptability, positive self-esteem, and realistic life planning (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al., 1994). However, values and competencies are often treated as outcomes that arise primarily from school-based socialization. Such an approach is insufficient because work socialization is also shaped by an external normative context—specifically, professional norms embedded in employment settings and the value-normative representations of employed adults (Ajzen, 1991; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cialdini et al., 1990). In this study, labor market expectations are seen as a socio-normative layer, referring to adults' views on which values and transversal skills should be nurtured in youth, and which value foundations are considered legitimate within society. This layer is conceptually distinct from institutional employer requirements, including vacancy texts, professional standards, and human resource practices. It does not substitute for those requirements, but it is significant for designing support at the stage of pre-vocational choice.

Problem statement. Although pre-vocational preparation is increasingly expected to support young people's transition to the world of work, its value-normative foundations are often conceptualized primarily within school-based socialization. Less attention is paid to the external normative environment formed by employed adults, whose representations of work, responsibility, social unity, and youth values may influence the expectations transmitted to young people through families, communities, and professional milieus.

Taking into account labor market heterogeneity, sectoral segments differ in employment types, regimes of responsibility and discipline, risk profiles, and communication practices. Consequently, different sectors may activate different value-normative emphases. Mapping sector-specific representations makes it possible to identify an intersectoral core of socially approved norms and, at the same time, delineate zones of variability that are important for formulating design hypotheses for psychological and pedagogical support for pre-vocational choice.

Additional context is provided by the societal dynamics of values and identities, as reflected in mass perceptions and evaluations. The empirical dataset used in this study includes questions that directly capture respondents' reflections on changes in Kazakhstani value representations following the January 2022 events. This circumstance indicates the value domain's sensitivity to sociopolitical and economic shocks and, accordingly, underscores the importance of evidence-based analysis of the mechanisms of value reproduction and social cohesion.

The article aims to describe sectoral value-normative representations of employed adults in Kazakhstan as an external context for youth work socialization and, on this basis, to derive cautious, empirically bounded design hypotheses for pre-vocational preparation.

Objectives. To achieve this aim, the study addresses the following objectives: (1) to describe value-normative representations of employed adults in Kazakhstan; (2) to identify the intersectoral normative core across employment sectors; (3) to delineate indicators with the most visible sectoral variability; (4) to determine initially articulated adult priorities for youth values formation; and (5) to translate the findings into cautious design hypotheses for pre-vocational preparation, without treating them as direct evidence of learner outcomes or causal sector effects.

Research questions. The study proceeds from the following research questions:

RQ1. What value-normative representations characterize employed adults in Kazakhstan as an external context of youth work socialization?

RQ2. Which elements constitute an intersectoral normative core across employment sectors?

RQ3. Which value-normative indicators show the most visible sectoral variability?

RQ4. What priorities for youth values formation are initially articulated by employed adults?

RQ5. How can these findings be translated, cautiously, into design hypotheses for pre-vocational preparation?

The study provides an empirical description of socially legitimized value-normative emphases among employed adults across sectors and outlines the initial contours of expectations regarding youth values education. The analysis is descriptive. It characterizes the external normative background rather than the level of value or competency formation among learners, and it is intended as context analysis and stakeholder mapping for subsequent educational design and testing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework of the study is organized hierarchically, rather than as a mechanical catalog of adjacent theories. The primary analytical lens combines Bronfenbrenner's ecological-systems approach with theories of subjective and injunctive norms. The first describes how youth work socialization occurs within interconnected family, school, community, sectoral, and macro-cultural contexts. The second framework explains how adult expectations gain regulatory power as socially sanctioned prescriptions (Ajzen, 1991; Bronfenbrenner, 1979;

Cialdini et al., 1990). In this logic, the employment sector is not treated as a causal determinant of values. It is used as a proxy indicator of professionally normative contexts that may structure the publicly articulated vocabulary of work, responsibility, social unity, and legitimate priorities for youth values formation.

The value-interpretation lens is provided by Schwartz's theory of basic values and Inglehart and Welzel's theory of modernization-oriented value change. These frameworks are used to interpret tensions between conservation and openness to change, national-cultural and universalistic foundations, and traditional and modernization-oriented value vocabularies (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Schwartz, 1992, 2012). The applied educational translation lens is provided by Social Cognitive Career Theory and career construction theory. Adults' value-normative representations are therefore interpreted as contextual supports, barriers, and cultural scripts that may inform subsequent pre-vocational design hypotheses (Lent et al., 1994; Savickas, 2005). Competency frameworks developed by the OECD, the Council of the European Union, and the World Economic Forum provide the vocabulary for discussing transversal competencies. They support educational interpretation, but they do not replace the primary ecological-normative framework (Council of the European Union, 2018; OECD, 2005, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2023).

Conceptual model. The model proceeds from (1) employment sector as a proxy context, through (2) adult value-normative representations and (3) intersectoral normative core and variability zones, toward (4) youth value-formation priorities and (5) cautious design hypotheses. The empirical analysis operationalizes this model by distinguishing direct youth-focused indicators from broader contextual indicators of the adult normative background and treating all sectoral comparisons as descriptive profiles of the employed subsample.

In classical approaches, values are understood as trans-situational orientations that define the desirability of goals and modes of action (Rokeach, 1973). The most developed framework for comparative research is Schwartz's theory of basic values, which specifies universal value types and their structural tensions, including conservation versus openness to change and self-transcendence versus self-enhancement (Schwartz, 1992, 2012). For this study, these frameworks are important because they allow a distinction between traditionalist and conservative components of the value space, on the one hand, and modernizing and autonomy-oriented components, on the other. They also make it possible to discuss their coexistence as a layered configuration, rather than as a simple dichotomy. In applied terms, adults' value-normative representations may simultaneously include support for traditional cultural foundations and demand for universalistic rules of cooperation in a diverse society. Such combinations require empirical description, not merely normative or declarative characterization.

Societies in transition are characterized by heterogeneous and often internally contradictory trajectories of value change. Alongside the reproduction of traditional norms, there are also demands for autonomy, self-expression, and new civic regulative principles.

Within theories of modernization and cultural dynamics, value shifts are understood as socially differentiated processes that depend on resource endowment, education, urbanization, and inclusion in global communication networks (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). This circumstance has methodological significance. Normative expectations concerning young people cannot be treated as uniformly given across employment segments and social groups. As a rule, they acquire a configurational character, reflecting both cultural constants and adaptations to changing working conditions.

Normative expectations directed toward young people should be interpreted not as a direct measurement of respondents' personal values, but as a component of social norm regulation. In the social psychological literature, expectations and prescriptions are linked to subjective norms that influence intentions and behavioral choice (Ajzen, 1991), as well as to the distinction between injunctive norms and descriptive norms as different sources of social control (Cialdini et al., 1990). For this study, this distinction is fundamental. The object of analysis is not an aggregate value profile of adults, but the representations articulated by adults regarding which values and transversal competencies should be developed in young people as a condition for successful socialization and professionalization. Such an approach makes it possible to conceptually connect mass survey findings to educational problematics without replacing employer expectations in the narrow human-resource sense with respondents' personal attitudes.

Channels for transmitting normative expectations include the family, the pedagogical community, and the immediate social environment. Mechanisms of transmission include direct mentoring and the modeling of behaviors and attitudes in accordance with social learning theory (Bandura, 1986). At the empirical level, socialization research shows that intergenerational similarity in values is not automatic. It is mediated by interaction style, quality of communication, and the psychological characteristics of significant adults (Podolskiy & Idobaeva, 2016), as well as by boundary situations, including social crises, transitions, and conflicts of norms, in which normative expectations become especially salient. Accordingly, describing the normative background of employed adults should be understood as diagnosing the external socialization environment, rather than as assessing the correctness or incorrectness of particular value positions.

In contemporary scholarship, career self-determination is conceptualized as a contextually conditioned process in which individual interests and abilities interact with environmental resources, constraints, and expectations (Patton & McMahon, 2021; Yates, 2025). In Bronfenbrenner's ecological-systems perspective, occupational choices are embedded in a system of interconnected contexts, from the microsocial environments of family and school to the macro-level of cultural norms and institutional rules (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Social Cognitive Career Theory further indicates that subjective mechanisms, including self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and perceived barriers and supports, mediate the environment's influence. Consequently, context does not operate directly, but through a system of meanings

and expectations shared by significant adults and groups (Lent et al., 1994). Recent career-awareness research similarly emphasizes that early exposure, perceived barriers, outcome expectations, and industry-school partnerships shape learners' career perceptions before formal vocational choice (Makola et al., 2025).

Within career construction theory, an occupational trajectory is seen as the outcome of adapting and constructing a meaningful life course. Social expectations serve not only as constraints but also as culturally accepted scripts (Savickas, 2005). For pre-vocational preparation, this means that psychological and pedagogical support cannot be reduced to diagnosing interests and informing learners about occupations. It presupposes work with the normative context, namely with models of success, a decent life, and acceptable employment transmitted by adults, including family members, teachers, and local professional communities. In this sense, describing normative expectations of employed adults provides empirical material for refining the content of support for pre-vocational choice, at a minimum by identifying zones of consensus and variability in normative representations.

The turn toward transversal competencies reflects a shift from training for a single occupation to preparing for changing working conditions and multiple employment trajectories. In international framework documents, competencies are treated as integrative formations that include knowledge, skills, attitudes, and value foundations. The OECD Definition and Selection of Competencies project formulated key competencies supporting autonomous action, interaction in heterogeneous groups, and the use of tools (OECD, 2005). In European and other international approaches, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, digital literacy, and learning to learn are similarly identified as foundational conditions for productive participation in society and the economy (Council of the European Union, 2018; OECD, 2019, 2023). Recent skills-policy analysis also stresses that the green and digital transitions intensify the need for resilient skills systems, including upskilling and reskilling across the life course (OECD, 2023 In this article, it is important to note that these frameworks should not overshadow national educational priorities. They provide a language of comparability and allow transversal competencies to be interpreted as a cross-sector normative minimum for inclusion in the contemporary labor market.

Economic and sociological research on labor markets demonstrates that, under conditions of automation and increasing organizational complexity, the value of social-communicative and self-regulatory skills surpasses that of narrowly procedural abilities. Large-scale data confirm the growth of demand for social skills and their contribution to labor outcomes (Deming, 2017), as well as the importance of soft skills in long-term educational and career trajectories (Heckman & Kautz, 2012). Taken together, these findings provide substantial support for treating transversal competencies as a core component of preparing for modern work, rather than just an add-on to subject knowledge.

International analytical work on the future of employment documents the hybridization of occupational requirements. The importance of combining digital skills with critical thinking,

communication, and the ability to work under uncertainty is increasing (World Economic Forum, 2023, 2025). The 2025 report further indicates that AI and big data, networks and cybersecurity, technological literacy, creative thinking, resilience, flexibility, curiosity, and lifelong learning occupy a central place in employer expectations (World Economic Forum, 2025 For educational programs, this creates a methodological challenge: transversal competencies cannot be reduced to a single instructional module, and their development requires integration into teaching, assessment, and values education. An additional complexity concerns the value-laden character of competency frameworks. The issue is not only technical performance, but also normatively preferred modes of cooperation, responsibility, and professional ethics. Accordingly, research on adults' normative expectations of young people may serve as an empirical complement to abstract competency frameworks. It clarifies which value-normative foundations of transversal competencies are socially legitimized by different employment segments. The current study does not focus on assessing the level of competency development among young people, but rather on the normative significance of the relevant domains.

Recent research evidence strengthens this educational interpretation. A Kazakhstan-focused study of regional standards-based vocational training reported perceived improvements in work performance and innovation-related competencies, including time management, problem-solving, strategic thinking, and teamwork (Mambetova et al., 2025). Another study of NEET youth emphasized the need to learn and relearn skills required by the digital age (Chauke, 2024). These findings support interpreting transversal competencies not as a purely technical supplement but as a socioeducational condition for transition to work, especially where vulnerable youth or rapidly changing sectoral expectations are involved.A targeted review of publications from 2018 to 2025 on value orientations and competency development in post-Soviet societies reveals methodological and thematic asymmetries. Most studies are based on samples from the Russian Federation, whereas substantially fewer studies represent the Kazakhstani context. Thematically, the body of research concentrates primarily on school and university students and educational environments, while studies of employed adults and cross-sector differences appear only episodically. This gap is significant. If sector-specificity of normative expectations is claimed, the empirical basis should rely either on cross-sector comparisons or on convincingly theorized case studies of professional cultures. In the post-Soviet literature, both directions remain unevenly developed.

Recent publications also document the Kazakhstani specificity of value formation. Zhunussova and Ryspayeva (2025) showed that language participates in the development and transmission of cultural values among young teenagers in Kazakhstan's multilingual environment. Gerfanova et al. (2025) conceptualized adolescents' civic identity in Kazakhstan as a multidimensional structure involving civic knowledge, values, behavior, and motivation, and their findings indicate a tension between strong civic values and weaker civic motivation. Baikulova et al. (2024) examined youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan through education, health, and civic engagement, thereby confirming that value education and pre-vocational

preparation should be interpreted in a wider developmental context. Tantakov et al. (2025) further showed that digital education in Kazakhstan raises ethical concerns related to academic integrity, accessibility, data privacy, digital literacy, and institutional support.

At the level of youth research, a persistent ambivalence of value and labor orientations is documented. Alongside the high salience of self-realization and autonomy, risks of weakening labor identity and a mismatch between the rhetoric of success and readiness for systematic productive work are observed (Finogenova, 2024; Kovaleva & Loginovskaya, 2019). In studies of high school students' professional prospects, values of health, self-development, and professional activity serve as significant predictors of future representations amid social change (Ralnikova et al., 2023). These findings indicate that the value foundations of occupational choice are formed within a field of tension between individualistic and collectivist orientations and between ideals of autonomy and requirements of discipline and responsibility.

A separate line of empirical research analyzes employers' and professional communities' expectations of graduates and young specialists, while adjacent work examines youth career guidance as a structurally mediated social process (Shchanina & Shokurova, 2024; Turgumbayeva et al., 2023). Such studies repeatedly identify deficits in practice-oriented skills, discipline, initiative, and responsibility, and they emphasize the role of mentoring and institutional partnerships among schools, universities, and employers (Istomina & Baranova, 2023; Shevchenko, 2022). At the same time, a substantial part of this work relies on expert samples and case-oriented designs, which increases interpretive depth but limits the possibility of describing a cross-sector normative field as a mass social fact. As a result, labor market expectations are often reconstructed as expectations of human resource experts or managers, whereas the normative representations of employed adults as carriers of everyday work culture remain insufficiently described.

For Kazakhstan, an additional research challenge is the society's multilayered value structure, in which national cultural foundations, religious and civic norms, and universalistic principles are embedded in complex compromises. This increases the significance of cultural literacy in career guidance support and imposes stricter requirements on operationalization. In empirical analysis, it is necessary to distinguish between direct expectations directed toward young people and assessments of the sociocultural environment or adults' own value preferences. It should also be noted that the pedagogical literature on inclusivity in career guidance emphasizes equal access to high-quality support and attention to barriers to participation. This is consistent with international normative frameworks for inclusive education that are oriented toward removing barriers and providing equitable access (Butabayeva et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2017). Recent publications further clarify this point: student funding and accessibility are decisive for youth with learning disabilities in vocational education and training (Nkambule & Ngubane, 2023), teacher capabilities mediate the implementation of inclusive education (Mokhampanyane, 2024), and adolescents with disabilities may experience loneliness even within inclusive settings if belonging and peer acceptance are insufficiently supported (Al

anati et al., 2025). However, empirical data connecting sectoral normative expectations to specific mechanisms of support in the context of special educational needs remain insufficient. Consequently, any design proposals in this domain require cautious formulation and subsequent piloting.

In light of the foregoing, two interconnected gaps directly related to the tasks of this study can be identified. First, there is a shortage of studies that use mass data to describe sector-differentiated value-normative representations of employed adults as an external context of work socialization, as distinct from narrowly professional cases or employer-centered models. Second, the bridge between the value-normative background and the design of school practices of pre-vocational preparation remains methodologically underdeveloped. The literature more often examines either youth values as a product of socialization or employers' competency expectations as a functional demand. In contrast, the normative layer of employed adults as an external context of socialization remains in the background.

This study addresses these gaps through descriptive mapping. Using a national survey of adults with countrywide territorial coverage, respondent-level primary data, and contractor-provided cross-tabulations, the article compares sectoral profiles of normative expectations. It identifies zones of cross-sector consensus and variability. In this way, an empirically grounded context is formed for subsequent, more detailed and methodologically rigorous design and piloting of psychological and pedagogical support programs for pre-vocational choice. These programs are oriented toward values education and the development of transversal competencies, while respecting cultural heterogeneity and the descriptive purpose of the present analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study was conducted as a quantitative descriptive-comparative analysis of a cross-sectional sociological survey dataset. This choice is consistent with methodological guidance that treats research design as the alignment of research questions, data structure, methods, and warranted inference, and treats descriptive analysis as a way to characterize who, what, where, when, and to what extent without making causal claims (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Loeb et al., 2017). The analytical purpose was to map value-normative representations of employed adults across employment sectors as an external context of youth work socialization and pre-vocational preparation. The analysis uses respondent-level data for the employed subsample together with contractor-provided marginal distributions and cross-tabulations. Since sampling weights and design parameters were unavailable, all results are interpreted as unweighted descriptive and adjusted associations in the achieved sample. Accordingly, the study does not evaluate school practices or intervention effects. It reconstructs the adult normative background and translates it into cautious, empirically bounded design hypotheses.

The research design combines three levels of analysis: (1) overall descriptive distributions for the employed subsample; (2) sectoral profiles based on within-sector proportions, Wilson precision intervals, and dispersion measures; and (3) auxiliary statistical checks assessing whether observed sectoral variability is concentrated in selected indicators rather than distributed uniformly across all value-normative items. All sectoral analyses are interpreted as descriptive or adjusted associations, not as causal effects of the employment sector.

Participants and sampling

The empirical basis of the study is a national sociological survey conducted by Open Space Center LLP on behalf of [institution name removed for peer review] from May 10, 2025, to June 5, 2025 (Open Space Center LLP, 2025). The target population consisted of residents of the Republic of Kazakhstan aged 18 years and older who had lived in the relevant settlement for at least six months. The final sample included N = 3,123 completed interviews. Coverage included 17 regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the cities of republican significance Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent. The sample design employed territorial stratification and quota control by gender, age, ethnicity, and settlement type (urban or rural), based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan for early 2025.

For this study, the analytical working sample was restricted to employed respondents, as indicated by Q22, 'To which social category would you primarily assign yourself?' The employed category included wage employees, entrepreneurs, owners of peasant farms, self-employed respondents, and working retirees. The resulting employed subsample comprised n = 2,314 respondents, or 74.1% of the full sample. Employment sector (Q23) was used as the grouping variable for intersectoral comparisons. The sectoral composition of the employed subsample is presented in Table 2 (see appendix).

Research instrument

The article draws on selected items from the standardized questionnaire. The instrument included single-choice, matrix, and competitive multiple-response questions. The analytical set used in the article comprises Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q10, Q14, Q16, Q21, Q22, and Q23. These items were chosen because they directly relate to the study's analytical aims. They collectively represent the cultural environment, perceived value unity, cultural policy orientations, perceived social divisions, obstacles to shared values, the importance of personal and family values, priorities for youth values formation, reflections on value changes following the January 2022 events, the decent-work benchmark, social categories, and employment sectors.

Operationalization distinguished direct and contextual indicators. Q14 was the only direct youth-focused indicator, since it explicitly asked respondents what is important in the formation of values among young people. The remaining items were treated as contextual indicators of the adult value-normative background. Q10 and Q21 operationalized the work-socialization and decent-work components of the intersectoral normative core; Q1-Q5 and Q16 described the broader sociocultural and institutional context. Q22 defined the employed subsample, and Q23 identified the employment sector used for sectoral comparisons.

For competitive multiple-response questions, two complementary indicators were calculated. The first-mentioned option was interpreted as an indicator of initial salience. The any-mention indicator was calculated as the presence of a given option in any response position. It was interpreted as a broader measure of inclusion in the respondent's priority or barrier set. This procedure was applied to Q14 and Q5. For matrix questions, each row was analyzed as a separate ordinal indicator. Where theoretically appropriate, binary derived indicators were constructed, including 'very important' versus other responses, 'mandatory' versus other responses, and 'full agreement' versus other responses.

Data collection

Data collection was conducted through face-to-face interviews using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) on tablets. Interviews were administered in Russian or Kazakh, depending on the respondent's language preference. The average interview duration was 15 to 20 minutes. The fieldwork period was May-June 2025.

Fieldwork quality control was organized through a multilevel verification procedure. The contractor reported interviewer training and testing, automatic audio recording of interviews, Global Positioning System (GPS) tags, monitoring of fieldwork progress, and follow-up telephone verification of up to 10% of completed interviews. Ethical procedures included informing participants of the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality, and the right to refuse participation.

Data analysis

The analysis used descriptive statistics calculated from respondent-level data and contractor-provided survey outputs: absolute frequencies (k), proportions overall and within employment sectors, cross-tabulations, first-mention indicators, any-mention indicators, and dispersion measures. Proportions were calculated within each sector as $p = k/Nj$, where k is the category frequency within sector j and Nj is the size of the sectoral subgroup. The intersectoral core was defined as the set of indicators with high overall support and limited intersectoral dispersion. The zone of variability was defined as the set of indicators with more noticeable sectoral-compositional variability.

For statistical strengthening of the sectoral block, Pearson chi-square tests of association and Cramér's V were calculated for selected sectors by response tables after recoding outcomes into theoretically meaningful binary indicators, including 'full agreement' versus other responses, 'agree plus partly agree' versus other responses, 'mandatory' versus other responses, and 'very important' versus other responses. These tests were conducted for sectors with $n \geq 50$ (unweighted $n = 2,251$), a restriction introduced to reduce instability caused by very small sectoral subgroups. Cramér's V was used as an effect-size diagnostic rather than as a basis for sector ranking. Wilson score 95% confidence intervals (Wilson, 1927; $z = 1.96$) were calculated for key sectoral proportions, primarily in full agreement with the statement on 'democratic values of Western societies' and selection of 'decent pay and social protection' as mandatory. In addition, two unweighted binary logistic regression models were estimated as

sensitivity analyses. The first model used full agreement with the statement on 'democratic values of Western societies' as the outcome. The second used the assessment of 'decent pay and social protection' as a mandatory outcome. In both models, the predictor of substantive interest was employment sector, and the controls were gender, age group, education, financial status, and settlement type. The results are reported as likelihood ratio tests for the sectoral block.

These statistics describe associations in the achieved unweighted sample and are not treated as population estimates because sampling weights and design parameters were unavailable. The availability of respondent-level data allowed the auxiliary reliability check and unweighted regression sensitivity analyses. However, these procedures do not constitute design-corrected national inference. The category 'difficult to answer' was retained as a substantively interpretable response category in descriptive tables and was not automatically treated as missing. For reliability checks and regression procedures, cases with missing or non-substantive responses on the variables included in the respective calculation were excluded listwise; the valid n is reported for each auxiliary analysis. The article uses the achieved quota-controlled sample; post-stratification weights were not applied.

Validity, reliability, and trustworthiness

Construct validity is reinforced through clear theoretical mapping and transparent operationalization. The separation of direct youth-focused indicators from contextual ones ensures the survey is not mistaken for a direct measure of learner outcomes. Q14 reflects adult priorities regarding youth values development, while Q1-Q5, Q10, Q16, and Q21 depict the broader adult normative context. This operational difference is crucial for translating findings into design hypotheses rather than making claims about the existing levels of values or competencies among youth.

Although the study does not construct a broad psychometric scale, the internal consistency of the four-item work-ethics core was assessed as an auxiliary reliability check. The four items—responsibility, decency, diligence, and honesty or selflessness—showed acceptable internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha = .736, n = 2,300 complete cases after excluding 'difficult to answer' and other non-substantive responses for the items included in the calculation. This supports interpreting these four items as a coherent normative core while preserving the descriptive character of the analysis.

Data trustworthiness is supported by the survey's national territorial coverage, quota-controlled field design, bilingual CAPI administration, audio and GPS fieldwork controls, monitoring of fieldwork progress, and telephone verification of up to 10% of completed interviews. Statistical checks strengthen the descriptive interpretation by identifying patterns of association, effect sizes, and the precision of intervals within the observed sample. They do not establish causal mechanisms or design-based population inference.

Limitations of the analytical strategy

The limitations of the analytical strategy stem primarily from the survey's cross-sectional, non-experimental design. The analyses identify descriptive and adjusted associations, but they do not establish causal effects of employment sector on value-normative representations. The study uses the achieved quota-controlled sample; post-stratification weights and sampling-design parameters were not available. Consequently, chi-square p-values, Cramér's V values, Wilson intervals, and logistic models should be read as diagnostics of the achieved unweighted sample rather than as design-corrected estimates for the national adult population. The employment sector is interpreted as a respondent-level proxy of professionally normative context and should not be equated with direct employer requirements or organizational cultures. Some sectoral groups are small and are therefore presented for transparency, but interpreted cautiously. Finally, the dataset concerns adults, particularly employed adults, rather than learners. Therefore, implications for pre-vocational preparation are formulated as design hypotheses requiring subsequent piloting in educational settings, including inclusive formats.

RESULTS

Sociocultural background: cultural environment and perceptions of value unity

In self-descriptions of the cultural environment of residence among employed respondents, the traditional Kazakh cultural environment predominates (1,341; 58.0%), whereas the share of respondents identifying themselves as living predominantly in a traditional Russian cultural environment is substantially smaller (172; 7.4%). Substantively, this self-identification may be characterized as the salience of the cultural component of the tradition/conservation pole, in the terminology of the theory of basic values, which sets the macro-level background of normative expectations (Schwartz, 1992).

Most employed respondents report the presence of value unity in Kazakhstani society: 'yes' 1,881 (81.3%), 'no' 303 (13.1%), and 'difficult to answer' 130 (5.6%).

The analysis of barriers to the formation of shared values was expanded beyond the first option mentioned. Table 3 presents both indicators. Social inequality is the dominant barrier by first mention (1,182; 51.1%) and remains the most broadly mentioned barrier when all three possible response positions are considered (1,399; 60.5%). The any-mention indicator also shows that low levels of education and culture (881; 38.1%), negative influence of mass media, the Internet, and social networks (855; 36.9%), and civic passivity (710; 30.7%) form a broader cluster of perceived risks to value integration.

Thus, socioeconomic disparities and the information environment function as key erosive factors in mass perceptions of value integration. At the same time, the any-mention distribution shows that education and civic agency also occupy a substantial place in respondents' broader repertoire of explanations. These results should be taken into account when formulating hypotheses about risks of youth maladaptation upon entry into the world of work.

The value-normative core of representations: dominant value orientations

Assessments of value orientations in cultural development serve as indicators of the normative background, specifically the perceived orientation of cultural policy. In the employed subsample, a pronounced orientation toward traditional and integrative foundations is observed.

Orientation toward universal human values: 'agree' 1,849 (79.9%), 'partly agree' 376 (16.2%).

Orientation toward the values of the Kazakh people: 'agree' 1,852 (80.0%), 'partly agree' 340 (14.7%).

Orientation toward nationwide values: 'agree' 1,813 (78.4%), 'partly agree' 385 (16.6%).

Orientation toward ethnic values: 'agree' 1,673 (72.3%), 'partly agree' 472 (20.4%).

Orientation toward religious values: 'agree' 1,515 (65.5%), 'partly agree' 594 (25.7%).

Orientation toward the values of the peoples of the Turkic world: 'agree' 1,315 (56.8%), 'partly agree' 615 (26.6%).

Overall, the perceived framework of value orientations of cultural policy is organized around universalistic, national-cultural, and religious foundations. The most pronounced intersectoral variability is observed for the item on 'democratic values of Western societies,' discussed below. Taken together, this configuration defines the external normative context in which expectations toward young people are articulated and pedagogical implications are discussed in terms of hypotheses.

3) Sectoral profiles of perceptions that cultural policy is oriented toward 'democratic values of Western societies'

The statement on the orientation of cultural policy toward 'democratic values of Western societies' exhibits the largest sectoral dispersion. Given its marked political and cultural character, it is used as a proxy to describe variability in perceptions of cultural-policy orientation. In the employed subsample, 'agree' was selected by 961 respondents (41.5%; Wilson 95% CI: 39.5-43.6), 'partly agree' by 661 (28.6%), 'disagree' by 512 (22.1%), and 'difficult to answer' by 180 (7.8%).

By sector, response distributions form distinguishable profiles primarily in the share of full agreement, whereas total agreement, meaning 'agree' plus 'partly agree,' remains predominant in most sectors. Sectoral shares of full agreement and their Wilson intervals are presented in Table 4.

Across sectors, variability is expressed primarily in the share of full agreement. The interpretations below rely on sectoral subgroups of sufficient size, approximately $n \geq 50$. Small sectors are presented for reference, and their Wilson intervals are wide (Table 4).

Among sectoral subgroups with $n \geq 50$, the highest point estimate for full agreement is observed in civil service and public administration bodies (127 of 234, 54.3%; Wilson 95% CI: 47.9–60.5). Relatively high values are also observed in the service sector (175 of 379, 46.2%; 95% CI: 41.2-51.2) and trade (197 of 437, 45.1%; 95% CI: 40.5-49.8).

The lowest point estimate among subgroups with n ≥ 50 is observed in the finance sector (15 of 56, 26.8%; Wilson 95% CI: 17.0-39.6). For small sectors, estimates are less stable, which limits the interpretation of apparent extremes.

The descriptive contrast between civil service and public administration bodies (54.3%) and finance (26.8%) is approximately 27.5 percentage points. Since the analysis is unweighted and not design-corrected, this contrast is interpreted as a sectoral profile contrast in the achieved sample, not as a population gap. When responses 'agree' and 'partly agree' are combined, a positive assessment predominates in most sectoral groups, ranging from approximately 60% to 77%. This suggests the item occupies a contested space between traditional foundations of value legitimation and civic-legal themes, including rights and freedoms.

Adults' values as a resource for work socialization: invariance in assessments of work-related virtues

The block of items on what has become important to respondents and their families is used to describe the value foundations of work socialization and as a resource for transmitting work norms through the immediate social environment.

For the core work-related virtues, a pronounced ceiling effect is observed. This permits the high response shares to be interpreted as a normative-declarative consensus. The subsequent emphasis is therefore placed on intersectoral dispersion rather than on absolute levels.

Responsibility: 'very important' 2,169 (93.7%). The within-sector share varies from approximately 89.9% in agriculture to approximately 100% in small subsamples.

Decency: 'very important' 2,143 (92.6%). By sector, the share of 'very important' remains approximately 90.8% to 100%.

Diligence: 'very important' 2,072 (89.5%), with moderate sectoral dispersion, approximately 85.3% to 100% for the 'very important' share within sectors.

Honesty and selflessness: 'very important' 2,021 (87.3%), with sectoral shares of 'very important' of approximately 81.7% to 94.1%.

The limited intersectoral dispersion of the 'very important' share for responsibility, decency, diligence, and honesty supports treating these qualities as elements of an intersectoral normative core. The auxiliary reliability check further supports this interpretation: the four-item work-ethics core showed acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .736; *n* = 2,300 complete cases). Extreme values in small sectoral subgroups are interpreted cautiously.

From the standpoint of designing psychological and pedagogical support, this adult consensus provides substantive grounds for a basic module of pre-vocational preparation, including self-regulation and responsibility, ethical reliability, work motivation, and persistence. At the same time, it describes the normative background and a resource for socialization, rather than the level of development of the corresponding qualities among young people.

In parallel, high importance is observed for life-domain foundations that provide motivational grounding for career self-determination: family ('very important' 2,243; 96.9%), health ('very important' 2,219; 95.9%), and education ('very important' 2,068; 89.4%).

Additionally, the value 'clean natural environment' receives a very high rating ('very important': 2,101; 90.8%). This may be interpreted as an indicator of the legitimization of environmental responsibility, which is relevant for updating the content of work-related preparation and career exploration activities.

Question Q14: first-mentioned and any-mentioned directions for youth values formation

Because Q14 allowed respondents to mark up to five response options, two indicators were calculated. The first-mentioned option captures initial salience, whereas the any-mention indicator captures whether a given value entered the respondent's broader priority set. Table 5 presents the leading priorities according to these two indicators.

The first-mentioned indicator shows a clear leading position for the cultivation of national and universal human values (1,025; 44.3%). However, the any-mention indicator demonstrates that the broader priority set is substantially wider: care for health (1,178; 50.9%), respectful attitude toward the environment (931; 40.2%), patriotic feelings (879; 38.0%), teaching diligence (782; 33.8%), responsibility for oneself and one's family (674; 29.1%), and study of cultural heritage (668; 28.9%) all become substantively visible. Thus, Q14 does not support a narrow one-dimensional interpretation of youth values education. It indicates an integrative hierarchy in which national and universal human values lead initial articulation, while health, environmental responsibility, patriotism, diligence, responsibility, and cultural heritage form the broader applied field.

The socioeconomic benchmark of decent work (Q21): normative rigidity as part of the invariant core

In the employed subsample, the statement 'decent pay and social protection, decent quality of life' is evaluated as normatively obligatory: 'mandatory' 1,973 (85.3%; Wilson 95% CI: 83.8-86.6), 'possible' 227 (9.8%), 'not suitable' 74 (3.2%), and 'difficult to answer' 40 (1.7%; n = 2,314). Sectoral point estimates for 'mandatory' are high in all large subgroups and, for most sectors, fall within approximately 82% to 88% (Table 6). Extreme values should be interpreted cautiously when the sectoral subsample size is small.

The Wilson intervals in Table 6 confirm that the decent-work benchmark is not a strong source of sectoral-compositional separation in the achieved sample. Intervals overlap substantially among all sectoral subgroups with n ≥ 50, and the wide intervals in very small sectors caution against substantive interpretation of apparent extremes.

7) Auxiliary statistical checks of sectoral association

Auxiliary tests were conducted for sectors with n ≥ 50 (unweighted n = 2,251). The purpose of these tests was not to rank sectors or establish causal sector effects, but to assess whether the article's distinction between an intersectoral normative core and a zone of variability is

supported by chi-square tests of association, Cramér's V effect-size diagnostics, Wilson interval inspection, and adjusted associations.

The results support the substantive interpretation developed above. The item on 'democratic values of Western societies' shows the most visible sectoral association among the tested indicators (Cramér's V = .136 for full agreement), and the sectoral block remains significant in the adjusted logistic regression model after controlling for gender, age group, education, financial status, and settlement type (LR $\chi^2(9) = 41.319$, $p < .001$). By contrast, the decent pay and social protection benchmark shows very weak sectoral association in cross-tabular diagnostics (Cramér's V = .057), overlapping Wilson intervals among major sectors, and no significant adjusted sectoral association in the sensitivity model (LR $\chi^2(9) = 7.997$, p = .534). The same pattern is observed for responsibility, decency, diligence, and honesty or selflessness, where Cramér's V remains below .08. These statistics describe associations in the achieved unweighted sample and are not treated as population estimates because weights and sampling design parameters were unavailable. Substantively, the most stable normative core is located in work ethics and decent-work expectations, whereas sectoral variability is concentrated in symbolically sensitive perceptions of cultural-policy orientation.

Perceived lines of value differences in society (Q4): the context of social cleavages

Distributions for the Q4 battery indicate that, in the employed subsample, the most pronounced value cleavages are associated with relations between authorities and the population ('between officials and the people': 80.5% selecting 'large differences') and with property inequality ('between affluent and low-income groups': 76.4%). High values are also observed for the generational dimension (61.5%), religious differences (61.2-62.9%), and political-ideological differences (59.6%). Urban-rural differences are evaluated as a salient line of difference (57.4%). Ethnolinguistic differences are moderate (45.3% to 46.4%), but remain socially significant. The opposition 'Turkic world versus Eurasian integration' is characterized by a high share of undecided respondents (17.5% selecting 'difficult to answer'), which limits interpretation of this axis as a stably articulated mass cleavage (Table 8).

Reflection on value changes after the January 2022 events (Q16)

In the employed subsample, responses to the question concerning what changed in Kazakhstanis' representations of themselves and their values after the January 2022 events do not, overall, indicate a radical revaluation of values. At the same time, they document a notable layer of attitudes related to responsibility and civic reflection. The most frequent response is 'nothing changed': 817 (35.3%). These were followed by 'responsibility for one's own life and the lives of others increased' (546, 23.6%) and 'recognized citizens' personal responsibility for what is happening' (281, 12.1%). Critical reflection regarding official policy in the sphere of spiritual culture is reported by 219 (9.5%), increased desire to participate in public life by 167 (7.2%), and increased apathy and pessimism by 147 (6.4%). A total of 137 respondents selected 'difficult to answer' (5.9%; Table 9).

DISCUSSION

The results make it possible to treat the societal demand directed at young people as a combination of a direct indicator of expectations (Q14) and contextual indicators of the normative background among employed adults (Q1-Q5, Q10, Q16, Q21). In the logic of socialization and career-development theories, this external normative background constitutes part of the context of career self-determination. Therefore, the linkage to pre-vocational preparation is context-analytic rather than evaluative (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lent et al., 1994).

The discussion first places these findings in relation to previous studies and then translates them into cautiously formulated implications for pre-vocational preparation.

Comparison with previous studies

The first comparison concerns research on the labor market value of social and self-regulatory qualities. Deming (2017) demonstrated the growing importance of social skills in labor markets; Heckman and Kautz (2012) argued that soft skills have robust educational and labor market consequences; and OECD competency frameworks identify autonomous action, cooperation in heterogeneous groups, and agency as key foundations of participation (OECD, 2005, 2019, 2023). More recent international analysis of future employment also connects technological skills with resilience, creativity, curiosity, lifelong learning, and social-emotional adaptability (World Economic Forum, 2025). Recent research evidence is consistent with this interpretation: Mambetova et al. (2025) report perceived gains in time management, problem-solving, strategic thinking, teamwork, and innovation skills in Kazakhstan vocational training, while Chauke (2024) highlights digital-age skills among NEET youth. The present data are consistent with this line of work, but add a normative, rather than performance-based, perspective. Responsibility (93.7%), decency (92.6%), diligence (89.5%), and honesty or selflessness (87.3%) are perceived by employed adults as very important family and work-socialization virtues, with acceptable internal consistency of the four-item work-ethics core (Cronbach's alpha = .736). Thus, social-regulatory qualities appear not only as competencies demanded by changing work but also as socially legitimized criteria of labor adaptation in the adult normative environment.

The second comparison concerns post-Soviet and youth-oriented studies of values. Kovaleva and Loginovskaya (2019), Finogenova (2024), and Ralnikova et al. (2023) primarily examine value orientations, labor mentality, or professional prospects of adolescents and high school students. Recent Kazakhstani studies complement this line by showing that adolescents' civic identity combines knowledge, values, behavior, and motivation (Gerfanova et al., 2025), that linguistic and cultural environments shape youth cultural values in multilingual settings (Zhunussova & Ryspayeva, 2025), and that youth well-being should be analyzed through education, health, and civic engagement (Baikulova et al., 2024). This study complements this research by shifting the empirical focus: Q14 measures not youth values themselves, but adult expectations about what should be instilled in young people. This distinction is important because the first-mentioned priority is the cultivation of national and universal human values (44.3%). In contrast, the any-mention indicator reveals a broader adult agenda that includes

health (50.9%), the environment (40.2%), patriotism (38.0%), diligence (33.8%), and responsibility for oneself and one's family (29.1%). The findings, therefore, describe the prescriptive socialization context surrounding youth rather than their internalized value structure.

The third comparison is with career-development literature on barriers, supports, and career self-efficacy. Social Cognitive Career Theory treats career interests and choices as mediated by self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and perceived contextual barriers and supports (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al., 1994). Recent scholarship also stresses that career guidance benefits from theoretically informed practice (Yates, 2025) and systems thinking (Patton & McMahon, 2021), while a recent career-awareness research shows that early exposure, career barriers, and industry-school partnerships are central to learners' career perceptions (Makola et al., 2025). In the present data, social inequality is the leading barrier to shared values both by first mention (51.1%) and by any mention (60.5%). In contrast, 'decent pay and social protection, decent quality of life' is evaluated as mandatory by 85.3% of employed respondents. This indicates that work values are linked not only to moral rhetoric about diligence and responsibility but also to perceived fairness, access to resources, and the institutional conditions for decent work. Accordingly, pre-vocational support should not be limited to value declarations. It should also strengthen self-efficacy, resource navigation, and the capacity to recognize and overcome social barriers.

The present study also differs from employer-centered approaches in its Kazakhstan-specific contribution. Previous studies of graduate preparation and labor market expectations often reconstruct requirements through employers, experts, professional communities, or labor-market actors (Istomina & Baranova, 2023; Shevchenko, 2022; Vesmanov et al., 2020). At the same time, recent Kazakhstan-focused research on regional standards-based vocational training shows that formal training mechanisms can be analyzed as institutional channels for work performance and innovation-skill development (Mambetova et al., 2025). By contrast, this study uses a mass employed-adult subsample *(n* = 2,314) and sectoral comparisons to describe the everyday normative layer carried by employees, entrepreneurs, self-employed respondents, and working retirees. This approach does not replace employer-demand analysis. However, it shows that intersectoral consensus on work ethics and decent work cannot be reduced to formal HR requirements. It is part of the broader public culture through which expectations about labor, responsibility, and acceptable life trajectories may be transmitted to young people.

Finally, the interpretation of inclusive support should be carefully situated within the inclusive education literature. UNESCO (2017) emphasizes removal of barriers and equitable access as conditions of inclusion, while Butabayeva et al. (2023) discuss career guidance in Kazakhstan through the lens of inclusivity. The inclusive interpretation is also consistent with recent research studies on just funding for youth with learning disabilities in vocational education and training (Nkambule & Ngubane, 2023), teacher capabilities in inclusive education (Mokhampanyane, 2024), and socio-emotional risks for adolescent students with disabilities in

inclusive settings (Al anati et al., 2025). The present data are compatible with this literature only at a general contextual level. The high salience of inequality and the near-universal decent-work benchmark support the need for accessible career guidance and individualized support. However, the instrument contains no specific variables on disability, special educational needs, accessibility conditions, or individual barriers to participation. Therefore, the inclusive implications in Table 10 should be read as design hypotheses that require a dedicated empirical module and subsequent piloting, not as direct evidence about learners with special educational needs or disabilities.

On this comparative basis, the strengthened descriptive mapping of the normative background may be used for three purposes: (a) to identify an invariant core of value-normative emphases, including work-related virtues and an orientation toward decent work, that can inform a basic module of pre-vocational preparation; (b) to delineate zones of symbolic sensitivity and translate them into an instrumental language of legal and ethical literacy of work; and (c) to document risks to value integration most frequently articulated in mass perceptions, namely inequality, the information environment, education, and civic passivity, as a rationale for including components of agency and communicative skills that international competency frameworks treat as transversal (Council of the European Union, 2018; OECD, 2005, 2019, 2023). Recent Kazakhstani evidence on project-based instruction further shows the relevance of structured tasks for creativity and collaboration in school settings (Alimanova et al., 2025), which is methodologically consonant with the proposed translation of value-normative findings into pilotable modules.

Normative consensus and social fissuring as two layers of one reality

On the one hand, responses indicate the presence of symbolic consensus: most respondents report that a basis for value unity exists in society. At the same time, because interviewer-administered surveys and sensitive value judgments are vulnerable to interviewer effects and social desirability bias (Krumpal, 2013; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007; West & Blom, 2017), this consensus should be treated as an indicator of public legitimization of umbrella values, not as a measurement of the depth of individual endorsement or a guarantee of behavioral enactment. In terms of the distinction between injunctive norms and descriptive norms (Cialdini et al., 1990), this layer is closer to injunctive norms, that is, a publicly approved vocabulary of values.

On the other hand, at the level of perceptions of social structure, pronounced fissuring is revealed, especially along lines of economic stratification and institutional trust, including the divide between officials and the people. Interpretively, this suggests that risks of social disintegration are linked less to the absence of declarative values than to experiences or expectations of injustice and asymmetric access to resources and opportunities. Within an ecological-systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), such evaluations pertain to the macro-context and institutional environment, which may indirectly influence trajectories of career self-determination and perceived barriers.

From a contextual standpoint, it may be hypothesized that declarations about values alone are insufficient if young people encounter the reality of perceived inequality and institutional distrust. Hence, as a design hypothesis for pre-vocational preparation, the linkage between values education and the development of transversal competencies should be considered. These include self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986), choice skills, planning of educational and occupational trajectories, and constructive interaction with institutions and adult authority figures.

Cultural self-identification of employed adults as a background for value-normative representations of the professional environment

The predominance of self-description through a traditional Kazakh cultural environment, alongside mixed cultural contexts, suggests a multicultural professional environment with a pronounced traditional core. Recent evidence on language, identity, and cultural value formation among adolescents in Kazakhstan strengthens this interpretation by showing that multilingual environments participate directly in cultural-value transmission (Zhunussova & Ryspayeva, 2025). Accordingly, pre-vocational support may explicitly address culturally marked norms of interaction, including respect, hierarchy, and everyday etiquette in educational and work communication, while relying on universalistic value frames as a shared language and developing communicative competence and cultural sensitivity as risk-reducing resources.

Asymmetry in perceptions of cultural-policy orientation: universalistic foundations and the variable item

The juxtaposition of high agreement that cultural policy is oriented toward universal human values with more restrained responses to the item 'democratic values of Western societies' indicates asymmetry in the perceived legitimacy of value vocabularies. Universalistic foundations are comparatively non-contentious, whereas the latter formulation more often triggers partial agreement or disagreement. The auxiliary tests show that this item is not only descriptively variable but also retains a small adjusted sectoral association after controlling for basic sociodemographic variables. In applied terms, themes of rights, equality, and nondiscrimination may be more productive when framed procedurally, through labor rights, contractual culture, and safe communication, rather than through ideologically loaded labels.

The religious factor as a zone of potential polarization and, simultaneously, a resource of meaning

Religious values occupy a notable place in the perceived value field. At the same time, the Q4 battery reports high salience of differences between believers and nonbelievers and between adherents of traditional and nontraditional religions (Table 8). For educational design, these points underscore the importance of a worldview-neutral yet culturally literate approach: respect for religious identities should be combined with a commitment to preventing worldview differences from becoming criteria for judging a learner's acceptability in educational and work settings.

Social cleavages: what exactly threatens socialization and professional adaptation

Data from the Q4 battery (Table 8) indicate that perceived tension is localized primarily in the institutional plane, namely officials versus the people, and in the property plane, namely affluent versus low-income groups. These lines are followed by generational and urban-rural contrasts; religious and political-ideological lines are also salient. In the context of pre-vocational preparation, this supports inclusion of skills for moving between social worlds, including school-to-work transition, intergenerational interaction, and heterogeneous linguistic and cultural regimes. Communication, conflict prevention, and realistic self-presentation are therefore not secondary skills, but conditions of adaptation.

What hinders shared values: the priority of structural factors over cultural explanations

The first-mention and any-mention distributions for barriers to shared values (Table 3) foreground structural explanations, above all social inequality, alongside factors of the information environment, education, and civic agency. Under near-universal support for the benchmark of decent pay and social protection (Q21), the salience of inequality links representations of decent work to perceived social justice. Recent Kazakhstani evidence on ethics and moral values in digital education shows that accessibility, data privacy, academic integrity, and institutional support are also value-relevant in digital learning environments (Tantakov et al., 2025). Substantively, this supports design hypotheses that combine values education with agency-oriented components, including self-efficacy, resource navigation, and media and digital literacy, rather than relying on declarative value messaging alone.

January 2022 as a test of the stability of the value system

Assessments of the January 2022 events (Table 9) do not indicate a radical revaluation of values for most employed respondents, since 'nothing changed' is the most frequent response. At the same time, they document a distinct layer of attitudes related to increased responsibility and civic reflection, alongside a smaller share reporting increased apathy and pessimism. For pre-vocational preparation, these responses are consistent with a high inertia of basic values, combined with situational activation of responsibility-related meanings relevant to the mature agency of a future worker and citizen.

From contextual mapping to an empirically testable educational design of pre-vocational preparation and inclusive support

The dataset primarily describes the normative background and expectations of employed adults. It does not include direct measurements of young people's values and competencies, characteristics of school practices, or effects of specific support modules. Therefore, the article's contribution is limited to specifying initial design requirements and testable hypotheses. The intersectoral normative core (Q10 and Q21) can underpin a basic module of work ethics and self-regulation; perceived cleavages and barriers (Q4 and Q5) justify modules on communication and resource navigation; and symbolically sensitive formulations motivate the use of pedagogically neutral, procedural language for civic-legal topics.

Table 10 summarizes a minimal scheme for translating key empirical results into module-level design decisions and measurable indicators for subsequent piloting in school settings, including inclusive formats.

Subsequent verification can follow design-based research with iterative piloting, combining pre- and post-measurements among learners, monitoring of implementation fidelity, and accessibility indicators, including physical, communicative, and digital indicators, in inclusive settings. Such piloting should include project-based and work-related tasks, given recent Kazakhstan-focused evidence on project-based instruction and standards-based vocational training (Alimanova et al., 2025; Mambetova et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The article provides an empirical description of the normative background of young people's work socialization in Kazakhstan, based on a nationwide survey of employed adults. The study does not evaluate school practices. Rather, it maps the external context of significant adults' expectations, which theories of socialization and career development conceptualize as a source of subjective norms, supports, and barriers shaping occupational choice. In a sectoral perspective, the analysis identifies a cross-sector core of socially approved work-related virtues and zones of variability in assessments of the normative background. The auxiliary reliability check supports the coherence of the work-ethics core. At the same time, chi-square tests, Cramér’s V diagnostics, Wilson intervals, and sensitivity regression show that sectoral association is concentrated mainly in the symbolically sensitive item on 'democratic values of Western societies,' not in the decent-work benchmark or basic work virtues.

The practical implications should be interpreted as design orientations that can be operationalized as module-level decisions and indicators for subsequent verification (Table 10). The mapped normative background can serve as a resource for formulating testable hypotheses, planning communication with adult agents of socialization, and aligning basic values-education content with cross-sector adult consensus. At the same time, the survey instrument does not include measures that would allow disability, special educational needs, or barriers to participation to be analyzed specifically. Therefore, the design of inclusive programs requires additional empirical blocks and piloting in educational organizations.

The limitations of the study are primarily related to the chosen analytical strategy and the character of the available survey design. The analyses identify descriptive and adjusted associations, but they do not establish causal effects. The study uses an achieved quota-controlled sample without post-stratification weights and without sampling-design parameters. Consequently, the results should not be presented as design-weighted national estimates, and the reported Wilson intervals should be read as precision descriptors for achieved sample proportions rather than as design-corrected population confidence intervals. The availability of respondent-level data permitted auxiliary reliability checks and unweighted regression sensitivity analyses, but not design-corrected population inference. The employment sector

functions as a respondent-level proxy for the professionally normative context rather than as a direct measure of employer requirements or organizational cultures. Some sectoral subgroups are small, which requires caution in interpreting extreme values. Finally, the dataset concerns adults, particularly employed adults, rather than learners. Consequently, the implications for pre-vocational preparation remain design hypotheses that require subsequent piloting.

Future research should be linked to strengthening the evidential rigor and applied validity of the conclusions. This requires: (1) extending multivariable analysis with official weights and sampling-design parameters when such parameters are available; (2) incorporating data on the expectations of employers and professional communities through surveys, interviews, and vacancy analysis in order to compare mass representations with institutional labor market requirements; and (3) developing and piloting specific modules of psychological and pedagogical support for pre-vocational preparation, including studies with dedicated learner samples, within the logic of design-based research (McKenney & Reeves, 2012), with evaluation of effects on indicators of adaptation, self-efficacy, accessibility of participation, and realism of career plans. Future designs should also test how theoretically informed career guidance and systems approaches can be adapted to Kazakhstan's sectoral, cultural, and inclusive-education contexts (Patton & McMahon, 2021; Yates, 2025).

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Instrumentation and Coding Rules (Excerpt)

Appendix A reproduces the question wordings and response scales used in this study and describes the coding rules and construction of derived indicators. It also clarifies the relationship between analytical question numbering used in the article and the technical variable codes in the primary Excel dataset. It is crucial to emphasize that these frameworks should not overshadow national educational priorities. Clarification is included to address apparent inconsistencies that arise when the dataset coding scheme differs from the analytical coding scheme used in the article.

Table A1. Instrumentation and coding rules used in the article (excerpt)

Variable or questionnaire block	**Wording and response scale (Russian-language version, translated into English)**	**Use and coding in the article**
Analytical coding note	Question numbers in the article follow the analytical coding scheme used in the manuscript. In the primary Excel dataset, several blocks have different technical codes.	Corresponding dataset codes are indicated where they differ: article Q2 = dataset Q3.R1-Q3.R7; article Q3 = dataset Q2; article Q4 = dataset Q5.R1-Q5.R10; article Q5 = dataset Q6(1)-Q6(3); article Q16 = dataset Q7; article Q21 = dataset Q16.R1.
Grouping variable: sector (industry) of employment / Q23	Question: 'In which sector (industry) do you work (select based on your main type of work)?' Categories: civil service and public administration bodies; Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Security Committee, and Armed Forces; industrial production; medicine, education, science, and culture; trade; transport and communications; service sector; construction; extractive industry; energy; finance; agriculture; other.	Used as the grouping variable for cross-tabulations and auxiliary sectoral tests within the employed subsample. Respondents not belonging to employed categories were excluded from sectoral comparisons. Sectoral subgroups with small sizes are interpreted cautiously.

Variable or questionnaire block	Wording and response scale (Russian-language version, translated into English)	Use and coding in the article
Q1. Cultural environment of residence	Question: 'What typically surrounds us in everyday life when we interact with people is referred to by scholars as a cultural environment. In which cultural environment do you live, and with which do you identify?' Categories include traditional Kazakh; traditional Russian; one's national culture; mixed cultural environments; European, Asian/Eastern, religious, other; difficult to answer.	Nominal variable. Used to describe respondents' cultural self-identification and the macro-level normative background. 'Difficult to answer' is retained as uncertainty and is not recoded as missing.
Q2. Value orientations of cultural development and characteristics of society	Matrix question: 'In your view, toward which values is Kazakhstan's cultural development policy oriented?' Rows used include universal human values, nationwide values, values of the Kazakh people, ethnic values, democratic values of Western societies, values of the Turkic world, and religious values. Response scale: agree; partly agree; disagree; difficult to answer.	Each row is treated as a separate ordinal indicator. Derived indicators include 'full agreement' and 'agreement' (agree plus partly agree). The row on 'democratic values of Western societies' is treated as a politically and culturally marked proxy indicator and interpreted cautiously.

Variable or questionnaire block	**Wording and response scale (Russian-language version, translated into English)**	**Use and coding in the article**
Q3. Presence of value unity	Question: 'Do you think that contemporary Kazakhstani society has value unity for all citizens, regardless of ethnic, age, educational, occupational, social-status, religious, and settlement affiliation?' Categories: yes; no; difficult to answer.	Nominal contextual indicator of declarative consensus or perceived disintegration.
Q4. Perceived value differences between population groups	Battery question on perceived differences between generations, urban and rural youth, titular ethnic group and other ethnic groups, Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking Kazakhstanis, Turkic-world and Eurasian-integration orientations, believers and nonbelievers, traditional and nontraditional religions, pro-government and opposition circles, affluent and low-income groups, and officials and the people. Scale: large differences; small differences; no differences; difficult to answer.	Used as a contextual indicator of perceived lines of social and value differentiation. Row percentages are presented for the employed subsample.

Variable or questionnaire block	Wording and response scale (Russian-language version, translated into English)	Use and coding in the article
Q5. Barriers to the formation of shared values	Question: 'From your perspective, what hinders the formation of shared values in Kazakhstani society?' Respondents could select no more than three options. Options include social inequality, different lifestyles, civic passivity, incorrect cultural policy, low level of education, negative influence of mass media/Internet/social networks, other, difficult to answer.	Two indicators are calculated: first mention as a measure of salience and any mention as a broader measure of inclusion in the respondent's barrier set. The category 'difficult to answer' is retained.
Q10. Importance of values and orientations	Matrix block: 'What, and to what extent, has become important for you and your family during the years of sovereign development?' Rows used include health, education, family, responsibility, decency, diligence, honesty and selflessness, and cleanliness of the natural environment. Scale: very important; partly important; not important at all; difficult to answer.	Primary indicator: share selecting 'very important'. The work-ethics core consists of responsibility, decency, diligence, and honesty/selflessness. As an auxiliary reliability check, 'difficult to answer' was treated as non-substantive and excluded listwise; Cronbach's α = 0.736, n = 2,300 complete cases.

Variable or questionnaire block	**Wording and response scale (Russian-language version, translated into English)**	**Use and coding in the article**
Q14. Priorities in youth values formation	Question: 'From your perspective, what is important in the formation of values among young people?' Respondents could mark no more than five options. Options include national and universal human values, cultural heritage, patriotic feelings, tolerance, environment, health, gender equality, critical and creative thinking, self-education, analytical skills, recognizing unreliable information, respect for teacher/mentor, diligence, civic position, responsibility for oneself and family, other, difficult to answer.	This is the only directly youth-focused block. Two indicators are calculated: first mention as initial salience and any mention as inclusion in the broader priority set. Results are not treated as a strict rank ordering because positional effects are possible.

Variable or questionnaire block	Wording and response scale (Russian-language version, translated into English)	Use and coding in the article
Q16. Changes in representations of values after the January 2022 events	Question: 'What changed in Kazakhstanis' representations of themselves and their values after the January 2022 events?' Categories include increased responsibility for one's own life and the lives of others; greater criticism of official policy in spiritual culture; increased apathy and pessimism; increased desire to participate in public life; recognition of citizens' personal responsibility; nothing changed; difficult to answer.	Used as a marker of perceived value changes after the January 2022 events. Presented as an employed-subsample distribution.
Q21. Attitudes and slogans of 'New Kazakhstan': decent work benchmark	Matrix row used: 'Decent pay and social protection, decent quality of life.' Scale: mandatory; possible; not suitable; difficult to answer.	Contextual indicator of the social-protection dimension of decent work. The share selecting 'mandatory' is analyzed overall and by sector; it is also used in auxiliary sectoral tests and sensitivity regression.

Variable or questionnaire block	Wording and response scale (Russian-language version, translated into English)	Use and coding in the article
Q22. Social category / employment status	Question: 'To which social category would you primarily assign yourself?' Categories include wage worker, entrepreneur, peasant farm owner, self-employed, pupil/student, working retiree, non-working retiree, unemployed seeking work, unemployed not seeking work, homemaker.	Used as the filter for the employed subsample: wage employees, entrepreneurs, peasant farm owners, self-employed respondents, and working retirees; *n* = 2,314.

Table 1.

Distribution of respondents by region of residence (n = 3,123).

Region	n	%
City of Astana	257	8.2
City of Almaty	285	9.1
City of Shymkent	164	5.2
Abai Region	98	3.1
Akmola Region	128	4.1
Aktobe Region	146	4.7
Almaty Region	225	7.2
Atyrau Region	109	3.5
West Kazakhstan Region	117	3.7
Zhambyl Region	156	5.0
Zhetysu Region	116	3.7
Karaganda Region	138	4.4
Kostanay Region	150	4.8
Kyzylorda Region	125	4.0
Mangystau Region	138	4.4
Pavlodar Region	144	4.6
North Kazakhstan Region	109	3.5
Turkestan Region	351	11.2

Region	n	%
Ulytau Region	39	1.2
East Kazakhstan Region	128	4.1
Total	3,123	100.0

Table 2.

Distribution of the employed subsample by employment sector (Q23), ~~n = 2,314.~~

Employment sector	n	%
Medicine, education, science, and culture	439	19.0
Trade	437	18.9
Service sector	379	16.4
Civil service and public administration bodies	234	10.1
Transport and communications	191	8.3
Construction	184	8.0
Industrial production	171	7.4
Agriculture	89	3.8
Other types of activities	71	3.1
Finance	56	2.4
Energy	25	1.1
Extractive industry	21	.9
Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Security Committee, and Armed Forces structures	17	.7
Total	*n = 2,314.*	

Table 3.

Barriers to the formation of shared values in Kazakhstani society: first mention and any mention (employed subsample, ~~n = 2,314).~~

Barrier to shared values	First mention, k (%)	Any mention, k (%)
Social inequality	1,182 (51.1)	1,399 (60.5)
Low level of education and culture	229 (9.9)	881 (38.1)
Negative influence of mass media, Internet, and social networks	289 (12.5)	855 (36.9)
General civic passivity	195 (8.4)	710 (30.7)

Barrier to shared values	First mention, k (%)	Any mention, k (%)
Different lifestyles among representatives of different cultures	224 (9.7)	569 (24.6)
Incorrect cultural policy	135 (5.8)	542 (23.4)
Other	8 (.3)	12 (.5)
Difficult to answer	52 (2.2)	52 (2.2)

Table 4.

Share of full agreement with the statement on 'democratic values of Western societies' by sector (employed subsample, n = 2,314): k (%) and Wilson 95% confidence intervals for sectoral proportions. For sectors with n < 30, percentages are rounded to whole numbers, and intervals should be read as reference only.

Sector (employment domain)	n	Full agreement, k (%)	Wilson 95% CI,%
Civil service and public administration bodies	234	127 (54.3)	47.9–60.5
Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Security Committee, and Armed Forces structures	17	7 (41)	21.6-64.0
Industrial production	171	59 (34.5)	27.8-41.9
Medicine, education, science, and culture	439	167 (38.0)	33.6-42.7
Trade	437	197 (45.1)	40.5-49.8
Transport and communications	191	67 (35.1)	28.7-42.1
Service sector	379	175 (46.2)	41.2-51.2
Construction	184	60 (32.6)	26.3-39.7
Extractive industry	21	9 (43)	24.5-63.5
Energy	25	13 (52)	33.5-70.0
Finance	56	15 (26.8)	17.0-39.6
Agriculture	89	35 (39.3)	29.8-49.7
Other types of activities	71	30 (42.3)	31.5-53.8

Table 5.

Leading priorities in youth values formation: first mention and any mention (Q14, employed subsample, ~~n = 2,314~~).

Youth values-formation priority	First mention, k (%)	Any mention, k (%)
Cultivation of national and universal human values	1,025 (44.3)	1,222 (52.8)
Care for health	195 (8.4)	1,178 (50.9)
Respectful attitude toward the environment	131 (5.7)	931 (40.2)

Youth values-formation priority	First mention, k (%)	Any mention, k (%)
Development of patriotic feelings	214 (9.2)	879 (38.0)
Teaching diligence	115 (5.0)	782 (33.8)
Responsibility for oneself and one's family	164 (7.1)	674 (29.1)
Study of cultural heritage	186 (8.0)	668 (28.9)

Table 6.

Support for the socioeconomic benchmark of 'decent pay' by sector (employed subsample): k (%) and Wilson 95% confidence intervals for sectoral proportions. For sectors with n < 30, percentages are rounded to whole numbers, and intervals should be read as reference only.

Sector (employment domain)	n	'Mandatory', k (%)	Wilson 95% CI,%
Civil service and public administration bodies	234	193 (82.5)	77.1-86.8
Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Security Committee, and Armed Forces structures	17	17 (100)	81.6-100.0
Industrial production	171	144 (84.2)	78.0-88.9
Medicine, education, science, and culture	439	380 (86.6)	83.1-89.4
Trade	437	370 (84.7)	81.0-87.7
Transport and communications	191	162 (84.8)	79.0-89.2
Service sector	379	332 (87.6)	83.9-90.5
Construction	184	151 (82.1)	75.9-86.9
Extractive industry	21	19 (90)	71.1-97.3
Energy	25	19 (76)	56.6-88.5
Finance	56	46 (82.1)	70.2-90.0
Agriculture	89	76 (85.4)	76.6-91.3
Other types of activities	71	64 (90.1)	81.0-95.1

Table 7.

Auxiliary χ^2 tests, Cramér's V effect-size diagnostics, and sensitivity models for selected indicators of sectoral association (sectors with n ≥ 50, unweighted ~~n = 2,251~~).

Indicator and coding	Statistic	Effect size / model result	Interpretation
'Democratic values of Western societies': full agreement vs other responses	$\chi^2(9) = 41.496$, $p < .001$	Cramér's V = .136	Small but substantively visible sectoral association

Indicator and coding	Statistic	Effect size / model result	Interpretation
'Democratic values of Western societies': agree + partly agree vs other responses	$\chi^2(9) = 27.293$, p = .001	Cramér's V = .110	Small sectoral association
Decent pay and social protection: mandatory vs other responses	$\chi^2(9) = 7.230$, p = .613	Cramér's V = .057	Very weak sectoral association
Responsibility: very important vs other responses	$\chi^2(9) = 7.471$, p = .588	Cramér's V = .058	Very weak sectoral association
Decency: very important vs other responses	$\chi^2(9) = 4.876$, p = .845	Cramér's V = .047	Very weak sectoral association
Diligence: very important vs other responses	$\chi^2(9) = 9.619$, p = .382	Cramér's V = .065	Very weak sectoral association
Honesty and selflessness: very important vs other responses	$\chi^2(9) = 12.661$, p = .179	Cramér's V = .075	Very weak sectoral association
Adjusted sectoral block for full agreement with 'democratic values of Western societies'	Binary logistic regression; controls: gender, age group, education, financial status, settlement type	LR $\chi^2(9) = 41.319$, $p < .001$	Adjusted sectoral association retained
Adjusted sectoral block for 'decent pay and social protection' as mandatory	Binary logistic regression; same controls	LR $\chi^2(9) = 7.997$, $p = .534$	No adjusted sectoral association

Table 8.

Assessment of the intensity of value differences between social groups (employed subsample, row percentages).

Pair of groups	Large differences,%	Small differences,%	No differences,%	Difficult to answer,%
Between people belonging to different generations	61.5	28.9	8.2	1.5
Between urban and rural youth	57.4	33.7	7.7	1.2
Between members of the titular ethnic group and other ethnic groups	46.4	38.1	10.6	4.9
Between Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking Kazakhstanis	45.3	39.0	13.8	1.9
Between supporters of drift toward the Turkic world and supporters of Eurasian integration	47.4	26.1	8.9	17.5
Between believers and nonbelievers	61.2	26.1	8.1	4.5
Between adherents of traditional and nontraditional religions	62.9	21.7	7.3	8.2
Between pro-government and opposition circles	59.6	20.4	7.7	12.3
Between affluent and low-income strata of the population	76.4	16.2	4.8	2.5
Between officials and the people	80.5	12.3	4.4	2.8

Table 9.

What changed after the January 2022 events (in the employed subsample)?

Response option	n	%
Responsibility for one's own life and the lives of others increased	546	23.6
Became more critical toward official policy in the sphere of spiritual culture	219	9.5
Apathy and pessimism increased	147	6.4
Desire to participate in public life increased	167	7.2
Recognized citizens' personal responsibility for what is happening	281	12.1
Nothing changed	817	35.3

Response option	n	%
Difficult to answer	137	5.9

Table 10.

Translating empirical results into design decisions for pre-vocational preparation and verifiable indicators for subsequent piloting.

Empirical result and interpretation (present article)	Design decision for pre-vocational support (module or pedagogical action)	Verifiable indicators for verification in the school setting (what to measure next)
Intersectoral normative 'core' of work-related virtues (Q10): pronounced consensus on responsibility, decency, diligence, honesty, and selflessness; auxiliary reliability check $\alpha = 0.736$.	Basic module 'Self-regulation and professional ethics': goal setting, planning, responsibility for outcomes, honesty in learning and project-based activities, and a culture of cooperation.	Dynamics of self-regulation and responsibility; quality of project-task completion and compliance with deadlines; manifestations of academic integrity; observational and self-report indicators.
Normative rigidity of the benchmark 'decent pay and social protection' (Q21) as part of mass representations of 'decent work'.	Module 'Labor literacy and economic realism': employment contract, rights and responsibilities, safe working conditions, criteria of 'decent work', and basic financial decisions.	Knowledge of basic labor rights and responsibilities; ability to analyze cases of 'working conditions or vacancy'; realism of expectations regarding income and employment conditions.
Social inequality as the most frequently first-mentioned and most broadly mentioned barrier to the formation of shared values (Q5).	Module 'Resource navigation and agency': search for educational and social resources, strategies for overcoming barriers, skills of requesting help and interacting with institutions.	Career and academic self-efficacy; skills of trajectory planning; frequency and effectiveness of seeking support; participation in career try-outs and projects.

Empirical result and interpretation (present article)	**Design decision for pre-vocational support (module or pedagogical action)**	**Verifiable indicators for verification in the school setting (what to measure next)**
High assessments of social cleavages and distrust of institutions (Q4), as well as the salience of urban-rural differences and the generational dimension.	Module 'Communication in a heterogeneous environment': negotiation, conflict prevention and resolution, respect for differences, and nondiscriminatory norms of interaction in educational and work settings.	Socio-psychological climate of the group; indicators of tolerance and acceptance of differences; reduction of conflict and exclusion; communicative skills in situational tasks.
Priorities for youth values formation (Q14): national and universal human values lead by first mention; health, environment, patriotism, diligence, responsibility, and cultural heritage form the broader any-mention priority set.	Integrative module 'Values and meaning-based career construction': linking personal plans with values, health-preserving and environmentally responsible work practices, and reflection on life scenarios.	Awareness and coherence of career plans; orientations toward health preservation; environmental responsibility; quality of reflective products (portfolio, individual plan).
Inclusivity: the instrument does not include specific measurements of disability or special educational needs and barriers to professional adaptation.	Inclusive support layer: accessible career try-outs, pathway individualization, support for self-determination and self-advocacy, and collaboration with the family and specialists.	Indicators of participation and accessibility for learners with disabilities and/or special educational needs, including physical, communicative, and digital accessibility; documented barriers and required conditions; individualized educational achievements and family satisfaction.