

# THE VALUE SYSTEM OF MODERN YOUTH AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**Abstract.** *Introduction.* The COVID-19 pandemic, which spread widely around the world at the beginning of 2020, has seriously affected the educational sphere as a whole. Under the influence of the pandemic, the psychology of young people, their value orientations, thoughts about the future, their well-being and behaviour are changing. R. Inglehart notes that this process is heterogeneous and manifests itself in different ways in different countries of the world. In developed countries with a predominance of values of self-expression and secular-rational values, the pandemic has affected more painfully than in developing countries with traditional values and values of survival. This study presents how the pandemic affected the values of student youth in Kazakhstan, a country that, according to R. Inglehart's map of cultural values, occupies a more neutral position. And also it was analysed whether the trends in Kazakhstan correlate with global ones.

*Aim.* The present research *aims* to identify how the pandemic has affected the value orientations of students in Kazakhstan and other countries around the world. The main hypothesis, derived by analogy with other countries of the world, is the assertion that the pandemic has led to widespread depressions among Kazakh youth, shaking their life values and the importance of education.

*Methodology and research methods.* The theoretical and methodological basis of the article was the research of R. Inglehart and C. Welzel, devoted to the problems of values, including in the conditions of the pandemic crisis. The survey method was also used. It was conducted on the basis of a sample formed: one thousand full-time university students from 17 regions of Kazakhstan (three megacities and 14 regions). A questionnaire containing 13 key questions concerning the values of young people, their prospects for the future, fears and anxieties, and the quality of education was used.

*Results.* The results of this study and their comparison with similar surveys in other countries of the world allowed the authors to conclude that Kazakh students in general are experiencing the same negative consequences of the pandemic as their peers from other countries. However, in matters of life goals, educational values, career prospects and general well-being, Kazakhstani students show great resilience and a positive attitude. Based on R. Inglehart's position, this happened due to the low economic development of the country, which, according to his system of values, is classified as developing countries with a strong traditional way of life and the predominance of survival values.

*Scientific novelty.* The article for the first time attempts to analyse the values of Kazakh students through the prism of the concept of R. Inglehart and C. Welzel, and also shows the impact of the pandemic on the well-being, quality of education and value orientations of young people in Kazakhstan and other countries of the world.

*Practical significance.* The materials of the article can be used to develop new approaches to teaching/educating students, taking into account the impact of the pandemic, the deterioration of the well-being of students and the crisis of values. This study reveals the specifics of these processes in Kazakhstan, one of the post-Soviet countries belonging to developing, traditional countries.

**Keywords:** pandemic crisis, Inglehart's map of cultural values, distance education, students' well-being, value orientations.

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## СИСТЕМА ЦЕННОСТЕЙ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ МОЛОДЕЖИ ПОСЛЕ ПАНДЕМИИ COVID-19

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**Аннотация.** *Введение.* Пандемия COVID-19, широко распространившаяся по миру в начале 2020 года, серьезно повлияла на образовательную сферу в целом. Под влиянием пандемии меняются психология молодых людей, их ценностные ориентации, мысли о будущем, их самочувствие и поведение. Р. Инглхарт отмечает, что данный процесс неоднороден и в разных странах мира проявляется по-разному. В развитых странах с преобладанием ценностей самовыражения и секулярно-рациональных ценностей пандемия сказалась более болезненно, нежели в развивающихся странах с традиционными ценностями и ценностями выживания. В данном исследовании представлено, как пандемия сказалась на ценностях студенческой молодежи в Казахстане – стране, которая, согласно карте культурных ценностей Р. Инглхарта, занимает нейтральное положение, а также проанализировано, соотносятся ли тенденции в Казахстане с общемировыми.

*Цель.* Основной целью данного исследования является выявление того, как пандемия повлияла на ценностные ориентиры студенческой молодежи в Казахстане и других странах. Основная гипотеза, выведенная по аналогии с другими странами мира, заключается в утверждении, что

пандемия привела к широким депрессиям среди казахстанской молодежи, пошатнув их жизненные ценности и значимость обучения.

*Методология и методы исследования.* Теоретико-методологической базой статьи выступили исследования Р. Инглхарта и К. Вельцеля, посвященные проблематике ценностей, в том числе в условиях пандемийного кризиса. Был также использован метод опроса. Он проводился на основе сформированной выборки: 1000 студентов очных отделений вузов из 17 регионов Казахстана (трех мегаполисов и 14 областей). Использовалась анкета, содержащая 13 ключевых вопросов, касающихся ценностей молодых людей, их перспектив на будущее, страхов и тревог, качества образования.

*Результаты.* Результаты данного исследования и их сравнение с аналогичными опросами в других странах мира позволяют сделать вывод, что казахстанские студенты в целом переживают такие же негативные последствия пандемии, как и их сверстники из других стран. Однако в вопросах жизненных целей, образовательных ценностей, карьерных перспектив и общего благополучия казахстанские студенты проявляют большую жизнестойкость и позитивный настрой. Исходя из позиции Р. Инглхарта, это произошло из-за невысокого экономического развития страны, причисляемой, согласно его системе ценностей, к странам развивающимся, с сильным традиционным укладом и преобладанием ценностей выживания.

*Научная новизна.* В статье впервые сделана попытка проанализировать ценности казахстанской студенческой молодежи сквозь призму концепции Р. Инглхарта и К. Вельцеля, а также показано влияние пандемии на самочувствие, качество образования и ценностные ориентации молодежи в Казахстане и других странах мира.

*Практическая значимость.* Материалы статьи могут быть использованы для разработки новых подходов к обучению/воспитанию студенческой молодежи с учетом влияния пандемии, ухудшения самочувствия студенческой молодежи и кризиса ценностей. Настоящее исследование вскрывает специфику данных процессов в Казахстане – одной из стран постсоветского пространства, относящихся к развивающимся, традиционным странам.

**Ключевые слова:** пандемийный кризис, карта культурных ценностей Инглхарта, дистанционное образование, самочувствие студентов, ценностные ориентации.

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# EL SISTEMA DE VALORES DE LA JUVENTUD MODERNA DESPUÉS DE LA PANDEMIA COVID-19

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**Abstracto. Introducción.** La pandemia de la COVID-19, que se extendió ampliamente por todo el mundo a principios de 2020, ha afectado gravemente al sector educativo en su conjunto. Bajo la influencia de la pandemia, la psicología de los jóvenes, sus orientaciones valorativas, los pensamientos sobre el futuro, su bienestar y comportamiento están cambiando. R. Inglehart señala que este proceso es heterogéneo y se manifiesta de manera diversa en diferentes países del mundo. En países desarrollados con predominio de valores de autoexpresión y valores tanto seculares como racionales, la pandemia ha incidido más dolorosamente que en países en vías de desarrollo con valores tradicionales y valores de sobrevivencia. Este estudio presenta cómo la pandemia ha afectado los valores de la juventud estudiantil en Kazajistán, país que, según el mapa de valores culturales de R. Inglehart, ocupa una posición neutral, y también analiza si las tendencias en Kazajistán se correlacionan con las tendencias globales.

**Objetivo.** El objetivo principal de este estudio es identificar cómo la pandemia ha afectado las orientaciones valorativas de los jóvenes estudiantes en Kazajistán y otros países. La hipótesis principal, derivada por analogía con otros países del mundo, es la afirmación de que la pandemia ha provocado una depresión generalizada entre los jóvenes kazajos, sacudiendo sus valores de vida y la importancia de la educación.

**Metodología, métodos y procesos de investigación.** La base teórica y metodológica del artículo ha sido la investigación de R. Inglehart y K. Welzel dedicada a las cuestiones de valores, incluso en el contexto de una crisis pandémica. También se utilizó el método de la encuesta. Se realizó sobre la base de una muestra formada: 1000 estudiantes universitarios de tiempo completo de 17 regiones de Kazajistán (tres metrópolis y 14 regiones). Se utilizó un cuestionario que contenía 13 preguntas clave sobre los valores de los jóvenes, sus perspectivas respecto al futuro, miedos y angustias, y la calidad de la educación.

**Resultados.** Los resultados de este estudio y su comparación con encuestas similares en otros países del mundo nos permiten concluir que los estudiantes kazajos, en general, experimentan las mismas consecuencias negativas de la pandemia que sus pares de otros países. Sin embargo, en cuestiones de objetivos de vida, valores educativos, perspectivas de carrera y bienestar general, los estudiantes kazajos muestran una gran capacidad de recuperación y una actitud positiva. Con base en la posición de R. Inglehart, esto se ha debido al bajo desarrollo económico del país, que, según su sistema de valores, se clasifica como un país en desarrollo con una fuerte forma de vida tradicional y un predominio de valores de supervivencia.

**Novedad científica.** En el artículo por primera vez se hace un intento de analizar los valores de la juventud estudiantil de Kazajistán a través del prisma del concepto de R. Inglehart y K. Welzel, y también muestra el impacto de la pandemia en el bienestar, la calidad de educación y orientaciones valorativas de los jóvenes en Kazajistán y de otros países del mundo.

*Significado práctico.* El material del artículo en mención se pueden utilizar para desarrollar nuevos enfoques para enseñar y educar a los jóvenes estudiantes, teniendo en cuenta el impacto de la pandemia, el deterioro del bienestar del estudiantado joven y la crisis de valores. Este estudio revela las especificidades de estos procesos en Kazajistán, uno de los países postsoviéticos pertenecientes a los países tradicionales en vías de desarrollo.

**Palabras claves:** crisis pandémica, mapa de valores culturales de Inglehart, educación a distancia, bienestar estudiantil, orientaciones valorativas.

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has stretched over several years, has taken the world by surprise. No country was ready for such a test. The education system has also been seriously affected. According to UNESCO, in the middle of April 2020, schools were closed in 191 countries in the world, and more than 1.5 billion students switched to distance education.<sup>1</sup> This process, which, only at first glance, seems temporary, in fact causes serious concerns of the academic community with deep socio-economic consequences and a new round of the global educational crisis.

The problem of values did not come to the fore by chance. As J. Trinidad rightly points out, “initial studies on education and COVID-19 often focus on technology use, student learning, and school reopening plans. However, debates on the form of instruction have become futile when stakeholders are unclear about what the competing values, issues, and priorities are” [1].

“Higher education is one of the most effective channels for broadcasting social norms”, according to A. Zolotov and N. Pripuzova [2]. The pandemic has called the importance of higher education into question. “Is it worth studying further when the world is unstable?” – this question is asked by millions of students around the world.

The pandemic has become that pivotal crisis moment that not only changes people’s way of life but also significantly affects their values, attitudes, worldview, and perception of the world. Researchers C. Forster, A. Hawlitschek and R. Hajji rightly point out that “students worldwide belong to a vulnerable group with an above-average tendency towards depressive disorders. Empirical studies also show that depressive feelings among students have increased significantly during the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic” [3].

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. Startling digital divides in distance learning emerge [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2022 Apr 21]. Available from: <https://en.unesco.org/news/startling-digital-divides-distance-learning-emerge>

The Coronavirus pandemic is a fairly new phenomenon and its impact on the higher education system and the value picture of the world of young people has not yet been fully studied. There are very few research materials devoted to this issue, including in Kazakhstan.

All this leads us to the need to study the impact of the pandemic on the values of young people, their ideas about the world, education, profession, and the future.

The purpose of this study is to identify how the pandemic affected the student youth in Kazakhstan and changed their value orientations.

Based on studies conducted abroad, we deduce the main hypothesis of the study: the pandemic led to widespread depression among Kazakh youth, shaking their life values and the importance of education.

This study is limited to Kazakhstan, one of the post-Soviet countries, as well as the fact that it was conducted online through an online questionnaire (due to the lockdown and subsequent strict quarantine throughout the country).

## Literature Review

The scientific and theoretical basis of the research was the works of R. Inglehart and C. Welzel [4]. R. Inglehart proved that human values are not unchangeable and can change under the influence of various factors. He also singled out materialistic and post-materialistic values, believing that the values of modern youth belong more to the second category. A. Almakayeva and A. Mavletova note that “young cohorts who were socialised in conditions of existential security are the main carriers of postmaterialist values and the main driving force of the modernisation process” [5]. These postmaterialist values are essentially emancipatory values, which “provide for the primacy of personal freedom over group discipline, diversity over compliance with group norms, and the independence of citizens from state power” [6]. At the same time, in different countries, as noted by R. Khabibulin and O. Deineka, “the fundamental values and beliefs characteristic of members of advanced societies radically differ from the values and beliefs of residents of less developed countries – and that these values evolve in a predictable direction in the process of socio-economic development” [6].

According to the cultural values map by Inglehart, countries with low economic development are more traditional, and survival values (materialistic values) prevail in them, while rational-secular values and self-expression values are widespread in countries with high economic development. However, some researchers, such as D. Davydov, critically evaluate Inglehart’s concept, considering that “the genuine flourishing of postmaterialistic values is impossible in a capitalist society” [7]. D. Davydov notes that postmaterialistic trends in developed countries can quickly reverse, and recent studies of youth show a significant shift towards materialistic priorities (money, career, fame, etc.) [7].

However, the concept of R. Inglehart is a good tool for assessing changes in the value system of people, especially during periods of crisis. Any crisis is a spotlight that illuminates the peculiarities of social structure. M. Sheena et al. believe that

“the social value orientations of society determine people’s behaviour and are crucial in times of crisis” [8].

A study conducted by R. Inglehart and M. Lampert in 2020 showed that “threats to survival generally make people more authoritarian and xenophobic, while safe conditions promote a more open and tolerant worldview”.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, people around the world have become more fearful, hostile, and upset, and on the other hand, strict quarantines have led to increased attention to individual choice and non-material aspects of life.

The results of R. Inglehart are supported by numerous studies conducted in different countries around the world. The focus of this study is on the values of student youth. Therefore, scientific studies related to the values and well-being of students are presented. The selection of materials was made through the Web of Science database for 2020 and 2021, as well as foreign media materials for the specified period. The keywords include the impact of the pandemic on higher education, the well-being of students, and the quality of online and distance education during the pandemic.

#### ***Scientific studies of the relationship between life goals and future profession among student youth.***

An analysis of the research literature of recent years has shown that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the well-being and value orientations of young people around the world. According to a study conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research in the United States, American respondents showed less clarity about their goals and ideas for future work or career, many students in the United States were not sure whether it was worth studying at university or not [9]. A number of researchers, including H. Johnes, M. Manze, V. Ngo and others stressed that “students experienced high rates of anxiety/depression and financial instability due to the pandemic” [10]. This situation occurred largely due to economic factors: the financial problems of young people in the United States and the loss of income during the quarantine. N. Rodriguez-Planas presented this as a percentage: “The pandemic also deprived 39% of the students of their jobs and reduced the earnings of 35% and the expected household income of 64%” [11].

In the UK, as M. Hamilton study shows, the average life satisfaction rate among students has decreased: it has become much lower than that of the adult population (5.8 vs. 7 out of 10) [12].

In Australia, according to a study by N. Zhou published in The Guardian newspaper, the majority of students are unsure about their financial future (64%) and postpone achieving their main life goals due to the COVID-19 pandemic (69%). Thus, the survey conducted by N. Zhou revealed a broad pessimism prevalent among Australian students. The majority of young people claimed that it would be unlikely for them to retire before the age of 65, find their dream house or job connected not

<sup>1</sup> Inglehart R., Lampert M. Two faces of COVID-19 impact: The pandemic ignites fear, but boosts progressive ideals and calls for inclusive economic growth [Internet]. n.d. [cited 2022 Apr 21]. Available from: <https://globalities.com/reports/valuestrends>



only with paying the bills. 84% out of 1000 young Australians said that it became more difficult to get a job after COVID-19 [13]. The pandemic has also affected the financial stability of young people. B. Jessup, H. Heng, T. Podubinski, K. Obamiro and others provide the following data: “36.6% of students reporting a reduction in income and 43.1% of students reporting a reduction in, or cessation of regular employment” [14].

In Russia, according to a study by Ural Federal University, 57.2% of respondents among students said that they lost control over the situation and their lives, felt the loss of goals, lack of plans and uncertainty.<sup>1</sup>

#### ***Scientific studies of correlation and dichotomy of spiritual and material values for young people.***

Some scientists, including O. Moldes, D. Dineva and L. Ku, assume that “the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in the factors that typically facilitate the endorsement of materialistic values (e.g., higher media consumption, stress and anxiety, loneliness, death anxiety, and lower moods)” [15].

However, the surveys show that non-material values have become more important. Thus, for the US students, according to a survey conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research, the family also took the first place in the values picture of the world of young people [9].

#### ***Scientific research on the study of the main fears of young people.***

In Russia, according to a study by Ural Federal University, along with the growth of traditional fears, young people have new, pandemic ones. These fears were either absent before the Coronavirus, or were very poorly expressed. According to the study, 88% of the survey participants noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the state of anxiety; 65.9% of respondents are worried about their state of health (own health, their relatives' and friends' state of health). There are also fears for the future among the leaders in the list (57.2%): the respondents note that they lose control of the situation and their lives.

In Canada, in a study by scientists led by K. Schwartz one in four student respondents noted that their stress level was above critical thresholds [16].

The studies of Turkish scientists L. Aslan, D. Ochnik, O. Cinar illustrate that “students' mental health during the pandemic is at high risk” [17]. In a similar vein to the above is the situation in Saudi Arabia. As part of the study, A. Alyoubi, E. Halstead and others, note that “undergraduate students reported high levels of depression, anxiety, and perceived stress and low levels of resilience during the pandemic” [18]. The students from other countries around the world also suffered from this situation: in Mexico [19], Brazil [20], China [21], Egypt [22], South Africa [23], South Korea [24] and lots of other countries in the world. In the results of Iranian research, conducted by a group of scientists led by Jenabi show that “although stress status was normal among most high school students, the status of anxiety and depression was high” [25].

<sup>1</sup> 3 Young people have pandemic fears [Internet]. Ural Federal University named after the First President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin; 2021 [cited 2022 Apr 21]. Available from: <https://urfu.ru/ru/news/35209> (In Russ.)



In the USA, according to a study by S. Wang and J. Goodman, the students also showed “high rates of depression and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic” [26].

Researchers C. Son, S. Hegde, A. Smith and others have identified multiple factors that contributed to an increase in the level of stress, anxiety and depressive thoughts among students. These include fear and concern for their own health and for their loved ones (91%), difficulties with concentration (89%), sleep disorders (86%), decreased social interactions due to physical distancing (86%) and increased concerns about academic progress (82%) [27].

Other researchers, including N. Charles, S. Strong, L. Burns and others, also noted that in spring, 2020 the students “reported more mood disorder symptoms, perceived stress, and alcohol use than did pre-pandemic participants and worried about COVID-19 negative impact on their wellbeing” [28].

#### ***Scientific studies of the specifics of full-time and distance education for students.***

A study conducted by scientists in 62 countries among 30,383 students showed that in the conditions of isolation around the world and the transition to online learning, students at the initial stage were most satisfied with the support provided by the teaching staff and universities. Subsequently, they considered computer skills insufficient, and also noted an increase in the academic workload. Students were concerned about the questions concerning their future professional career and studies; they experienced boredom, anxiety and frustration [29].

The report prepared by the International Labour Organisation “Youth and the COVID-19 pandemic: Impact on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being” reports that 65% of young people during the pandemic received less knowledge due to the fact that the closure of educational institutions led to the switch from full-time education to online or remote study. All of them strive to continue their studies and professional training, but half of them believe that their academic training may be delayed now, and 9% are not sure that they will be able to complete it.<sup>1</sup>

In the USA, the results of a survey conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research showed that the respondents’ satisfaction rate with the quality of education in the pandemic was low: many believe that both quality and experience have significantly deteriorated in the COVID era [9].

According to the research in Romania, conducted by A. Buzatu, C. Cojoc and other scientists, “although in favour of online education, students are unsure if the quality of it matches the quality of the traditional face-to-face education” [30]. Researcher M. Btoush from Jordan points at the gender differences in getting online education. He noted that “there are gender-related differences in the perceptions of the quality of the online courses and distance education” [31].

Chinese researchers, including A. Clark, H. Nong and others, note that “not all online education was equal: students who were given recorded online lessons from

<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization. COVID-19 disrupts education of more than 70 per cent of youth [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2020 Aug 11]. Available from: [https://www.ilo.org/moscow/news/WCMS\\_753125/lang--ru/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/moscow/news/WCMS_753125/lang--ru/index.htm)

external higher-quality teachers had higher exam scores than those whose lessons were recorded by teachers from their own school” [32].

Scientists from India R. Gupta, A. Aggarwal and their colleagues believe that online education has provided a solution in the current scenario, but it cannot replace offline learning, which ensures the holistic development of young minds for a better future [33].

Other researchers also reckon that online education was a kind of salvation in the pandemic’s period but afterwards it cannot be considered to be an acceptable efficient method.

About half (49%) of students in the UK, according to a study conducted by M. Hamilton, reported that the pandemic had a strong or significant impact on their academic progress [12].

Tomsk State University, with the support of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, in collaboration with specialists from 10 other Russian universities, conducted a study on Russians’ attitudes towards the transition to distance learning during the pandemic. In Russia, the transition to distance learning, according to researches, has not become a “disaster”; the Russian higher educational system has shown resistance to abrupt changes. However, due to the lack of social contacts and student life, the physical and psychological well-being of students has significantly worsened.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, based on the analysis of scientific and other literature dedicated to axiological problems of student youth during the pandemic, the mental, psychological, and spiritual problems of youth become obvious, as well as a reassessment of their values from material goods to non-material ones, the emergence of doubts about the world order and established life goals, uncertainty about the future, and dissatisfaction with the quality of higher education.

The categorical-conceptual apparatus of this study consists of the terms of axiology and concepts from R. Inglehart’s concept.

“Value” is understood as the meaning-forming foundation of human existence, which sets the direction and motivation of human life [34]. Value orientations are a person’s selective attitude to material and spiritual values, a system of his/her attitudes, beliefs, preferences expressed in consciousness and behaviour, a way for a person to differentiate objects by their significance [35].

In R. Inglehart’s concept, traditional values (giving special importance to religion, family, respect for authority, national belonging, and public over individual, etc.) and secular-rational values (with opposite characteristics, low role of religion, preference for a secular state, prevalence of individual over collective) are distinguished, as well as survival values, which include material goods, security, obedience, low assessment of human rights, xenophobia, and self-expression values, manifested in a high assessment of human rights, striving for success and material goods, attention to economy and gender equality.

<sup>1</sup> TGU. Education during the pandemic: Social hunger and fears of students [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2020 Aug 26]. Available from: [https://www.tltsu.ru/about\\_the\\_university/news/detail.php?ID=277991](https://www.tltsu.ru/about_the_university/news/detail.php?ID=277991) (In Russ.)

The cultural orientation map compiled by sociologists R. Inglehart, C. Welzel and their colleagues shows how changes in people's values affect economic development, the establishment of democracy, and the quality of life of citizens in different countries of the world. As economic development and the provision of all members of society with a basic set of material goods (guarantee of survival) occur, traditional values gradually give way to secular-rational values, and survival values are replaced by post-materialistic self-expression values. However, in crisis moments, the situation changes in the opposite direction.

### **Methodology, Materials and Methods**

The concept of values presented in the works of R. Inglehart and Ch. Welzel was chosen as a theoretical and methodological basis for studying the value picture of the worlds of youth in Kazakhstan and the impact of the pandemic on it. In along with the "traditional/secular-rational values" axis, there is a "materialistic/post-materialistic values" axis, or "survival values / values of self-expression" axis [4], which allows us to judge not only the specifics of values in different countries of the world, but also the dynamics of changes in values over time.

Kazakhstan, according to R. Inglehart's map of cultural values, occupies a position close to neutral. The bias towards traditional values is small, however, there is a significant bias towards survival values (compared to the values of self-expression). In general, the country is located in the lower left quarter of the coordinate system, next to poorer and less developed countries.

A study conducted by R. Inglehart and M. Lampert in 2020 identified 9 international value trends that emerged during the pandemic and the COVID-19 crisis. These trends include increasing fear and pessimism, growing attention to post-materialism and freedom, decreasing attention to patriarchy, law, and order, growing support for emancipation and equality, growing attention to sharing and community, decreased attention to hedonism, increased attention to health, growing ecological problems, and a growing emphasis on inclusive economic growth. The research conducted will allow us to trace how the values of young people in Kazakhstan change within the paradigm of R. Inglehart's values and under the influence of the pandemic. It will also allow us to compare them with the results presented in studies conducted in other countries.

As for the quantitative component of the study, an online survey method was chosen (via a Google form). The sample is non-representative. The survey was conducted in April–May 2021. More than 1000 students from 17 regions of Kazakhstan participated in the survey: 3 cities and 14 regions of Kazakhstan. Students from Kazakhstan universities of different levels (from 1 to 4), different languages of instruction (Kazakh, Russian, English), and different specialities (from technical to humanitarian) participated in the survey.

The questionnaire (Table 1) included 13 key questions regarding the values of young people, their future perspectives, fears and concerns, and the quality of education.

The results of the survey will visually demonstrate whether the survey results correspond to the position of Kazakhstan, as defined in the studies of R. Inglehart, as well as whether the trends in the country correlate with global trends during the pandemic.

## Results

The conducted research revealed the trends in the field of higher education in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Table 1).

Table 1

### Assessment of the quality of higher education and the well-being of students in the Republic of Kazakhstan

Number	Questions	Response options	Answer
1	Do you have a specific goal in life?	Yes	86.6%
		No	2.9%
		Find it difficult to answer	10.5%
2	What is the most valuable thing for you in life?	Family	60.9%
		Health	14.1%
		Career	9.5%
		Money	4.8%
		Education	2.8%
		Everything else	7.9%
3	Why is university education valuable?	It allows you to acquire a profession	44.7%
		To become educated	33.4%
		To prepare for an independent life	15.1%
		It helps to become rich	4%
		To establish yourself among close people	1.9%
4	Will a quality of higher education help ensure a successful career and self-realisation?	Own answer	0.9%
		Yes	82%
		No	8.2%
		Find it difficult to answer	9.8%
5	What should your future profession bring you?	Pleasure from activity	49.8%
		To be useful to people	22.3%
		A high income	21.7%
		To be prestigious	6.2%
6	What values are more important to you: material or spiritual?	Spiritual	57.2%
		Material	19.1%
		Find it difficult to answer	23.7%
7	What feelings do you most often experience?	48.5%	
		Normal vitality, even feelings	30.9%
		Emotional uplift, cheerfulness	9%
		A state of unbalance, a sense of anxiety	
		Depression	4.8%
A sense of indifference to everything	4.2%		
	Other feelings		
		2.6%	

8	What causes fear and uncertainty in later life?	The fear of not realising themselves	54%
		Problems with employment	11.4%
		Fear of being left without means of livelihood	11.2%
		Health problems	10.3%
		Problems with marital status	8.5%
		Other fears	4.6%
9	What format of training do you prefer?	Full-time training	50.6%
		Distance learning	26.7%
		Mixed training	22.7%
10	How do you rate the quality of education during a pandemic?	High	40.8%
		Above average	30.2%
		Average	24.5%
		Below average	3.2%
		Low	1.3%
11	How do you rate the quality of education during a pandemic? (on a scale of 1 to 5)	5	34.3%
		4	36.8%
		3	21.9%
		2	5.5%
		1	1.5%
12	Do your life goals coincide with your future profession?	Yes	43.3%
		Partially	47.6%
		No	6.3%
		Find it difficult to answer	2.8%
13	Do you plan to work in the future in your speciality?	Yes	67.4%
		No	8.6%
		Find it difficult to answer	24%

## Discussion

The key hypothesis of the research was that the pandemic led to widespread depression among Kazakh youth, shaking their values and the importance of education.

This was indicated by the conclusions of the study by R. Inglehart and M. Lampert during the pandemic in 2020, conducted in 24 countries around the world. Scientists believe that youth aged 18–34 were the most affected population group. They demonstrated a deterioration in mental health, growing pessimism, hostility, and concern about unemployment and the economy. Young people – even more than the elderly – called for greater income equality, as the realities of the pandemic and long-term prospects for the future were bleak:

Despite the pandemic crisis, Kazakhstan students confirmed that they have a certain life goal (86.6% of respondents). The majority (82%) link a successful career and self-realisation with obtaining quality higher education.

The majority of Kazakhstan students consider spiritual values more important than material ones (57.2% versus 19.1%). In the hierarchy of values, family (60.9%), health (14.1%), and only thirdly, career (9.5%) prevail.

At the same time, one in five students admitted that they have begun to experience negative emotions more often (feelings of imbalance, anxiety, depression,

indifference, etc.). Among the main fears of Kazakh student youth are the fear of not realising oneself (54%), problems with employment (11.4%), the fear of being left without means of subsistence (11.2%), health problems (10.3%), and problems with family status (8.5%).

The majority of students consider in-person education to be the best form of education. The quality of distance learning in Kazakhstan is evaluated by young people as high but at 4 points.

Thus, there was no widespread depression among students in Kazakhstan, the pandemic did not shake life goals and values, the importance of education remained as high as before the pandemic.

For comparison, American respondents, according to the study by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research in the USA, showed less clarity about their goals and ideas about future work or career [9]. In Australia, the survey conducted by N. Zhou showed widespread pessimism among students [13]. In Russia, according to the study by Ural Federal University, most of the students said they lost control of the situation and their lives, felt the loss of goals, lack of plans and uncertainty in the future.

Regarding mental health and depression, trends in Kazakhstan correspond to global ones, but are less pronounced. For example, in Kazakhstan, only a fifth of respondents reported experiencing negative feelings, while in global studies, this figure is usually higher. According to a UNICEF survey on the impact of COVID on the mental health of teenagers and young people conducted in 9 countries among more than 8,000 respondents, one-third (27%) reported experiencing anxiety, and another 15% reported experiencing depression; 43% of girls and 31% of boys are pessimistic about the future.<sup>1</sup>

According to the report “Youth and the COVID-19 pandemic: Impact on jobs, education, rights, and mental well-being” by the International Labour Organisation, 50% of young people may potentially experience feelings of anxiety or depression, and another 17% are likely already experiencing these problems.

As we can see, the pandemic is having a serious impact on the mental health of young people around the world. A. Krendl believes that “during a pandemic, indicators of mental health, stress and loneliness increase” [36]. The results of one of the studies in general show that “the combined prevalence of anxiety symptoms is 31%, the total prevalence of depressive symptoms is 34%” [37], which is considered quite high. In addition, “resilience and life satisfaction play a mediating role in the relationship between stress and the scale of burnout” [38].

In general, scientists are united in the belief that “mental health screening and intervention should be a top priority for universities and colleges during a pandemic” [39].

As for the goals in life and the value of learning, 43.3% of respondents in Kazakhstan noted that their life goals coincide with their chosen profession, and 47.6%

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF. The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of adolescents and young people [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2022 Apr 21]. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/impact-covid-19-mental-health-adolescents-and-youth>

noted that they partially coincide. Kazakhstan students in general do not question the value of education, emphasising that higher education allows them to acquire a profession (44.7%), become educated (33.4%), prepare for independent life (15.1%), get rich (4%), and establish themselves among close people (1.9%).

The situation is markedly different in other countries. For example, in the United States, according to research, young people seriously question the need for continuing education in universities (“Is college worth it?”) [40].

Why do the data in Kazakhstan differ in some way from the global ones?

The answer is clarified by R. Inglehart’s map of cultural values, which assigns Kazakhstan a more neutral position in the structure of values. Being a country where survival values (materialistic values) prevail over self-expression values (post-materialistic values), traditions over secular-rational values, this allowed the country to emerge from the pandemic with fewer losses.

Traditions in Kazakhstan remain significant to this day, with strong family and kinship ties. The country is still divided into three major “juzes” (hordes), which are in turn divided into many tribes and clans. In this regard, the main value for the inhabitants of the country has always been the family. The only thing worth noting is the inclusion of health in the list of top priorities following the pandemic. Previously, it ranked third after friendship, according to a study conducted by G. Sarsembek [41]. In this study, however, friendship did not make the top list of youth’s most important values, and health became more valuable. Scientists S. Towne, J. Weber and others emphasise that “collective traumas such as the COVID-19 pandemic can trigger an immediate shift in values” [42]. Here we see the direct impact of the pandemic, with fears for one’s life and health, causing a reevaluation of values among respondents. Students highlighted their career, largely as a result of their successful studies at university, as one of the top three priorities.

In this regard, it is worth noting that, according to a 2020 study conducted by R. Inglehart and M. Lampert, it was revealed that not only Kazakhstan, but also developing countries as a whole were less affected by the pandemic than developed ones. This is due to the fact that in developed countries people gave more preference to the values of self-expression than to the values of survival, and during the pandemic – this trend went in the opposite direction, while in developing countries survival values were initially more widespread and the pandemic did not change them much. The “reservoir of mental stability” in advanced economies has quickly been depleted.

Thus, it should be noted that in Kazakhstan, the student youth did not experience widespread depression, as in other (developed) countries of the world, did not change life goals and priorities, and also did not reduce faith in education. Based on R. Inglehart’s position, this was due to the low economic development of the country. Even before the pandemic, young people in Kazakhstan were concerned about survival problems. Moreover, Kazakhstan belongs to countries with a strong traditional way of life. Thus, the pandemic has not significantly changed the basic values of young people.



## Conclusions

The results of this study and their comparison with similar surveys in other countries of the world allow us to conclude that Kazakhstan students in general are experiencing the same negative consequences of the pandemic as their peers from other countries.

However, in matters of life goals, educational values, career prospects and general well-being, Kazakhstan students show great resilience and a positive attitude associated with the specifics of Kazakhstan society, belonging to developing, traditional countries, with pronounced survival values (materialistic values). It is this (close to neutral) place that Kazakhstan occupies in the map of cultural values of R. Inglehart. Like other developing countries, Kazakhstan youth, due to their value characteristics, were less affected by the pandemic.

Nevertheless, we believe that the pandemic is not a fully understood problem at the moment. It seems that in the issues of overcoming the negative consequences of the pandemic for the mental health of students and further motivation of young people, more in-depth studies of the value orientations of young people are needed. It is imperceptible to the eye, but changes in the value foundations lead modern researchers to the need to revise and reassess existing approaches to teaching/educating young people. Thus, in this aspect, the conducted research complements the ideas about the relationship of students' value perceptions with their well-being and assessment of educational events that occurred during the pandemic and reveals the specifics of the situation in Kazakhstan.

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A. S. Begalinov – development of research methodology, preparation of a questionnaire for the survey, critical analysis and revision of the text.

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