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Examining the Socio-Political Implications of Internal Labour Migration in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

This study examines the socio-economic and political implications of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan. The aim of the study is to identify the factors and causes of internal labour migration, with further analysis of the consequences of these factors and their impact on labour markets and other aspects. This thesis applies descriptive and secondary data analysis and investigates government sources, national statistics, and the studies of other scholars on this topic. Wage differentials between regions and regional socio-economic and political differences were identified as the main factors of internal labour migration. To make a profound analysis, the effectiveness of government resettlement programs such as Serpin 2050 and Enbek were also considered. According to main results of this study, higher average wages and better living conditions in urban centers, such as Astana and Almaty, pull a significant inflow of low-income citizens. This inflow leads to unequal distribution in the labour market, particularly oversaturation of urban labour markets and workplace shortages in rural areas. The study points to the essence of a structured migration policy. It notes the importance of taking into account both the factors of inflow to rural areas and the factors of attraction to urban centers. It also emphasizes the importance of sustainable economic development and infrastructure improvement in the regions. This thesis underlines the complex interplay of socio-economic factors of internal migration and raises the question of adopting comprehensive policy measures to effectively manage migration flows. This in turn could reduce social tensions and contribute to balanced regional development.

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Introduction

Significant demographic shifts associated with internal labour migration due to unfavourable living conditions in rural areas, combined with the attractiveness of cities and industrialisation, have led to changes in resource distribution, labour markets and social dynamics. This increase in internal migration, combined with unstructured migration policies, has the potential to lead to marginalisation and social tensions in a number of regions. Differences in the provision of the same social services, exacerbated by increasing migration dynamics, can lead to social exclusion and inequality.

This study focuses on the labour market, and the subsequent distribution of labour resources across the region. The formation of unbalanced labour supply and demand affects the level of employment and unemployment in different parts of the state. There are problems associated with high competition for jobs in regions with high attractiveness of employment opportunities, as well as in regions with outflow of the working class experiencing labour shortages, which in turn leads to problems of economic development of the region, and further maintenance of infrastructure. By examining the causes and consequences of labour migration, this study seeks to provide a broad understanding of the shaping of the socio-political landscape through descriptive analyses of government sources to determine wage differentials between regions, combined with empirical data from government programmes and qualitative analysis of archival research on socio-economic inequalities between regions.

The underlying aim of this thesis is to comprehensively examine the dynamics of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan, examining its causes and consequences. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how unbalanced labour supply and demand in a number of regions affects economic development and social cohesion. The need for a comprehensive analysis of this issue is due to this kind of failure to redirect internal labour migration flows, which leads to a discussion of the performance of resettlement programmes and its impact on the socio-

political landscape of the country, and therefore informing the broader academic discourse on internal labour migration is essential to better understand the implications of this phenomenon.

The thesis is structured as follows: the literature review section presents the existing academic work based on internal labour migration, focusing on the theoretical framework as well as gaps in the literature. The methodology section details the qualitative research methods as well as the use of secondary data collection methods. In the main part, however, the causes and consequences of stabilising internal labour migration flows are discussed in terms of socio-economic factors, including inequalities between urban centres and rural areas, the effectiveness of state migration programmes in attempting to address migration flows, and consequently the consequences of such unstructured migration policies, with a particular focus on issues of employment competitiveness and pressure on infrastructure.

1. Literature review

The field of internal labour migration research in Kazakhstan is largely characterised by its vast geographical space and diverse regional opportunities. According to Johnson & Salt (1990), labour migration is a movement of population in which a change of permanent residence is accompanied by a change of employment. This literature review summarised findings from a number of academic articles touching on the socio-political and economic landscape of the state to examine the broad impact of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan.

Aldashev and Dietz (2011), examine the economic side of interregional labour migration, highlighting income inequality as an argument to motivate the marginalisation of society. In their analyses, migration flows have a significant impact on income levels, by moving from low-income regions to regions with the potential for higher income levels. It is also noted that migration costs, exacerbated by poor infrastructure, are a problem that could be addressed through investments in public and social infrastructure for balanced regional development of the population. Continuing with the context of economic inequality, Makhmutova (2013) focuses on the internal labour

migration of young people in Almaty, emphasising the role of economic inequality and the search for better job opportunities as key factors in the emergence of legal job and housing search issues, illustrating the complex interplay between financial aspirations and the realities of urban migration.

In exploring the broad causes and factors of migration processes, including the prevalence of labour migration and the critical role of political influence, such as corruption, or the lack of protection of citizens' legal rights, the work of Baurzhan Bokaev et al. (2021) is noteworthy for the failure of the state to retain young professionals and scientists, highlighting the urgent need to develop a policy agenda for socio-economic change in the area of internal migration.

The research of Korganova et al. (2016) examines the relationship between migration processes and national security, arguing that migration in turn should be studied in the broader context of national interests as well as the resources available to the state. The study by Korganova and colleagues emphasises the importance of social security as an instrument of national security, which goes beyond economic considerations.

When considering the regulation of internal migration, it is worth noting the works of Bodaukhan et al. (2020) and Jaxylykov (2017) who emphasised the role of internal labour migration in the context of creating a common economic space, using the example of migration from southern to northern regions. The study by Bodaukhan et al. proposes recommendations on migration management in order to increase economic activity and improve the socio-economic conditions of regions affected by migration flows.

Kurmanova et al. (2020) and Zhussupova & Kenessov (2012) conducted a thorough study to understand the structure, causes and problems of internal migration in Kazakhstan. They studied how people move within the country. Another goal of the study was to find out what the legal regulations are and what impact migration has on society. First, they studied internal migration to see trends and to understand how to make life better for migrants. Then they studied why people

move within Kazakhstan and to other countries. They explained the reasons why people move. Their papers showed that the main reason for internal labour migration turned out to be the difference in wages and social amenities. The researchers also looked at the social and economic problems caused by rural-to-urban migration. They suggested how the government could better manage internal migration through policies and programs. The study showed that migration is a serious problem that needs close attention and solutions.

The study by Zhanuzakova and Serikzhanova (2022) looks at internal migration patterns in Kazakhstan from 2010 to 2020. The authors aimed to discover how migration has changed over time. They also looked at the factors that influence internal labour migration. The researchers studied where migrants are moving to within Kazakhstan. They used a sampling method called respondent-driven sampling to collect data. The study provided insight into the reasons why people migrate to major cities such as Almaty and Astana. Social and economic reasons played a major role in the decision to migrate. Motivations were similar in the three cities.

Valitova and Yessimova (2017) analyzed migration patterns within Kazakhstan from 1989 to 2015. Their aim was to find out why people moved and the effects on different regions. They compared migration trends and discovered two major areas that attracted many people. More and more migrants started moving to the northern and southern capital cities by the early 2000s. According to their results, it was found that social welfare, level of income and high level of opportunities were among the main motivations for migrating to another region. However, the study did not clearly explain their methods. It also failed to consider recent migration data and factors behind regional variations in migration levels. Though the study provides useful insights, more research is needed to understand how migration impacts Kazakhstan's society as a whole.

Lindstrom and White (2005) studied different parts of internal migration. They looked at reasons why people move, ways to measure migration, and how potential movers find job opportunities. Their methods involved examining data collection techniques. They stressed

defining the right population and considering geographical factors. Important findings included using government data to understand migration, reasons for moving, and trends in city centers losing people. Lindstrom and White examined various aspects of internal migration. They looked at the causes that determine why people move within a country.

Assanbaev and Kilybaev (2021) studied internal migration in Kazakhstan, focusing on migration factors, the effects of urbanization, and migrants' coping strategies. Using population census data and interviews, the study concluded that the main motivations for migration are employment opportunities, access to health care, and educational prospects. Limitations include the limited number of studies of internal migration compared to studies of emigration.

An, Becker, and Cheng (2016) studied how people moved between different regions in Kazakhstan from 2000 to 2014. They looked at patterns, how differences in wages affected movement, the role of uncertainty, and how regional differences played a part. They used regression analysis, tests for stationarity, and weighted least squares estimation with detailed data on regional economies and migration. The findings showed that wage differences had a huge impact on movement. The study had limitations because it used overall data instead of individual behavior data. Still, it highlighted how the economic situation greatly influences migration patterns, especially in big cities like Almaty and Astana.

In conclusion, as it can be seen from Table 1, this literature review provides a clear picture of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan. Migration is a complex process that is influenced by many different processes such as society, politics, economics and population changes. The experts examined how internal labour migration affects the economy. They looked at differences in income, employment opportunities, and infrastructure development. The articles also talk about how public policies shape migration patterns. It discusses how policies address the social problems associated with internal labour migration.

Cities such as Almaty and Astana are growing rapidly. Their urbanisation influences the stability and development of the region. However, these cities face unresolved challenges such as poor infrastructure, unequal wealth and policy gaps. Studies show that there is a necessity for policies that encompass the economic, social and political consequences of migration. Migration policies should be thorough and take into account all sides of the issue.

Based on the research base, the fundamental aspect of this paper is a description and brief analysis of migration programmes established by the state, highlighting the cause-and-effect relationships of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan due to wage differentials between regions and socio-economic inequalities highlighting the complex nature of the distribution of migration flows in the country, which in consequence is fraught with rising unemployment, strain on public services and depletion of labour resources.

Table 1: A brief review of the literature

Authors	Year	Factors of internal migration	Impact
Aldashev and Dietz	2011	Income inequality, migration costs, poor infrastructure	Significant impact on income levels, need for investment in public and social infrastructure
An, Becker, and Cheng	2016	Employment opportunities, healthcare access, education	Wage differences influence movement, economic situation influences migration patterns in big cities
Assanbaev & Kilybaev	2021	Employment opportunities, healthcare access, education	Impact of urbanization, migrants' coping strategies, limitations due to fewer studies on internal migration
Baurzhan Bokaev et al.	2021	Political influence, corruption, lack of legal protection	Failure to retain young professionals, need for policy development for socio-economic change
Bodaukhan et al.	2020	Economic space	Recommendations for migration management to improve economic activity and socio-economic conditions

Authors	Year	Factors of internal migration	Impact
Jaxylykov	2017	-	Creation of a common economic space, migration management
Korganova et al.	2016	National security, resources of the state	Importance of social security as an instrument of national security
Kurmanova et al.	2020	Wage differences, social amenities, rural-to-urban migration	Socio-economic problems, need for government policies and programs
Lindstrom & White	2005	Reasons for moving, job opportunities	Use of government data to understand migration, trends in city centers losing people
Makhmutova	2013	Economic inequality, job opportunities	Legal job and housing search issues, interplay between financial aspirations and urban migration realities
Valitova & Yessimova	2017	Social welfare, income levels, opportunities	Migration trends, need for more research on recent data and regional variations
Zhanuzakova & Serikzhanova	2022	Social and economic reasons	Changes in migration patterns, reasons for migration to major cities like Almaty and Astana
Zhussupova & Kenessov	2012	Legal regulations, structure of migration	Trends in internal migration, impact on society, government policy recommendations

2. Methodology

The focus of this paper is internal labour migration in Kazakhstan, namely to examine its causes and to consider its potential socio-political consequences.

The topic of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan has a certain literature that collects analysis, opinions and conclusions of other scholars. Also, this topic requires a great deal amount of statistics to understand the situation of migration. Therefore, this study uses qualitative research methods and utilises secondary data collection methods, including descriptive analysis of academic papers of other scholars and national statistics.

To fully explore and explain the theoretical part of the paper, the works of Van Hear et al. (2017) and Parkins (2010) were considered, which gave a full and clear view about the “Push and Pull” theory of migration, explaining the two factors and what influences them. Bodvarsson, Simpson & Sparber (2015) on the other hand provided and explained the concept of “Human Capital Theory”. Several works have also been used to define and explain the concepts required for this paper. For example, Pedroza (2020) explains the importance of migration policy in his paper.

3 Theoretical and conceptual framework

3.1 Theoretical framework

As this paper examines the phenomenon of internal labour migration and also aims to identify its main causes, it is necessary to delve into theories such as push-pull and human capital theories. These theoretical frameworks are a crucial aspect to familiarise with, as they provide an in-depth understanding of the motivations for migration and the socio-economic determinants of migrants' decisions.

The push-pull theory of migration provides an understanding of the multi-structured nature of migration through two factors "push" and "pull". Van Hear et al. (2017) state that the main idea behind the theory is that there are factors pushing the population out of the place of departure (push) and pulling it to the place of arrival (pull). Push factors are defined by unfavorable conditions such as economic hardship, political instability, environmental degradation, low level of education, etc., which drive people to leave their homelands. For example, Parkins (2010) writing on push-pull theory states that the main “push” factors are a mismatch of occupations and skills, lack of economic opportunities and lack of social opportunities. At the same time, “pull” factors such as better job opportunities, high-quality education, social stability, etc., on the contrary, are a "magnet" for people to change their place of residence to another region. By

addressing the complex dynamics between the above factors, these theories aim to understand the motivations for internal labour migration and migration patterns in Kazakhstan.

To complement the above theory, human capital theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding migration as an investment in human capital. According to Bodvarsson, Simpson & Sparber (2015), migration is the act of investing human capital. Based on their words, it can be understood that through the lens of the theory, it does not matter whether migration occurs across internal or international borders, as these two types of flows are driven by the desire to use geographical differences in return for labor. The idea behind this theory is that people, through migration, seek access to better education, vocational training and promising career opportunities that match their existing skills and aspirations for personal and career development. Considering labor migration through the prism of this theory provides an opportunity to understand migration as an investment in human capital and to clarify the economic rationale behind migration decisions. The integration of push-pull theory and human capital theory into this study provides an opportunity to explore in greater depth the complex interplay between socio-economic factors, individual aspirations and migration dynamics, exposing and reinforcing the arguments on the implications of internal labour migration presented in this thesis.

3.2 Conceptual framework

For a clearer understanding, it is necessary to explain some of the concepts that will be used in this study. For example, migration dynamics, socio-political consequences of migration and migration policies. Understanding the following concepts is very important as they will be used throughout this thesis to reveal a certain idea.

The concept of migration dynamics includes aspects such as the drivers of migration, migration patterns and the consequences of internal migration within a state. More specifically, it includes an understanding of the spatial distribution of migration flows, the various motivations and influences on migration decisions. There is also a broader concept that considers the social

and political consequences of internal migration that are relevant for both the sending and receiving regions. The impact of migration on social relations, political dynamics, infrastructural development and cultural identity are all socio-political consequences of migration. Another equally important aspect is migration policy, which refers to the legal and institutional framework that regulates the movement of people within a country. Pedroza (2020) states that "in terms of national policy-making, a clear distinction is usually made between policies aimed at immigrants and those aimed at emigrants, with every immigrant in one country being an emigrant in the other". It includes regulations affecting immigration, emigration, internal migration and refugee protection. Analysing the role of migration policy in shaping migration dynamics and considering the socio-political implications is important for understanding the main purpose of this thesis.

4 Causes and consequences of stabilising internal labour migration flows

4.1 Causes of internal labour migration

This part will consider the causes of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan. In general, they can be categorised as "wage differentials between regions" and "socio-economic differences between regions".

One of the main reasons for labour migration within Kazakhstan is the difference in wages between regions. According to Aldashev & Dietz (2011), Zhussupova & Kenessov (2012) and An et al. (2016), people are more likely to relocate to areas with higher income levels and to leave low-income regions. Makhmutova (2013) and Zhanuzakova & Serikzhanova (2022) also argue that the majority of the population migrate to large cities for socio-economic reasons, most often to seek employment. Based on the statistics provided by the Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan, it can be assumed that high wages are a "pull" factor for the population to migrate to other regions in Kazakhstan. From Table 2, which shows the statistics of intra-republican population migration for 2009-2021, it can be observed that the cities to which Kazakhstan residents most often migrate are Astana and Almaty. Between 2009 and 2021, 283,540 and

357,951 people migrated there from different regions of Kazakhstan respectively. One clear reason for this is the high wage levels across Kazakhstan. To fully understand the difference in salaries, a comparison can be made between the regions of Kazakhstan.

Table 2: Intra-republican migration of population between 2009 and 2021

Akmola region	124,381 people
Aktobe region	147,192 people
Atyrau region	72,532 people
West Kazakhstan region	111,651 people
Zhambyl region	106,131 people
Karagandy region	195,483 people
Kostanay region	111,202 people
Kyzylorda region	72,919 people
Mangystau region	77,278 people
Pavlodar region	91,148 people
North Kazakhstan region	73,054 people
Turkistan region	130,526 people
East Kazakhstan region	148,615 people
Astana city	283,540 people
Almaty city	357,951 people

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan

As shown in Table 3, in the city of Astana and Almaty, the average monthly salary for 2022 is 406,920 and 354,860 tenge, respectively. While in the south, north and some western regions of the country the level of average monthly wages is lower and ranges from 227,021 to 287,063 tenge. The exceptions are oil-producing regions, namely Mangystau and Atyrau regions, where average monthly wages range from 459,953 to 523,210 tenge. The difference in wages between regions is indeed one of the main reasons for internal labour migration in Kazakhstan.

Table 3: Average monthly salary by regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan in tenge,
2018-2022

Region/Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Akmola r.	121,361	140,272	168,302	203,006	250,155
Aktobe r.	137,039	156,595	182,923	217,597	274,401
Almaty r.	115,101	136,212	168,313	207,592	261,228
Atyrau r.	293,572	351,103	367,799	406,166	523,210
West Kazakhstan r.	153,782	183,914	195,410	226,537	276,191
Zhambyl r.	109,420	127,043	156,846	195,922	234,526
Karagandy r.	149,916	172,239	203,806	240,608	283,803
Kostanay r.	125,995	145,890	171,319	201,923	250,943
Kyzylorda r.	130,391	152,085	178,174	212,777	265,738
Mangystau r.	275,679	294,099	317,611	349,503	459,953
Pavlodar r.	141,915	160,670	187,427	220,291	273,505
North Kazakhstan r.	110,686	130,233	157,497	187,501	227,021
Turkistan r.	104,136	123,853	158,762	195,302	237,189
East Kazakhstan r.	140,126	162,182	190,287	224,700	287,063
Astana city	240,320	266,796	302,504	344,691	406,920
Almaty city	200,919	224,158	247,951	295,985	354,860
Shymkent city	115,574	136,995	161,329	193,682	234,729

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan

Social and economic factors is the next cause of internal labour migration (Cote, 1997). An et al (2016) and Lindstrom & White (2005) in their papers on internal migration point out that labour migration arises as a response to inequality in terms of regional differences in income opportunities caused by disparities in the spatial distribution of factors of production. Shortage of

workplaces, tangible differences in wages between regions and unequal distribution of economic resources required for the production of goods and services force citizens to change their place of residence in order to improve their socio-economic conditions. The difference of socio-economic conditions in rural areas compared to big cities should also be taken into consideration. This is also mentioned by Valitova & Yessimova (2017), stating that due to the abolition of collective (kolkhozes) and state (sovkhozes) farms, insufficient development of farms and exacerbation of land use problems, unemployment in rural areas started to increase, which led to the degradation of socio-economic conditions of rural residents. Rural populations still face problems with emergency medical care, social insurance and social security programs, as well as high unemployment and the lowest per capita income, which could, in theory, lead to the emergence of a highly mobile working-age population as the driving force of internal migration in Kazakhstan (Assanbayev & Kilybayev, 2021). For clarification, the attention can be focused on Table 4, where 1200 residents of Astana and Almaty cities were interviewed by Zhanuzakova and Serikzhanova about their reasons for moving to urban centres (2022).

Table 4: Survey on reasons for moving to Astana and Almaty

Reason for moving	Almaty	Astana
Unable to find a job in previous place of residence	12%	6.8%
Looking for a new job in a new place	15.7%	19.2%
Work-related transfer	4.8%	8.6%
Moving due to university enrolment/study	16.8%	15.3%
Moving due to marriage	3.7%	3.3%
Willingness to settle down in a new location	5.1%	3.2%
Reunification with relatives/family	5.1%	9.1%
Health reasons	1.4%	1.2%
For the children's future.	11.6%	13.1%
To improve the living conditions	12.7%	13.1%

Favourable working conditions in the new location	4.9%	2.3%
Favourable climatic conditions in the new location	2.8%	1%
Other	3.2%	3.8%

Source: Zhanuzakova and Serikzhanova, 2022

According to the table, one of the most common reasons is socio-economic motives, namely the shortage of jobs in the previous place of residence, the search for work in the new place of residence and improvement of living conditions of migrants and their children. As a consequence, socio-economic differences, being a ‘push’ factor, led to a mass movement of the population to big cities of Kazakhstan with more convenient conditions for work and life, i.e. with ‘pull’ factors.

4.2 The impact of governmental migration programmes

The need for state intervention in the regulation of migration flows is necessitated by the promotion of labour mobility to stabilise regional imbalances. Such state migration programmes, which include normative and legal acts promoting the regulation of internal labour migration, play a key role in structuring the management of internal migration flows. While the primary factors for adopting such programmes are conditioned, there are also problems of implementation, together with potential socio-political consequences.

For example, we can mention the state programme Serpin-2050, which aims to train and further employ young people in regions experiencing labour shortages (Satanbekov, 2019). In this way, the pull factors of urban centres are eliminated, thereby stabilising demographic shifts as well as increasing urbanisation of rural areas. Improving socio-economic status through access to better opportunities, contributes to the socio-cultural fabric of the sending and receiving regions. However, adaptation problems and dissatisfaction with the programme conditions, particularly related to low awareness of government support, which was either not provided or were provided untimely emerged as decisive factors in the programme (Zhusupova et al., 2022).

The lack of understanding of the labour market needs of recipient regions, coupled with the lack of information on interim performance analysis, creates social tensions between migrants and long-term residents over employment issues.

Another example of an attempt to increase labour mobility is the state programme for the development of productive employment - Enbek, which was implemented in 2017 and ended in 2021. The aim of the programme is to reduce the level of conflict associated with increasing migration flows in the country by assisting government agencies in finding employment and providing timely payments for one year to cover necessary expenses in a new location (E-Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022).

Table 5: Resettlement regions of the Enbek programme

Disposal regions	Settlement regions
Astana	North Kazakhstan
Almaty	Aqmola
Shymkent	Kostanay
Mangystau	Pavlodar
Turkestan	Karaganda
Kyzylorda	East Kazakhstan

Source: Zhusupova et al., 2022

However, the success of this programme is directly expressed in quantitative indicators, without taking into account the intention of workers to continue living and working in the recipient regions. According to Yerbolat Abulkhatin, Deputy Chairman of the Committee of Labour, Social Protection and Migration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, using the example of the state programme "Enbek", about 30 thousand people were resettled, which justifies the effectiveness according to the set objectives (Zhusupova et al., 2022). Nevertheless, as can be seen from Table 2, it can be concluded that the implementation of this programme in addressing labour shortages still demonstrates a high level

of migration flows to urban centres, especially if we compare the situation with migration flows before the start of the programme (Figure 1), in which there is no significant difference.

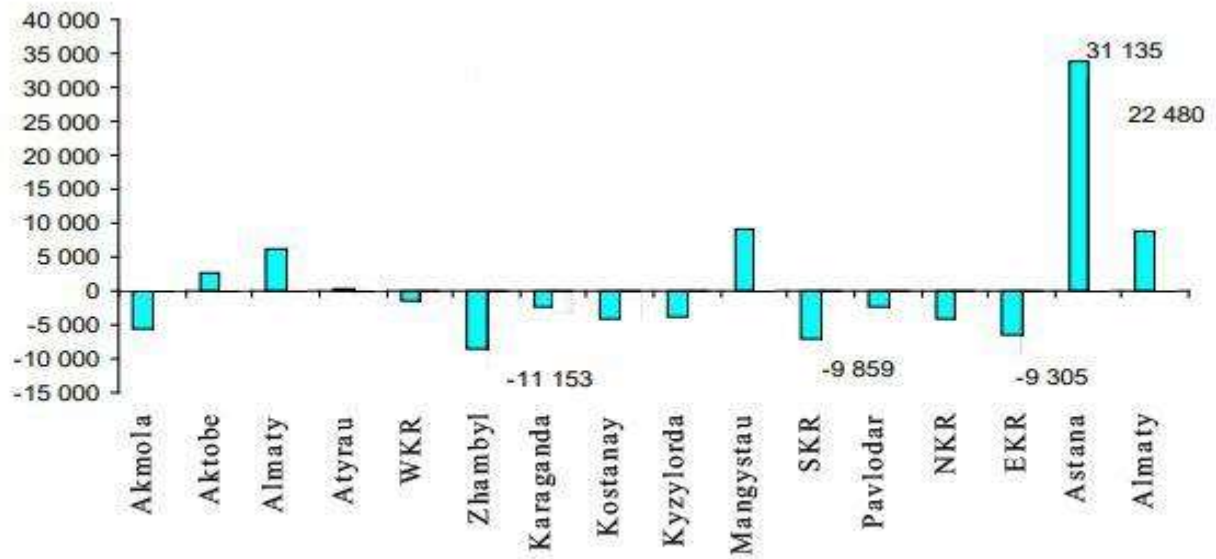


Figure 1: Migration balance in 2015

Source: Makhmutova, 2015

It should be noted that the implementation of similar programmes aimed at addressing the problems of internal labour migration is reflected in inappropriate funding due to the lack of significant indicators of stabilization of migration flows.

4.3 Labour market imbalances: consequences of unstructured migration policies

The significant increase in internal migration to urban centres such as Astana or Almaty is characterised by a pronounced spatial dichotomy caused by better employment opportunities, advanced educational institutions training competitive professionals, and better health care, which has attracted people from rural areas as well as cities with inferior amenities in search of higher living standards (Bureau of National Statistics, 2023).

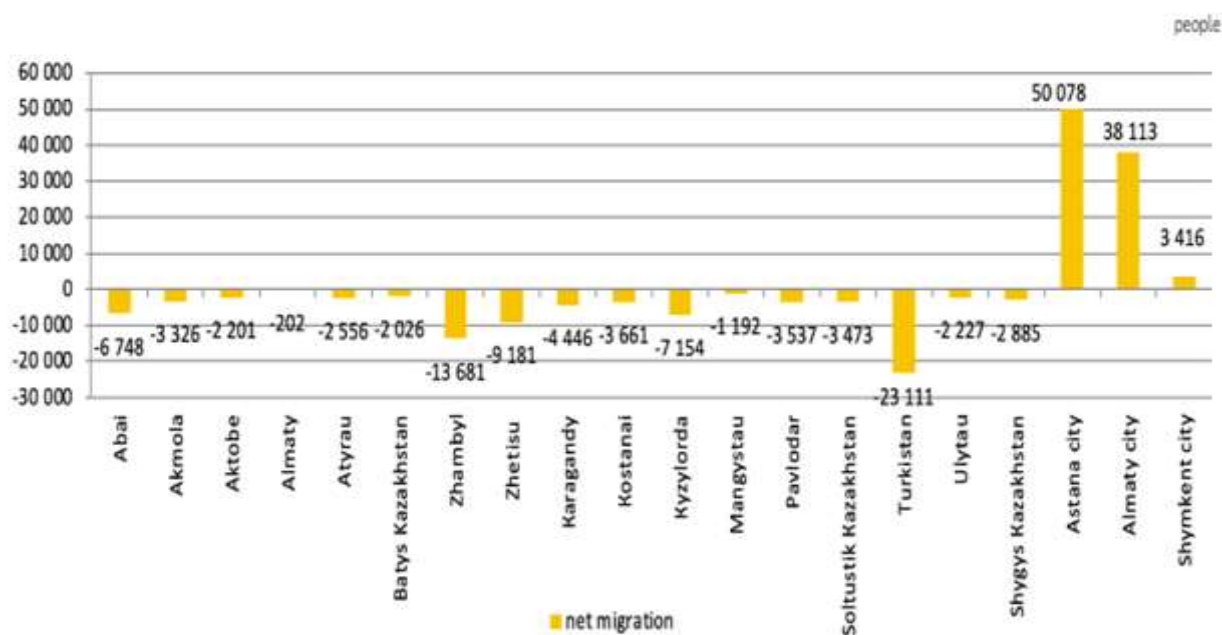


Figure 2: Migration balance in 2023

Source: Bureau of National Statistics, 2023

Such differences in the nature of migration dynamics are reflected in the efficiency of rural-urban out-migration, thereby accelerating the decline in the population base. The intense migration of Southern cities to Northern cities reflects the possibility of relocation (Jaxylykov, 2017), but such internal migration dynamics highlight pull factors in migration theory that are particularly strong in the context of Kazakhstan's rapidly urbanising landscape. In turn, rural areas characterised by declining socio-economic opportunities exemplify the factors pushing rural populations towards urban centres in search of better prospects (Kurmanova et al., 2020). This phenomenon highlights a crucial aspect of human capital theory regarding the reallocation of labour to regions where it is valued more highly and can bring higher returns.

The dynamics of internal migration has a significant impact on the labour market of Kazakhstan. There is a potential for labour market oversaturation, based on an imbalance between migration flows, whereby migrant arrivals may exceed the number of available jobs. Saturation is also fraught with an increase in unemployment or underemployment among migrants, which in

turn can lead to serious socio-economic problems. The problem of increased competition for jobs, combined with pressure on housing and public services, only exacerbates social tensions and can lead to the marginalisation of society. Such dynamics only emphasises the urgent need for a timely structured migration policy that not only regulates the inflow of migrants, but also facilitates their socio-economic integration into the urban environment (Korganova et al., 2016).

Based on the unemployment figures in Table 6 compared to the migration balance in Figure 2, there are consequences of the depletion of labour resources in the cities being abandoned, which exacerbates the labour shortage situation. Currently, the policy of regulating internal labour migration is implemented through a number of resettlement programmes, but the worsening demographic situation entails the problem of rising prices in the regions with the largest inflows and unemployment in the regions with the largest outflows.

Table 6: Unemployed people due to lack of work by regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2023

City/Country	Number of unemployed people
Republic of Kazakhstan	95 064
Abai region	3 086
Akmola region	2 019
Aktobe region	448
Almaty region	8 472
Atyrau region	12 000
West Kazakhstan	2 346
Zhambyl region	2 604
Zhetisu region	9 220
Karaganda region	944
Kostanay region	440
Kyzylorda region	2 905
Mangystau region	5 104
South Kazakhstan	435
Pavlodar region	565
North Kazakhstan	34 228
Ulytau region	2 004
East Kazakhstan	274
Astana city	3 566

Source: Bureau of National Statistics, 2023

Ineffective structured labour migration policies only exacerbate the untapped potential of the labour force to contribute to balanced regional development. The lack of smoothing of labour market imbalances across the country leads to an uneven distribution of human capital. In turn, this implies not only managing the inflow of migrants to urban centres to avoid oversaturation of the competitive labour market, but also promoting the economic efficiency of rural areas and cities with the largest outflows to reduce the factors that stimulate migration. A study of the current labour migration situation in Kazakhstan reveals trends of a transition economy whose transformations are leading to a significant reshuffling of social life and social institutions (Bodaukhan et al., 2020), closely linked to an increase in the social status and living standards of migrants due to potential social consequences (Aryn, 2020).

Significant imbalances in the labour market caused by unstructured migration policies lead to oversaturation of urban labour markets, growing unemployment among migrants, and labour shortages in rural areas. This kind of imbalance is reflected in the inefficient distribution of human capital, while offering no alternative solution to the problem of rising costs in regions with high inflows and unemployment rates in regions with high outflows. This issue highlights the need for a comprehensive study of the promotion of the socio-economic integration of labour migrants into urban areas, as well as further study of government programmes that are crucial for ensuring stable migration flows throughout the country.

5. Findings

The analysis indicated that push factors were low wages, job scarcity and socioeconomic environment. While pull factors include high wages, for example, in urban centres and oil-producing cities, and a more favourable socio-economic environment.

Analysis of the causes of internal labour migration has shown that significant differences in wages between regions stimulate internal labour migration. Residents move from low-income regions to high-income regions. From 2009 to 2021, 283,540 and 357,951 people from different regions of Kazakhstan migrated to Astana and Almaty. According to the statistics, Astana and Almaty are the most preferred destinations due to their higher average monthly salaries. In 2022, average monthly salaries in Astana and Almaty were 406,920 Tenge and 354,860 Tenge, respectively, compared to lower salaries in other regions, with the exception of oil-producing regions such as Mangystau and Atyrau, where salaries were exceptionally high (459,953 to 523,210 Tenge).

Socio-economic differences also drive migration as people seek higher standards of living. Socio-economic problems in rural areas are forcing residents to migrate to urban centres such as Astana and Almaty, which offer better job prospects and living conditions. According to the survey results, the most frequent reasons for moving to urban centres such as Astana and Almaty are shortage of employment in the previous place of residence, search for a job in the new place of residence and better living conditions for migrants and their children.

The results of the study of the state programmes on the example of Serpin-2050 and Enbek show a mixed performance due to the evaluation of mainly quantitative data, without taking into account the intentions of direct workers to stay in the recipient regions. In addition, there was evidence of unchanged migration flows to urban centres before and since the start of the programme, thus suggesting a persistent imbalance. Also, the study suggests the limited success of the Enbek programme in terms of financial assistance provided due to the lack of significant indicators of stabilisation of migration flows.

The analysis of internal labour migration highlighted the critical socio-political implications of the significant increase in migration to urban centres, largely due to better employment opportunities, reflecting the spatial dichotomy between urban and rural areas. The

presence of pull factors in the rapidly urbanising environment of Kazakhstan has been identified, indicating intensive migration flows from southern to northern cities. There is a suggestion of a profound impact on the labour market, potentially leading to oversaturation of urban centres, where the number of arrivals may exceed the number of jobs available. This dynamic could lead to increased unemployment or underemployment among the migrant population itself. The data also show significant regional differences in unemployment rates, highlighting the uneven distribution of human capital across the country.

6. Conclusion

Research into the socio-political implications of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan has provided insight into the dynamics shaping the demographic landscape of the country. Using a comprehensive approach, trends were captured, as well as the nuances of the human experience behind such movements. A number of regions in Kazakhstan were covered, each with unique characteristics and migration trends. This focus allowed for a more detailed examination of the local factors influencing migration dynamics, from the economic potential of urban centres to the challenges in rural areas. Integrating case studies of specific regions, it was shown how internal migration can potentially lead to labour market imbalances. An important aspect was also to raise issues of the challenges migrants face in adapting to their new environment, as well as their impact on the recipient regions, which allowed for a deeper understanding of the role of the human factor in the context of migration, often overshadowed by statistical data. This project demonstrated the effectiveness of a mixed-methods approach to the study of complex social phenomena. The integration of descriptive analysis together with qualitative data provided a holistic view of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan.

Further consideration of this thesis should focus on longitudinal studies to more broadly examine the impact of internal labour migration on urban centres and rural regions, particularly affecting economic development together with social inclusion and infrastructure sustainability. A

comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of existing government programmes is needed, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods to improve the empirical evidence. Comparative studies based on the experience of other countries with similar patterns of internal labour migration can reveal best practices and new insights into the management of migration flows.

This study makes a contribution to the understanding of the causes and consequences of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and structured migration policy to address regional imbalances in a timely manner and promote sustainable socio-political development. The integration of theoretical data offers an alternative consideration of migration dynamics applicable to other contexts.

It should be noted that the complex interplay between regional imbalances and migration policies in shaping the pattern of internal labour migration in Kazakhstan provides valuable insights into the socio-political implications, highlighting the need to achieve balanced regional development and social cohesion in Kazakhstan.

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