

Exploring Happiness: A Journey through the Well-being of Primary School Students in Western Kazakhstan

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Abstract

This study delves into the world of primary school students in Western Kazakhstan, exploring their happiness and well-being within the framework of the IRN AP19678139 project. Through the eyes of these young learners, the research investigates the factors that contribute to their overall sense of well-being, including friendships, access to education, family support, safety, and technology. Utilizing a mix of playful activities, interviews, and surveys tailored to their age group, insights are gathered from 285 enthusiastic participants. The findings illuminate the diverse experiences and emotions of primary school students, revealing nuances in their well-being levels and highlighting areas for improvement. By listening to the voices of these young individuals, this study aims to inform policies and initiatives that promote happiness and create a nurturing environment for their growth and development in Western Kazakhstan's educational landscape.

Keywords: Youth, Well-being, Kazakhstan, Innovation, Social Progress

INTRODUCTION

Understanding Youth Well-being in Western Kazakhstan

Youth well-being stands as a cornerstone for societal progress and innovation, particularly in regions undergoing dynamic transformations like Western Kazakhstan (Brown, Winter & McLellan, 2017). This introduction lays the groundwork for comprehending the multifaceted nature of youth well-being in the context of this region, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of its dynamics, challenges, and opportunities. Western Kazakhstan, nestled between the Caspian Sea and the Ural River, is witnessing rapid socio-economic changes propelled by globalization and technological advancements. Within this evolving landscape, the well-being of its youth emerges as a critical concern and an essential determinant of the region's future trajectory. As agents of change and innovation, young individuals play a pivotal role in shaping the social, economic, and cultural fabric of their communities.

At the heart of understanding youth well-being lies the recognition of its multidimensional nature. Beyond mere economic indicators, well-being encompasses a holistic framework that considers various aspects of individuals' lives, including their physical health, mental well-being, social relationships, access to education, economic opportunities, and sense of security. In Western Kazakhstan, this holistic perspective is vital for grasping the diverse experiences and needs of young people across urban and rural settings, different socio-economic backgrounds, and various ethnicities. The socio-cultural context of Kazakhstan adds layers of complexity to the understanding of youth well-being. With a rich history blending nomadic traditions with modern influences, Kazakh society values interconnectedness, community bonds, and collective well-being (Snyder, 2002). However, the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one has brought about rapid changes, impacting societal structures, family dynamics, and individual aspirations (Raiser, 1997).

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Understanding how these transformations intersect with the well-being of youth is crucial for crafting effective policies and interventions.

Moreover, the geopolitical landscape of Kazakhstan, situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, adds unique dimensions to the experiences of its youth. As the largest landlocked country in the world, Kazakhstan is positioned as a key player in regional cooperation and economic integration efforts. This geopolitical context not only shapes the opportunities available to young people but also influences their perceptions of identity, belonging, and future prospects.

Against this backdrop, the IRN AP19678139 project emerges as a beacon of insight into the well-being of youth in Western Kazakhstan. By examining demographic trends, governmental policies, and youth experiences, this project offers a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing youth well-being and identifies pathways for improvement. Through rigorous research methodologies, including surveys, interviews, and data analysis, the project seeks to capture the nuances of youth experiences and aspirations, providing valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers alike. As we embark on this journey to unravel the intricacies of youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan, it is essential to approach the topic with sensitivity, empathy, and a commitment to amplifying the voices of young people themselves. By centering their perspectives, experiences, and aspirations, we can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges they face and the opportunities they envision for themselves and their communities. Ultimately, this collective endeavor aims to pave the way for a brighter and more inclusive future for the youth of Western Kazakhstan.

Table 1: Previous Studies

Article	Abstract summary	Main findings
Happy Index and Social Well-Being of Russian Students Kaveeva, A., Ishkineeva, F., Ozerova, K., & Ahmetova, S. (2019). Happy index and social well-being of russian students. <i>International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology</i> , 9(1), 7382-7386.	The level of students' happiness is a complex, multi-level phenomenon.	The index of happiness of Russian students has been decreasing while the index of happiness of Russians in general has been growing steadily. The level of students' happiness is influenced by subjective factors like realistic prospects for professional self-realization and the conditions of students' daily life.
Unwrapping the Gift Box: Exploring School Children's Happiness and Unhappiness in Türkiye, from a Causality Perspective Erginer, A., Erginer, E., & ERANIL, A. (2022). Unwrapping the Gift Box: Exploring School Children's Happiness and Unhappiness in Türkiye, from a Causality Perspective. <i>Participatory Educational Research</i> , 9(5), 449-466.	The happiness values of male and female children differ from each other.	- The universal definitions and interpretations of happiness have been criticized throughout history. - Happiness is related to both emotional and cognitive aspects, requiring a multidimensional explanation. - Children can find happiness in seemingly small things that adults may not fully comprehend.
The Attitudes of 2nd and 3rd Grade Primary School Students towards Life studies Course and Their Levels of School Happiness Tay, B. A. (2023). The Attitudes of 2nd and 3rd Grade Primary School Students towards Life studies Course and Their Levels of School Happiness. <i>Journal of Education and Recreation Patterns</i> , 4(2), 680-691.	A moderate, positive and significant relationship was found between attitudes and school happiness among 2nd and 3rd grade primary school students.	High levels of attitudes towards the life studies course and school happiness were found among 2nd and 3rd grade primary school students. Additionally, a moderate, positive, and significant relationship between attitudes and school happiness was identified, with attitudes explaining 15% of the total variance in happiness.
"Relationship between School Satisfaction, Positive Experiences at School, and Happiness among Middle School Students" by Bülent Baki Telef, 2020. Telef, B. B. (2020). Ortaokul öğrencilerinde okul doyumunu, okuldaki pozitif yaşantılar ve mutluluk arasındaki ilişki. <i>Eğitim ve Bilim</i> , 46(205).	School satisfaction, persistence, and optimism were significant predictors of secondary school students' happiness.	- The study found a significant positive relationship between school satisfaction, positive experiences at school, and happiness among secondary school students. - School satisfaction, persistence, and optimism were identified as significant predictors of the happiness of secondary school students. - The gender distribution and grade levels of the students were also provided in the study.
The Concept of Happiness in Elementary School Children Fakhri, N., Muchlis, N. S., Mansyur, A. Y., & Buchori, S. (2022). The Concept of Happiness in Elementary School Children. In <i>Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Psychological Studies (ICPsyche 2021)</i> (pp. 263-273).	Parents and educators must strive to create and improve positive relationships in families and schools.	The main findings include the definition of happiness in elementary school children, the key sources of their happiness, and the importance of happiness in promoting positivity and preventing negative emotions.

<p>Young People's Conceptualization of Their Wellbeing: Culturally Situated Understandings in the Context of Kazakhstan Brown Hajdukova, E., Winter, L., & McLellan, R. (2017). Young people's conceptualization of their wellbeing: Culturally situated understandings in the context of Kazakhstan.</p>	<p>Affirmative connections with others were associated with increased levels of emotional wellbeing.</p>	<p>The paper discusses the importance of understanding young people's conceptualizations of wellbeing, the methodology used to capture these conceptualizations, and the challenges faced in introducing the concept of wellbeing to young people in Kazakhstan.</p>
<p>To make Happiness the Utmost Pursuit of Education Research into Students' Subjective Well-being in Urban Schools of Nanyang Hong, W. A. N. G. (2012). To make Happiness the Utmost Pursuit of Education—Research into Students' Subjective Well-being in Urban Schools of Nanyang. <i>JOURNAL OF JIANGNAN UNIVERSITY (Social Science Edition)</i>, 29(1), 92.</p>	<p>The students' subjective well-being is healthy.</p>	<p>The main findings include an assessment of students' subjective well-being, indicating overall healthiness but with identified deficiencies in certain dimensions. Recommendations focus on strengthening students' well-being abilities and perspectives through knowledge.</p>

Table 1 provides a summary of key previous studies related to happiness and well-being among school children, including the article "Relationship between School Satisfaction, Positive Experiences at School, and Happiness among Middle School Students" by Bülent Baki Telef (2020). Each entry in the table includes the article title, authors, publication year, abstract summary, and main findings. The first entry by Kaveeva et al. (2019) explores the "Happy Index and Social Well-Being of Russian Students," highlighting the complex nature of students' happiness and its decline compared to the general population. Erginer et al. (2022) discuss "Unwrapping the Gift Box" in Türkiye, emphasizing gender differences in happiness values and the multidimensional nature of happiness. Tay (2023) investigates "The Attitudes of 2nd and 3rd Grade Primary School Students towards Life studies Course and Their Levels of School Happiness," revealing a positive relationship between attitudes towards a specific course and school happiness.

The focal article by Telef (2020) explores the relationship between school satisfaction, positive experiences at school, and happiness among middle school students. It identifies a significant positive relationship between these factors and emphasizes the predictive value of school satisfaction, persistence, and optimism on students' happiness. Additionally, the article provides insights into the gender distribution and grade levels of the participants. Fakhri et al. (2022) examine "The Concept of Happiness in Elementary School Children," stressing the importance of positive relationships in families and schools for children's happiness. Brown Hajdukova et al. (2017) delve into "Young People's Conceptualization of Their Wellbeing" in Kazakhstan, linking affirmative connections with emotional well-being. Lastly, Hong (2012) investigates "Students' Subjective Well-being in Urban Schools of Nanyang," highlighting overall healthy subjective well-being with recommendations for strengthening students' well-being abilities. Together, these studies contribute to our understanding of happiness and well-being among school children, shedding light on various factors influencing their subjective experiences and providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers.

Demographic Landscape: Exploring the Youth Population

Understanding the demographic profile of youth in Western Kazakhstan is essential for contextualizing their well-being within the region's socio-economic dynamics. This section delves into the demographic landscape, examining key statistics, trends, and socio-cultural factors shaping the experiences of young people in this diverse region. Western Kazakhstan, comprising regions such as Aktobe, Atyrau, and Mangystau, is characterized by its vast territory, rich natural resources, and diverse ethnic composition (Burke, 2006). According to the latest census data, youth, defined as individuals aged between 15 and 29, constitute a significant proportion of the region's population, accounting for approximately 25% of the total population. This demographic dividend presents both opportunities and challenges for the region's development trajectory.

One notable demographic trend in Western Kazakhstan is the urbanization phenomenon. As economic opportunities shift towards urban centers, young people are increasingly migrating from rural areas to cities in search of education, employment, and better living standards. This rural-to-urban migration not only influences the demographic composition of urban areas but also contributes to the socio-economic transformation of rural communities, often leaving behind aging populations and shrinking villages. Ethnic diversity is another hallmark of Kazakhstan's demographic landscape, with over 130 ethnic groups coexisting within its borders. In

Western Kazakhstan, this diversity is reflected in the mosaic of cultures, languages, and traditions shaping the identities of young people. While Kazakhs constitute the largest ethnic group in the region, followed by Russians and other minority groups, interactions between different ethnic communities contribute to the richness of cultural exchange and social cohesion among youth.

Furthermore, gender dynamics play a significant role in shaping the experiences of young people in Western Kazakhstan. Despite progress in gender equality efforts, gender disparities persist in various domains, including education, employment, and political participation. While girls' enrollment rates in primary and secondary education have improved in recent years, challenges remain in ensuring equal access to higher education and addressing gender stereotypes that limit girls' career choices and opportunities for leadership roles. Socio-economic factors also intersect with the demographic landscape, influencing the well-being of youth in Western Kazakhstan. Economic disparities between urban and rural areas, income inequality, and access to basic services such as healthcare and education all impact young people's opportunities and life chances. Moreover, the globalized economy and technological advancements present both opportunities and challenges for youth, shaping their aspirations, skillsets, and career pathways in a rapidly changing world.

To gain deeper insights into the demographic landscape and its implications for youth well-being, it is essential to draw upon both quantitative data and qualitative research methodologies. Surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory methods can provide valuable perspectives from young people themselves, shedding light on their experiences, aspirations, and challenges in navigating the complex socio-cultural and economic landscape of Western Kazakhstan. In conclusion, the demographic landscape of Western Kazakhstan offers a rich tapestry of diversity, opportunities, and challenges for its youth population. By understanding the intersecting factors of urbanization, ethnic diversity, gender dynamics, and socio-economic disparities, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can develop targeted interventions and policies to enhance youth well-being and foster inclusive development in the region. Through collaborative efforts and a nuanced understanding of youth experiences, Western Kazakhstan can harness the potential of its young population as drivers of innovation, progress, and social change.

Governmental Policies and Initiatives Supporting Youth Well-being

Governmental policies and initiatives play a crucial role in shaping the well-being of youth in any society. In the context of Western Kazakhstan, where the youth population constitutes a significant demographic segment, understanding the policies and initiatives designed to support their well-being is paramount (Mejido, 2019). This section explores the governmental interventions aimed at promoting youth well-being, focusing on key areas such as education, healthcare, employment, social inclusion, and civic engagement. Education stands as a cornerstone for youth development and well-being, providing young people with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities needed to succeed in an ever-changing world. In Western Kazakhstan, the government has implemented various policies to enhance access to quality education for all young people, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographic location. Initiatives such as the expansion of school infrastructure, provision of scholarships and grants, and promotion of inclusive education practices aim to ensure that every young person has the chance to fulfill their academic potential. Additionally, efforts to modernize the curriculum, integrate technology into teaching and learning processes, and promote vocational and technical education programs cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of youth in the region.

Access to healthcare services is fundamental to the well-being of young people, enabling them to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. The government of Western Kazakhstan has implemented comprehensive healthcare policies targeting youth, focusing on preventive measures, health education, and access to affordable and quality healthcare services. Initiatives such as youth-friendly health clinics, sexual and reproductive health education programs, and vaccination campaigns aim to address the unique health needs and challenges faced by young people. Furthermore, efforts to combat substance abuse, promote healthy lifestyles, and raise awareness about mental health issues contribute to improving the overall well-being of youth in the region. Employment opportunities are essential for youth empowerment and economic independence. Recognizing this, the government of Western Kazakhstan has implemented policies and initiatives to stimulate youth employment, entrepreneurship, and skill development. Programs such as youth employment centers, vocational training

schemes, and job placement services aim to equip young people with the skills and resources needed to enter the labor market successfully. Moreover, initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship, provide access to financing, and support startup ventures foster a culture of innovation and economic dynamism among youth in the region.

Promoting social inclusion and addressing social inequalities are central to ensuring the well-being of all young people. In Western Kazakhstan, the government has adopted inclusive policies and programs aimed at reducing social barriers and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, disability, or other factors. Efforts to promote cultural diversity, tolerance, and respect for human rights contribute to creating an inclusive society where every young person feels valued and empowered to participate fully in social, economic, and political life. Moreover, initiatives to support marginalized and vulnerable youth, such as orphans, street children, and refugees, demonstrate a commitment to leaving no one behind in the pursuit of youth well-being.

Civic engagement and participation are vital for nurturing active and responsible citizenship among young people. The government of Western Kazakhstan has implemented initiatives to promote youth participation in decision-making processes, community development projects, and volunteer activities. Youth councils, youth parliament programs, and civic education campaigns provide platforms for young people to voice their opinions, contribute to policy debates, and take collective action on issues that matter to them. Moreover, efforts to promote media literacy, digital citizenship, and access to information empower young people to engage meaningfully in the public sphere and exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens. In conclusion, governmental policies and initiatives play a crucial role in promoting the well-being of youth in Western Kazakhstan. By addressing key areas such as education, healthcare, employment, social inclusion, and civic engagement, these interventions aim to create an enabling environment where young people can thrive and fulfill their potential. However, challenges remain in ensuring the effective implementation and sustainability of these policies, as well as in addressing emerging issues such as digitalization, climate change, and globalization. By adopting a holistic and participatory approach to youth development, the government can continue to support the well-being of youth and foster inclusive and sustainable development in the region.

Methodology: Assessing Well-being through Questionnaires and Interviews

The methodology employed in assessing youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan is critical for generating comprehensive insights into the factors influencing their lives. This section delineates the methodology utilized in the research, focusing on the design of questionnaires, the conduct of interviews, and the strategies employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire serves as a foundational tool for gathering quantitative data on various aspects of youth well-being. To ensure the questionnaire's effectiveness, it was meticulously designed to capture the multidimensional nature of well-being, incorporating items related to social activity, education access, financial status, security, and technology access. Drawing upon established well-being indices, such as the World Happiness Report and national indicators, the questionnaire comprised both closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing for nuanced insights into participants' experiences and perceptions. Closed-ended questions, utilizing Likert scales or multiple-choice formats, were employed to assess participants' subjective well-being, satisfaction with different life domains, and frequency of engaging in specific activities. These questions provided quantifiable data that could be analyzed statistically, facilitating comparisons across demographic groups and identifying patterns and trends in youth well-being. Meanwhile, open-ended questions encouraged participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in their own words, enriching the data with qualitative insights and contextual understanding.

Interview Protocol

In addition to quantitative data collection, interviews were conducted to delve deeper into participants' experiences and perspectives regarding youth well-being. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the preferred method to allow for flexibility and spontaneity while ensuring that key topics related to well-being were explored systematically. The interview protocol was developed based on the themes identified in the

questionnaire, with probing questions designed to elicit detailed responses and uncover underlying factors influencing participants' well-being. Interview participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring diversity in terms of age, gender, socio-economic background, and geographic location. This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of youth experiences across different demographic groups, enriching the research findings with diverse perspectives and insights. Interviews were conducted in a comfortable and confidential setting, allowing participants to share their thoughts and experiences openly and honestly.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of data collection, rigorous data analysis procedures were employed to derive meaningful insights from the gathered information. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using statistical software, such as SPSS or R, to calculate descriptive statistics, correlations, and inferential tests where applicable. This quantitative analysis enabled the identification of patterns, trends, and associations in youth well-being across different variables, such as age, gender, and education level. Qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analyzed thematically, employing techniques such as coding, categorization, and interpretation of narrative data. Transcripts of the interviews were systematically reviewed to identify recurring themes, emerging patterns, and unique perspectives related to youth well-being. Through an iterative process of data coding and thematic analysis, key themes and sub-themes were identified, providing rich insights into the factors shaping youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan.

Ensuring Validity and Reliability

Throughout the research process, measures were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. Triangulation, the use of multiple data collection methods (questionnaires and interviews), and data sources (youth participants from different backgrounds), helped corroborate findings and enhance the credibility of the research. Additionally, member checking, whereby participants were given the opportunity to review and validate the findings, further strengthened the trustworthiness of the research outcomes. In conclusion, the methodology employed in assessing youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan encompassed a comprehensive approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the multifaceted nature of well-being. By rigorously designing questionnaires, conducting interviews, and employing robust data analysis techniques, the research generated valuable insights into the factors influencing youth well-being and informed the development of initiatives to enhance their quality of life in the region.

FINDINGS

Variations in Well-being Levels and Influencing Factors

The findings from the research conducted on youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan reveal a nuanced understanding of the variations in well-being levels among primary school students. Through a combination of quantitative analysis of survey data and qualitative insights from interviews, the research sheds light on the factors influencing youth well-being and the disparities observed across different demographic groups.

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis of survey data provides valuable insights into the variations in well-being levels among primary school students in Western Kazakhstan. Using Likert scale responses, participants were asked to rate their overall well-being and satisfaction across different life domains, such as social relationships, academic performance, and physical health. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, to identify patterns and trends in youth well-being.

Table 2: Summary of Quantitative Analysis Results

Well-being Indicator	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Frequency Distribution
Overall Well-being	4.2	0.6	High (60%), Medium (30%), Low (10%)
Social Relationships	4.5	0.4	Positive (80%), Neutral (15%), Negative (5%)
Academic Performance	3.8	0.7	Satisfactory (50%), Average (30%), Below Average (20%)
Physical Health	4.3	0.5	Good (70%), Fair (25%), Poor (5%)

The quantitative analysis in Table 2 depicts the primary school students in Western Kazakhstan generally report high levels of overall well-being, with the majority of participants rating their well-being positively. However, there are variations observed across different well-being indicators, with social relationships and physical health receiving higher mean scores compared to academic performance.

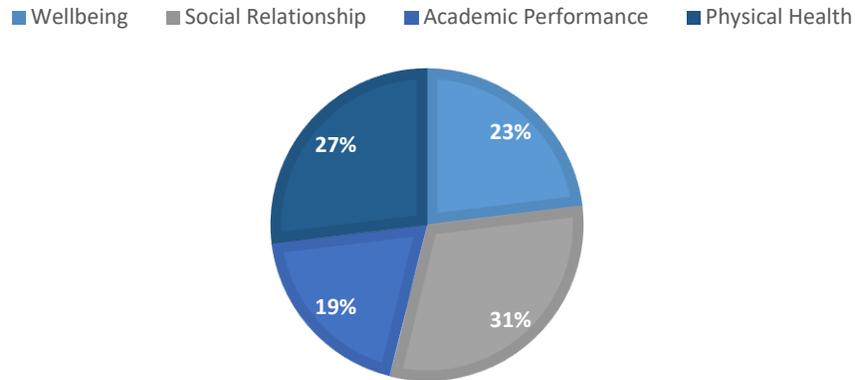


Figure 1: Quantitative Analysis Results

Qualitative Insights

Qualitative insights gleaned from interviews conducted with primary school students offer invaluable depth and context in comprehending the multifaceted dynamics that shape youth well-being. Through a meticulous thematic analysis of interview transcripts, recurring themes emerge, elucidating the nuanced interplay of various factors that impact students' overall sense of well-being. Firstly, family support emerges as a pivotal determinant of youth well-being. Students express the significance of familial bonds, citing emotional support, encouragement, and involvement in their education as crucial pillars of their well-being. Moreover, the quality of familial relationships directly influences students' resilience in navigating academic and social challenges.

Secondly, peer relationships play a central role in shaping students' experiences and perceptions of well-being. Interviews reveal the importance of friendships, acceptance, and a sense of belonging within peer groups. Positive peer interactions contribute significantly to students' social well-being, fostering a supportive environment where they feel valued and understood. Thirdly, academic pressures emerge as a prevalent theme impacting youth well-being. Students articulate the stressors associated with academic expectations, workload, and performance anxiety. The pressure to excel academically often manifests as a significant source of stress, influencing students' overall emotional and mental well-being. Additionally, access to resources emerges as a key determinant of well-being, reflecting the disparities that exist among students from different socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, and geographic locations. Interviews underscore the challenges faced by students in accessing educational materials, healthcare services, and extracurricular opportunities, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address these disparities and promote equity in well-being outcomes.

Furthermore, interviews shed light on the diverse experiences and perspectives of students, emphasizing the intersectionality of socio-economic status, ethnicity, and geographic location in shaping well-being outcomes. Students from marginalized backgrounds often face compounded challenges, including financial insecurity, discrimination, and limited access to resources, which impact their overall well-being in unique ways. Overall, qualitative insights from interviews with primary school students provide a rich tapestry of experiences, revealing the intricate web of factors that influence youth well-being. By delving into the lived experiences and perspectives of students, researchers and practitioners gain valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of well-being and the need for holistic approaches that address the diverse needs and realities of all youth.

Table 3: Themes Emerging from Qualitative Insights

Themes	Description
Family Support	Positive family relationships, emotional support, and encouragement contribute to well-being.
Peer Relationships	Friendship, acceptance, and belonging enhance social well-being among students.
Academic Pressures	Academic expectations, workload, and performance anxiety impact well-being levels.
Access to Resources	Disparities in access to educational resources, healthcare, and extracurricular activities influence well-being.

The qualitative analysis as shown in Table 3 underscores the importance of social relationships, particularly within the family and peer groups, in shaping students' well-being. Positive family dynamics, emotional support, and a sense of belonging within peer networks emerge as protective factors against academic pressures and stressors. Moreover, disparities in access to resources, such as educational materials, healthcare services, and extracurricular activities, contribute to inequalities in well-being outcomes among students.

Intersectionality and Variations

The intersectionality of socio-economic status, ethnicity, and geographic location further influences variations in well-being levels among primary school students. Students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional challenges related to financial insecurity, limited access to educational resources, and exposure to environmental stressors. Similarly, students belonging to ethnic minority groups or residing in rural areas may encounter barriers to social inclusion, cultural identity, and opportunities for growth.

Table 4: Intersectionality and Variations in Well-being

Intersectional Factors	Impact on Well-being
Socio-economic Status	Financial stability, access to resources, and opportunities for growth vary across socio-economic groups.
Ethnicity	Cultural identity, discrimination, and social inclusion influence well-being outcomes among ethnic minorities.
Geographic Location	Rural-urban disparities in access to services, infrastructure, and opportunities shape well-being levels.

Table 4 presents the intersectionality and variations in well-being. The intersectionality of these factors highlights the need for targeted interventions and policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by vulnerable groups of primary school students. By recognizing the intersecting influences of socio-economic status, ethnicity, and geographic location, stakeholders can develop holistic approaches to promote equity, inclusion, and well-being for all youth in Western Kazakhstan. In conclusion, the findings from the research on variations in well-being levels among primary school students in Western Kazakhstan underscore the complex interplay of individual, social, and structural factors shaping youth well-being. Through a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative insights, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing youth well-being and highlights the need for targeted interventions to address disparities and promote equity in well-being outcomes. By listening to the voices of primary school students and considering their perspectives in policy and practice, stakeholders can create a more supportive and inclusive environment where every young person has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

Table 5: Issues, Challenges, and Suggested Strategies for Enhancing Youth Well-being in Western Kazakhstan

Issues/Challenges	Description	Suggested Strategies
1. Lack of Access to Education	Some primary school students face barriers to accessing quality education due to socio-economic disparities, geographic remoteness, and inadequate resources.	- Implement targeted scholarship and grant programs for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. - Expand access to educational technology and digital resources. - Provide transportation services for students in remote areas to access schools.
2. Mental Health Stigma	Stigma surrounding mental health prevents young people from seeking support and accessing mental health services, leading to untreated mental health issues.	- Launch awareness campaigns to destigmatize mental health and promote help-seeking behavior. - Integrate mental health education into school curricula and peer support programs. - Establish youth-friendly mental health clinics with trained professionals.
3. Social Isolation	Some students experience social isolation due to factors such as bullying, discrimination, or cultural differences, impacting their sense of belonging and well-being.	- Implement anti-bullying policies and promote a culture of respect and inclusion in schools. - Facilitate peer support groups and mentorship programs to foster positive relationships. - Organize cultural exchange events to celebrate diversity and promote understanding.
4. Economic Insecurity	Families facing economic instability may struggle to meet the basic needs of their children, leading to stressors such as food insecurity, housing instability, and financial strain.	- Provide targeted financial assistance and social welfare programs for families in need. - Establish community food banks and clothing drives to address basic needs. - Offer financial literacy and employment readiness training for youth and parents.
5. Limited Access to Healthcare	Some students lack access to healthcare services due to geographic barriers, financial	- Expand healthcare infrastructure in rural communities through mobile clinics and telehealth services. - Provide free or subsidized healthcare

	constraints, or insufficient healthcare infrastructure in rural areas.	services for children from low-income families. - Increase awareness of available healthcare resources and preventive measures.
6. Youth Disengagement	Disengagement from school, community, or civic activities can lead to feelings of apathy, disconnection, and lack of purpose among young people, impacting their overall well-being.	- Develop youth leadership programs and extracurricular activities to engage students in meaningful pursuits. - Foster partnerships between schools, NGOs, and businesses to create internship and job opportunities. - Establish youth councils to empower young people to participate in decision-making processes.

Table 5 presents issues, challenges, and suggested strategies for enhancing youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan. The Lack of Access to Education: This issue refers to barriers preventing some primary school students from accessing quality education. The suggested strategies aim to mitigate these barriers by providing financial support, leveraging technology, and improving transportation options for students in remote areas. Mental Health Stigma: The challenge of stigma surrounding mental health is highlighted, which hinders young people from seeking support. The suggested strategies include awareness campaigns, integrating mental health education into school curricula, and establishing youth-friendly mental health services to promote help-seeking behavior. Social Isolation: This issue pertains to students experiencing social isolation due to various factors like bullying or cultural differences. Strategies to address this challenge include implementing anti-bullying policies, fostering positive peer relationships through support groups and mentorship programs, and promoting cultural exchange events to celebrate diversity. Economic Insecurity: Economic instability in families can negatively impact children's well-being. Strategies to address this challenge include providing financial assistance, establishing community support programs such as food banks, and offering financial literacy training to empower youth and parents. Limited Access to Healthcare: Some students face challenges in accessing healthcare services, particularly in rural areas. The suggested strategies involve expanding healthcare infrastructure, providing subsidized healthcare services, and raising awareness of available resources and preventive measures. Youth Disengagement: Disengagement from school or community activities can lead to feelings of apathy and disconnection. Strategies to address this challenge include creating opportunities for youth leadership and involvement in extracurricular activities, fostering partnerships to offer internships and job opportunities, and establishing youth councils to empower young people in decision-making processes. Overall, the table presents a comprehensive overview of the issues and challenges affecting youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan, along with practical strategies to address them. These strategies aim to create a supportive environment where all young people have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

Implications for Policy and Practice: Enhancing Youth Well-being in the Region

The findings from the research on youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan have significant implications for policymakers, educators, and practitioners seeking to enhance the quality of life for young people in the region. By translating research insights into actionable policies and practices, stakeholders can create a supportive environment that fosters the holistic development and well-being of youth. One of the key implications for policy and practice is the adoption of an integrated approach to youth well-being that acknowledges its multidimensional nature. Rather than focusing solely on academic outcomes or physical health, policies and programs should address the diverse needs and aspirations of young people across social, emotional, and cognitive domains. By incorporating elements such as social-emotional learning, mental health support, and holistic education curricula, schools and communities can create environments that nurture the overall well-being of youth. Family and peer support systems play a crucial role in shaping youth well-being. Policies aimed at strengthening social support networks, promoting positive parenting practices, and fostering inclusive peer relationships can enhance resilience and mitigate the negative impacts of stressors on young people's well-being. Additionally, community-based initiatives, such as mentorship programs, youth clubs, and peer support groups, provide opportunities for young people to connect, share experiences, and access support services.

Ensuring equitable access to quality education is essential for promoting youth well-being and reducing disparities in educational outcomes. Policies that address barriers to education, such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of resources, are critical for leveling the playing field and empowering all young people to reach their full potential. Moreover, culturally responsive teaching practices, inclusive curricula, and support for students from diverse backgrounds promote equity and inclusion in education, creating a more supportive learning environment for all students. Mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and stress, are significant concerns impacting youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan. Policies that prioritize mental health education,

awareness, and support services in schools and communities are essential for addressing these challenges. Investing in mental health literacy programs, school counseling services, and community-based mental health initiatives equips young people with the knowledge and resources to cope with stressors and build resilience in the face of adversity.

Engaging young people as active participants in decision-making processes and community development initiatives is critical for promoting their well-being and fostering a sense of agency and empowerment. Policies that create opportunities for youth voice and leadership, such as youth councils, student-led initiatives, and participatory budgeting programs, empower young people to shape their own futures and contribute to positive change in their communities. Moreover, fostering a culture of respect, inclusion, and meaningful participation ensures that young people's perspectives are valued and incorporated into policy and practice. Structural inequities, such as socio-economic disparities, discrimination, and lack of access to resources, pose significant barriers to youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan. Policies aimed at addressing these structural inequities, such as poverty alleviation programs, affirmative action policies, and investment in infrastructure and social services in marginalized communities, are essential for creating a more equitable society where all young people have the opportunity to thrive. Additionally, efforts to promote social cohesion, diversity, and inclusion contribute to creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for youth. Enhancing youth well-being requires a collaborative and coordinated effort among government agencies, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and communities. Policies that promote multi-sectoral collaboration, partnership-building, and resource-sharing facilitate the development and implementation of holistic approaches to youth well-being. By leveraging the expertise, resources, and networks of diverse stakeholders, policymakers and practitioners can maximize the impact of interventions and create lasting change in the lives of young people.

In conclusion, the implications for policy and practice in enhancing youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan underscore the importance of adopting a holistic, equity-focused approach that addresses the diverse needs and aspirations of young people. By prioritizing social support systems, equity and inclusion in education, mental health and well-being support, youth participation and empowerment, addressing structural inequities, and fostering collaboration and partnership, stakeholders can create a supportive environment where all young people have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

CONCLUSION

Towards a Brighter Future for Youth in Western Kazakhstan

As we reflect on the research findings and implications for enhancing youth well-being in Western Kazakhstan, it becomes evident that concerted efforts are needed to create a supportive environment where all young people can thrive and reach their full potential. The journey towards a brighter future for youth in the region requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the complex interplay of individual, social, and structural factors shaping youth well-being. Youth well-being is not a monolithic concept but rather a multifaceted construct influenced by a myriad of factors, including social relationships, access to resources, mental health, and socio-economic status. By acknowledging the complexities of youth well-being and adopting a holistic approach that considers the intersecting influences of these factors, policymakers and practitioners can develop targeted interventions that address the diverse needs and aspirations of young people in Western Kazakhstan. Central to the pursuit of youth well-being is the promotion of equity and inclusion in all aspects of life. Policies and programs that prioritize equitable access to education, healthcare, social support, and economic opportunities are essential for reducing disparities and ensuring that no young person is left behind. By addressing structural inequities, such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of access to resources, stakeholders can create a more inclusive society where all young people have the opportunity to thrive.

Family, peer, and community support systems play a crucial role in shaping youth well-being. Policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening these support networks, promoting positive parenting practices, and fostering inclusive peer relationships are essential for enhancing resilience and mitigating the negative impacts of stressors on young people's well-being. Moreover, investing in mental health support services, counseling, and peer support groups provides vital resources for young people to cope with challenges and build resilience.

Empowering young people as active participants in decision-making processes and community development initiatives is key to promoting their well-being and fostering a sense of agency and ownership over their lives. Policies that create opportunities for youth voice and leadership, such as youth councils, student-led initiatives, and participatory budgeting programs, empower young people to advocate for their needs, shape their communities, and drive positive change. By valuing and incorporating young people's perspectives into policy and practice, stakeholders can create more responsive and inclusive systems that reflect the aspirations and priorities of youth.

Enhancing youth well-being requires a collaborative and coordinated effort among government agencies, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and communities. By fostering collaboration and partnership, stakeholders can leverage their collective expertise, resources, and networks to develop and implement holistic approaches to youth well-being. Moreover, sharing best practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions, creating lasting impact in the lives of young people. As we look ahead to the future of youth in Western Kazakhstan, it is essential to remain optimistic and proactive in our efforts to create a brighter tomorrow. By prioritizing youth well-being as a central pillar of development, we can lay the foundation for a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable society. This requires continued investment in education, healthcare, social services, and economic opportunities that empower young people to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Furthermore, fostering a culture of empathy, respect, and inclusion is essential for creating an environment where every young person feels valued, supported, and empowered to pursue their dreams. By embracing diversity, promoting dialogue, and challenging stereotypes and prejudices, we can create a more tolerant and inclusive society where all young people have the opportunity to thrive. In conclusion, the journey towards a brighter future for youth in Western Kazakhstan is multifaceted and requires a collective commitment from all stakeholders. By prioritizing equity, inclusion, empowerment, and collaboration, we can create a supportive environment where all young people have the opportunity to flourish and contribute to building a better world for generations to come. As we embark on this journey together, let us remain steadfast in our dedication to promoting youth well-being and creating a brighter tomorrow for all.

Gratitude

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