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Professional motivation of students in modern conditions of labor market development

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Abstract

The present work is a tribute to researching students' career motivation in a dynamically changing work environment. There is a certain emphasis placed on researching the interrelationship between gained work competencies, youth career aspirations, and present requirements placed by employers. In its activity, the present study utilizes an interdisciplinary analysis with both quantitative and qualitative tools, including correlation and regression. The report mentions career progression and high salaries as principal driving impulses for students, but significant geographical inequality in employment opportunities still prevails. Huge urban areas, such as Almaty and Astana, enjoy a relatively easier working environment, but less economically developed regions have restricted access to high-quality jobs. Besides, extreme gender gaps have been experienced: while males have a greater concern for salary and professional advancement, females prioritize job stability. Insufficient practical training among graduates further widens the gap between youth expectations and the actual conditions of the labor market. The authors espouse a systemic transformation of the educational system through practice-related instruction, dual training structures, and competency development with a view to adaptability. Upscaling infrastructure and generating jobs in economically disadvantaged regions is regarded as a strategic intervention in youth unemployment. The online transformation of the jobs marketplace, such as career guidance and job placement platforms, is regarded as a key factor in addressing employment challenges. The report offers valuable recommendations for educational institutions and government bodies to enhance the competitiveness of young professionals and promote the sustainable development of the labor market.

Keywords: Career ambitions, Educational system, Employer, Employment, Gender differences, Labor market, Professional motivation, Professional orientation, Student youth, Unemployment.

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1. Introduction

Work is the basis of human activity, which has always been an important part of people's lives. The labor market is a place where people can work and where their labor is used [1]. There are many definitions of the labor market in the Russian literature, which are considered from different points of view – economic, psychological, sociological and

political. However, no single common definition has yet been created. Therefore, several different definitions can be found in scientific papers [2].

Youth, as a distinct socio-demographic group, frequently serves as a subject of scientific inquiry, as their experiences and behaviors reflect broader societal transformations. In the modern era, young individuals exhibit diverse approaches and perspectives toward job searching, shaped by the ongoing changes within society [3].

The financial well-being of youth is primarily determined by the composition of their income sources, with employment and parental support serving as the most significant contributors. Their socioeconomic status and degree of professional engagement play a crucial role in shaping their earnings. Consequently, students predominantly rely on financial assistance from their parents while simultaneously increasing their consumption, with a substantial proportion combining their studies with work. In contrast, employed young individuals derive the majority of their income from professional activities, whereas only a small fraction of them are engaged in entrepreneurial endeavors.

A successful integration of youth into the labor force is a crucial factor in fostering the long-term development of both the national economy and society as a whole. Challenges associated with entering the labor market significantly affect economic stability and overall social well-being [4, 5]. Although young professionals enter the workforce with clear aspirations, they often face employment-related challenges, contributing to the growing issue of youth unemployment. The stark contrast between their expectations and the realities of the labor market underscores the depth of this problem [6-8].

Recent economic transformations have heightened the challenges faced by young professionals in securing employment within their fields of specialization. This is primarily attributed to the misalignment between their professional competencies and the demands of the labor market. Consequently, a pronounced imbalance has emerged between labor demand and supply in the contemporary job market.

The distinctiveness of this study lies in its examination of students' professional motivation in Kazakhstan within the context of a rapidly evolving labor market shaped by globalization, digitalization, and structural economic transformations. The research adopts a comprehensive approach that integrates both micro- and macro-level analysis, enabling a nuanced consideration of various interrelated factors, including education level, regional disparities, salary expectations, and gender-based differences in job satisfaction. A key contribution of the study is the development of a conceptual model that explores direct, indirect, and limiting relationships, demonstrating high practical applicability across diverse contexts. The methodological framework is based on quantitative data analysis utilizing regression methods, complemented by a comparative examination of international best practices. This methodological integration enhances the reliability of the findings and aligns them with the broader global discourse on youth employment. Particular emphasis is placed on addressing regional inequalities in employment and job satisfaction, assessing the influence of gender and socio-economic factors, and promoting the development of soft skills alongside the adaptation of educational programs to labor market demands. The study's conclusions possess a universal character, making them adaptable to the conditions of other developing economies. Furthermore, the research incorporates trend forecasting, highlighting the growing significance of digital literacy and entrepreneurial competencies, thereby reinforcing its strategic relevance. The combination of theoretical analysis, empirical validation, and the formulation of targeted recommendations underscores the study's practical significance, making it a valuable resource for students, educators, and employers in addressing contemporary labor market challenges.

By examining key aspects such as the alignment of educational programs with labor market demands, regional disparities, and the development of soft skills, this study provides a thorough and comprehensive analysis of professional motivation. Its relevance extends beyond the context of Kazakhstan, offering valuable insights applicable to global labor markets. This broad scope enhances the study's significance, making it a noteworthy contribution both to academic research and to practical applications in workforce development.

The economic transformations of recent years have intensified the mismatch between the qualifications of young professionals and the demands of the labor market. This imbalance between labor supply and demand complicates the employment process and presents additional barriers to the professional development of young specialists. The introduction provides a foundation for analyzing this issue, formulating key research questions, and substantiating the relevance of the study.

As part of the study, the following questions were formulated to achieve the goals set:

1. How do transformations in the economic environment affect the formation of professional motivation of students in Kazakhstan?
2. How do regional and gender differences affect the level of professional satisfaction?
3. What approaches and tools can be developed to bring educational programs in line with the current requirements of the modern labor market?
4. What skills and competencies are most in demand in modern economic realities, and how does their development contribute to increasing employment opportunities among young people?

Each of these research questions is aimed at analyzing the key factors influencing professional motivation, as well as developing recommendations for integrating these insights into educational policy and the strategic planning of labor market development.

Literature Review. The theoretical foundation of this study is built upon an analysis of scholarly works examining professional motivation, the impact of regional and gender factors on the labor market, and the adaptation of education to economic transformations. The literature review offers a comprehensive perspective on the issue and highlights key areas for further research.

Methodology. This study employs a combination of quantitative and comparative analysis, enabling an objective assessment of the influence of various factors on professional motivation and job satisfaction. Such an approach enhances the reliability, validity, and reproducibility of the findings.

Results and Discussion. The key conclusions about the influence of regional differences and gender factors on professional motivation are presented. Interpreting the data in the context of the identified trends allows us to formulate reasonable conclusions and strengthen the link between theory and empirical data.

Conclusion. The conclusion synthesizes the key findings of the study, emphasizes their practical significance, and identifies prospective directions for further research aimed at developing effective solutions.

This structure ensures a coherent and systematic exploration of the topic under investigation.

2. Literature Review

With Kazakhstan's transition to a market economy, the study of employment and unemployment issues, particularly among young people, has gained significant importance. Research in this field has expanded in scope and diversity, incorporating both specialized and interdisciplinary approaches that account for the economic challenges faced by the youth population [9]. The problem of matching qualifications to the requirements of the labor market is becoming more and more urgent, therefore, it is necessary to conduct in-depth research on the employment opportunities of young professionals [10]. Much attention is paid to the conditions of youth employment, given that almost half of the unemployed in the world are young people [11].

The study of what is important to people in life is becoming increasingly popular because of its impact on individual destinies and society as a whole [12]. Philosophical theories help us understand what values exist and how we evaluate them, as well as classify different types of values [13]. Social psychology examines which values are important in small groups and how they affect society, while general psychology explores differences in values between people and their psychological roots using special methods [14].

Other scientific fields, such as psychology, political science, and ethics, study different types of values and related preferences. In a work environment, values are manifested through life goals, plans, ways to achieve success and motivation to work. This helps to understand what strategic decisions young people make in their careers [15, 16].

The choice of professions by young people shows their deliberate and rational approach to decision-making. They strive for real skills in their chosen fields, counting on the possibility of employment, a decent salary and interest in the profession, while paying less attention to its prestige [17]. However, despite this, young people often find themselves less prepared for the demands of the labor market and the expectations of employers due to lack of experience and idealistic views [18]. Graduates, as a rule, have the necessary professional and communication skills, which helps them find a job. But half of them do not work in their specialty, often due to low salaries in their original profession [19, 20].

Young people seeking career development face serious difficulties in finding a job. These difficulties include high expectations on the part of employers and other obstacles that can affect their attitude to work. As a result, many are forced to accept any available job in order to earn a living, even if it is not related to their education or interests.

There is increasing emphasis within university programs on enabling graduating students to develop and demonstrate key generic skills to secure employment on graduation. This is relevant to graduating midwives as supporting them to secure employment that aligns with their personal philosophy and career expectations is predictive of retention in the profession [21].

Career development theorists emphasize that individuals experience multiple career transitions throughout their lives. One of the most critical turning points occurs when young adults move from structured academic settings to more flexible or unpredictable workplace environments. This process, commonly referred to as the “school-to-work transition” (STWT), is a universal experience for young professionals; however, the degree of success in this transition varies significantly. Successful individuals demonstrate performance that meets employer expectations and exhibit a positive attitude toward their work environment and job responsibilities, whereas those who struggle with the transition often fail to do so, at least in their initial employment. Research has identified several factors influencing STWT success, including the quality of career exploration, pre-employment training and competencies, access to career counseling and mentoring, as well as post-employment socialization and workplace adaptation. Despite extensive prior research on this subject, there remain areas requiring further investigation to deepen the understanding of the factors that contribute to a successful school-to-work transition [22].

A significant portion of the discourse in the school-to-work transition (STWT) literature focuses on "work-bound students"—those actively preparing for or engaged in the job search process. Consequently, much of the research emphasizes pre-employment and educational factors while paying comparatively less attention to the role of post-employment and managerial factors in facilitating early career transitions. Studies have demonstrated that receiving career-related training and support during higher education positively influences career-related attitudes, including career planning and job search intentions, as well as employment status and job quality. Furthermore, the career aspirations and work values that individuals develop during their education play a crucial role in shaping their employment outcomes post-graduation [22].

Self-esteem and success in youth work are interrelated factors that can significantly influence each other. The level of self-esteem directly affects a person's confidence, motivation and ability to cope with professional tasks.

Young individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to achieve career success, as they exhibit confidence in their abilities, a willingness to take risks, and the capacity to embrace challenges. They demonstrate greater initiative, recover from setbacks more effectively, and adapt to learning from mistakes at a faster rate. Conversely, low self-esteem may

hinder professional achievement by fostering fear and uncertainty regarding one's own competencies, thereby limiting career advancement opportunities.

It is important to note that success at work, in turn, can strengthen self-esteem. Achievements, recognition and support from colleagues and management help young professionals feel their importance and value.

The development of adequate self-esteem among young people requires support from both the educational system and the professional environment. Trainings, mentoring and positive feedback can play a key role in building self-confidence, which contributes to their professional growth [23].

High-quality student preparation and alignment with personally meaningful career paths serve as key mechanisms for ensuring stable economic growth in a country. However, the rapid advancement of civilization presents challenges for many students in realizing their career potential and achieving professional success. With each passing year, employer expectations continue to rise, rendering certain professions obsolete or entirely redundant. Simultaneously, the expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises has led to a significant transformation in job market requirements.

In addition to possessing professional knowledge, skills, and competencies, graduates must demonstrate self-confidence, a commitment to lifelong learning, and a willingness to pursue further professional development even after completing formal education and entering the workforce. Moreover, they are expected to exhibit strong critical thinking abilities, advanced communication skills, high emotional intelligence, problem-solving capabilities, and proficiency in modern technologies. The concept of "Career Opportunities" remains in its early stages of development, with scholars often integrating the notions of "Career" and "Personal Opportunities" into a unified framework [12].

Employment has become the main focus of higher education worldwide, as evidenced by the publication of university rankings on employment indicators such as QMS (Quality Management System) and time. In the modern period, employment has become a key element of labor and education policy, and international organizations such as the United Nations and the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) have begun to actively raise the issue of improving employment [24]. The motivation of students to study at the university is determined by various expectations, motives and factors, such as the perception of the quality of education in a particular educational institution, place of residence and other aspects. One of the most common motives for choosing a university is the desire to improve your chances in the labor market. This idea is confirmed by the fact that in the context of globalization, education is considered as an investment in human capital, contributing to an improvement in the labor market, including long-term employment prospects. This motive is especially characteristic of women, which is explained by their more vulnerable position in the labor market in the Slovak Republic. They are more likely to seek to improve their situation through education.

The quality of teaching is influenced not only by the attitude of students to the learning process, but also by the professionalism of teachers. Their competence, commitment to professional growth, approach to interaction with students, integration of modern knowledge into the educational process and the use of advanced teaching methods play an important role. Teaching methods are a key tool that should take into account the needs of students and meet modern technical and economic trends. The choice of methods depends on factors such as the size of the study group, learning conditions, the level of motivation of students, the experience of teachers, as well as the quality of educational materials and the availability of necessary didactic tools. About half of the students rate the educational process as high-quality, which indicates a significant potential for further improvement of the work of teachers and improvement of the content and forms of education [25]. The body of research focusing on the causes and consequences of youth unemployment, as well as strategies for addressing it, has grown significantly in recent years. To provide a deeper understanding of the critical aspects of this issue, studies have been organized by thematic areas, with their main findings summarized below.

Mseleku [26] investigates the problem of unemployment among university graduates in South Africa, emphasizing the inadequate practical training of young professionals, which does not align with the needs of the modern labor market. The study also highlights the weak integration between education systems and employer demands. Similarly, Iduseri, et al. [27] examine youth unemployment in Nigeria, identifying a key issue in the mismatch between educational qualifications and the skills demanded by the labor market. They also note the low levels of awareness among youth regarding available employment opportunities. In Kazakhstan, Izguttieva, et al. [1] explore the phenomenon of hidden unemployment, attributing it to a misalignment between workers' qualifications and the current needs of the labor market.

Tosun, et al. [28] analyze youth perceptions of unemployment using data from 11 European countries. Their findings reveal that factors such as family background, including parental unemployment, and the influence of social environments play a significant role in shaping young people's career expectations and perceptions of their professional prospects. Meanwhile, Fakih, et al. [29] examine the impact of gender and social factors on youth unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa, highlighting how discrimination and limited professional opportunities for women significantly contribute to rising youth unemployment in the region.

Migration and the brain drain of skilled professionals are explored in studies by Korgan, et al. [30] and Nienaber, et al. [31]. Korgan, et al. [30] draw attention to the issue of brain drain in Kazakhstan, stressing the need to develop strategies to retain skilled youth and foster knowledge-based economic growth. In contrast, Nienaber, et al. [31] analyze the international mobility of youth in Europe, noting that while participation in international education and professional programs enhances competencies, it often fails to resolve unemployment in the participants' home countries, as structural challenges persist upon their return. Doskeyeva [32] examines youth employment programs in Kazakhstan, with a particular focus on their adaptation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study underscores the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in ensuring the effectiveness of such programs during crises. Khussainova, et al. [33] focus on young people classified as NEET (not in employment, education, or training), stressing the importance of targeted governmental initiatives to address barriers preventing this group from entering the workforce. Sabirova, et al. [34] emphasize the

importance of labor market digitalization in Kazakhstan, linking it to increased economic activity and highlighting the need to support youth entrepreneurship as a tool for promoting employment.

Haman [35] critiques neoliberal approaches to addressing unemployment in Morocco, arguing that such strategies often neglect local context and nuances. Instead, the author advocates for the adoption of region-specific development strategies tailored to the country's unique socio-economic realities. Alternative approaches, such as promoting entrepreneurship, vocational training, and educational reform, are also discussed in various studies. For instance, Paul [36] analyzes the case of South Sudan, where youth facing limited job opportunities turn to micro-entrepreneurship as a source of income. The author emphasizes the importance of equipping young people with business skills. Similarly, Safarli and Abdullayev [37] stress the role of entrepreneurship in developing countries, while advocating for the implementation of robust labor standards to enhance labor market resilience.

Alfonsi, et al. [38] compare the effectiveness of different vocational training approaches in Uganda, concluding that professional training provides more sustainable long-term benefits for youth employment compared to on-the-job training. Within the realm of education policy, Adebiyi and Omogbehin [39] highlight the importance of aligning educational programs with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4 on Quality Education and SDG-8 on Decent Work) to effectively address youth unemployment in Nigeria.

This comprehensive synthesis of research addresses existing gaps in the study of youth unemployment through a multidisciplinary approach. It integrates analyses of vocational training, psychological determinants, digitalization trends, and career preferences. Particular attention is given to post-employment adaptation and support mechanisms for vulnerable youth populations. The findings provide a foundation for developing more effective, practice-oriented strategies aimed at improving labor market outcomes for young professionals and ensuring their long-term career stability.

3. Methodology

3.1. Description of the Research Project

This study examines the professional motivation of students in Kazakhstan within the context of a dynamically evolving labor market shaped by globalization, digitalization, and economic restructuring. Particular attention is given to analyzing the interrelationships between educational attainment, expected earnings, job satisfaction, and employment structure, while considering regional and gender-specific factors. The research makes a significant scientific contribution by presenting a conceptual model that explores the direct, indirect, and limiting relationships influencing the career trajectories of young professionals.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how young people assess their career prospects and the key factors influencing their professional choices, this study establishes several objectives. These include examining young individuals' approaches to job searching, evaluating the significance of employment within their field of study, identifying the primary reasons for accepting positions that do not align with their qualifications, analyzing their salary expectations, and determining the most significant aspects of their professional activities.

3.2. Participants

The study included a diverse group of respondents, comprising students, early-career professionals, and unemployed individuals actively seeking employment. The participants' age range spanned from 18 to 35 years. The sample encompassed multiple regions of Kazakhstan, including economically developed urban centers such as Almaty and Astana, as well as less economically prosperous areas like Pavlodar. This methodological approach facilitated the collection of comprehensive regional data. A total of 1,200 individuals participated in the survey, with 56% identifying as male and 44% as female. The survey aimed to identify the key challenges faced by young people in the employment process. The primary objective of the study was to examine labor market transformations driven by economic crises, analyze the increase in the number of higher education graduates amid a shortage of qualified specialists in technical fields, and explore the factors influencing young individuals' professional choices.

The analysis revealed that a significant proportion of young people encounter difficulties in navigating the labor market and often lack a clearly defined plan for achieving their career objectives. Their salary expectations tend to be disproportionately high relative to their actual skill levels, which are often insufficient to meet such demands. The survey also indicated that when selecting a job, students prioritize qualities such as responsibility, perseverance, and efficiency. However, the significance of respect for work, previously regarded as a key factor, has noticeably declined. This paradox reflects an emerging trend in which, despite the continued importance of job satisfaction, the intrinsic value of work as a fundamental priority is gradually diminishing.

The findings of the study suggest that young people primarily prioritize high wages when selecting a job, while considerations related to public welfare hold lesser significance for them. Furthermore, the labor market is experiencing increased dynamism due to the growing number of graduates amid a limited supply of available vacancies. This imbalance is further exacerbated by the misalignment between societal needs and labor market demands, creating additional barriers to the employment of young professionals.

3.3. Assessment Methods

The Pearson correlation coefficient was employed to evaluate the relationship between key variables, including education level, expected salary, job satisfaction, and the unemployment rate. This statistical measure, which ranges from -1 to 1, enables the identification of both the direction and strength of the linear dependence between variables. A positive coefficient value signifies a direct correlation, whereas a negative value indicates an inverse relationship.

3.4. Data Collection Tools

The data for this study was collected using structured surveys and questionnaires incorporating both closed and open-ended questions. These methodological instruments were designed to obtain quantitative information on respondents' demographic characteristics, educational attainment, employment status, salary expectations, job satisfaction, and professional values.

$$r = \frac{\sum(X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum(X_I - \bar{X})^2 \sum(Y_i - \bar{Y})^2}} \quad (1)$$

The collected data was analyzed to examine the relationships between various variables, including educational attainment and student satisfaction. Particular attention was given to exploring correlations between education level and expected wages, as well as assessing the impact of job satisfaction on the unemployment rate.

The study utilized data provided by survey participants, incorporating numerical values for key indicators such as salary, satisfaction level (measured using a scale-based system), and education level, categorized into classifications such as secondary, higher, and others.

To assess the influence of independent variables—including expected wages, job satisfaction, and education level—on the unemployment rate or employment probability, regression analysis was employed. Linear regression, based on an appropriate mathematical model, served as the primary analytical tool.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_n X_n + \epsilon \quad (2)$$

As part of the study, a regression model was constructed to evaluate the impact of expected wage fluctuations and education levels on the likelihood of student employment. The model was developed using data on students, including their educational attainment, salary expectations, and job satisfaction. This dataset enabled the prediction of employment probabilities among students.

In this study, employment probability was defined as the dependent variable, assigned a value of "1" if the student was employed and "0" if they were not. Independent variables included expected wages, job satisfaction, and various other factors, such as demographic characteristics. The application of this methodological approach allowed for an assessment of the extent to which each factor influenced students' likelihood of employment and facilitated the identification of key determinants contributing to their successful integration into the labor market.

Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on the pre-professional training stage (for example, the work of Takeuchi, et al. [22] this study covers both pre-professional and post-professional aspects. Special attention is paid to the study of the influence of factors of adaptation in the workplace and employer support on career satisfaction.

The methodological foundation of this study is based on an integrative approach that combines quantitative methods, such as statistical and regression analysis, with qualitative data derived from survey responses. This comprehensive approach enhances the validity and reliability of the findings, ensuring their practical applicability and facilitating the establishment of a connection between theoretical models and the actual dynamics of the labor market.

4. Results and Discussion

In the context of Kazakhstan's rapidly evolving labor market, students' professional motivation plays a crucial role in facilitating the successful integration of young professionals into the national economy. The ongoing processes of globalization, digitalization, and structural economic transformation are driving significant shifts in labor market dynamics, presenting both challenges and new opportunities for enhancing student motivation. The youth unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 to 34 is illustrated in Graph 1 [1].

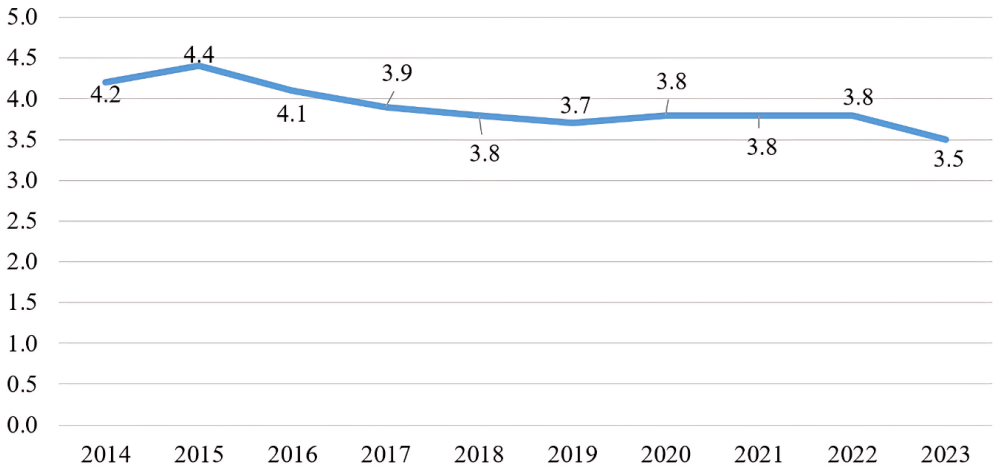

Figure 1.
Statistical data on youth unemployment rates in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Figure 1 illustrates that the unemployment rate in Kazakhstan showed a steady downward trend from 2014 to 2023. In particular, while in 2014 this figure was 4.2%, by 2023 it had decreased to 3.5%. This decrease indicates the effectiveness of the implemented measures aimed at strengthening the labor market and stabilizing the economic situation. It should be

particularly noted that after reaching the peak unemployment rate in 2015, there has been a steady decline, which contributes to the creation of favorable conditions for further economic growth in the country [1].

Figure 2 shows the unemployment rate in various regions.

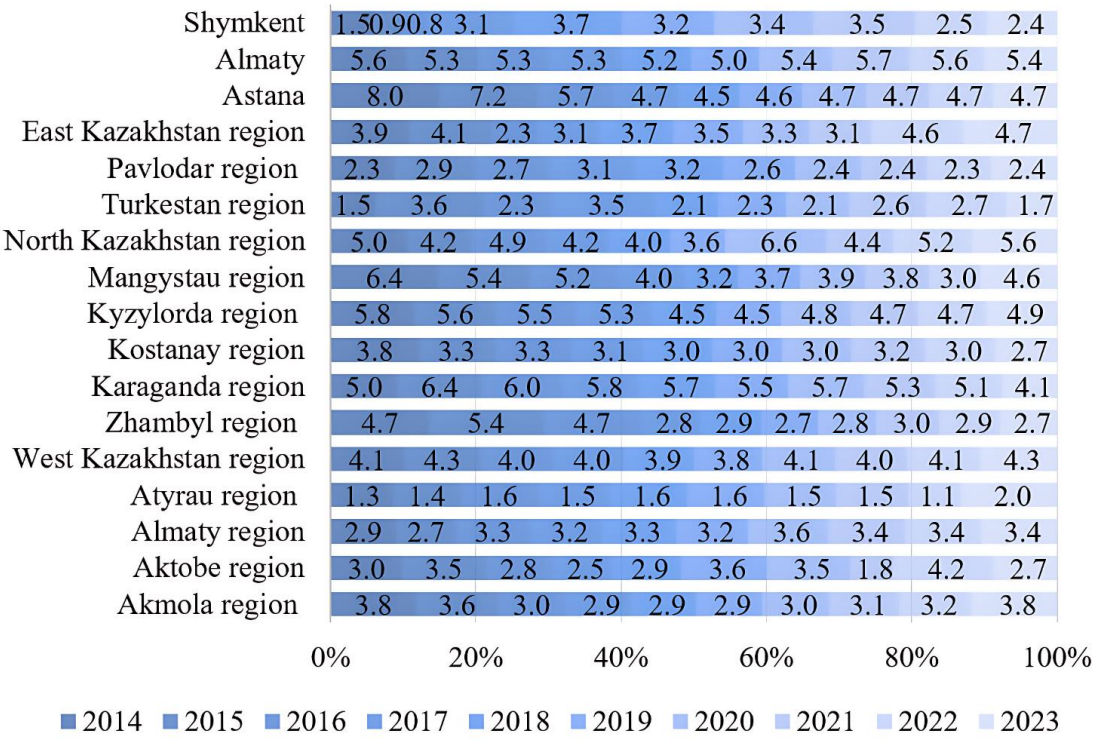

Figure 2.
A study of the youth unemployment rate.

From Figure 2 a review of youth unemployment in Kazakhstan regions between 2014 and 2023 reveals a high level of variation in regions. There has been a sharp fall in unemployment in a considerable number of regions, but in most, high youth unemployment continues to dominate. For instance, youth unemployment continues to plague regions including Karaganda, Mangystau, and Kyzylorda, but in regions including Bay and Turkestan, a brighter picture seems to prevail. These findings emphasize the necessity of developing targeted policies to mitigate unemployment in the most affected areas while sustaining positive trends in regions demonstrating improvement. Additionally, incorporating labor market forecasts is crucial for formulating effective workforce management strategies and optimizing employment policies.

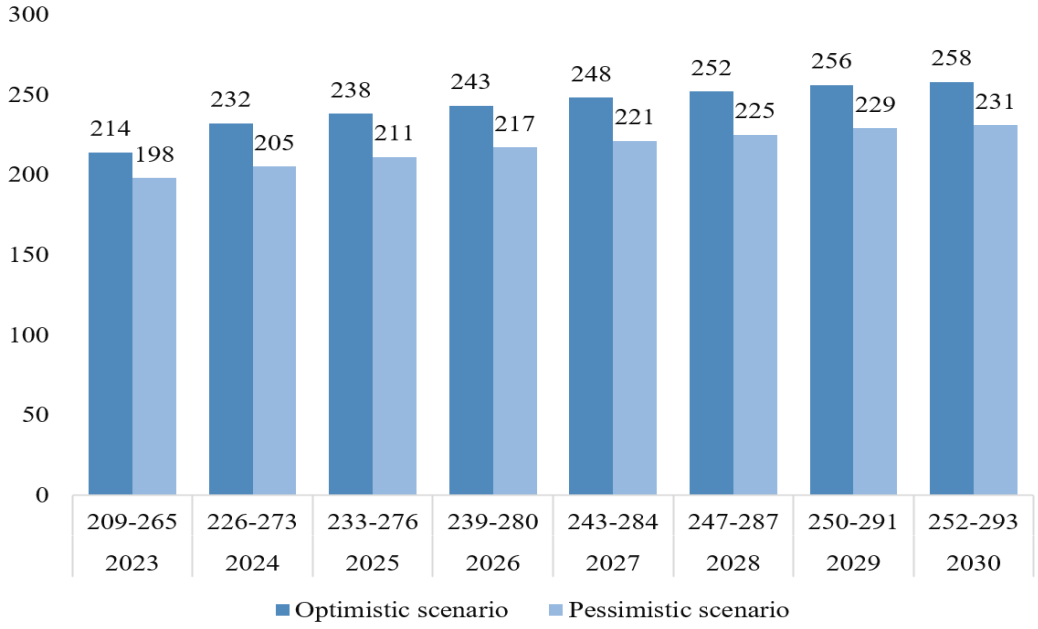

Figure 3.
Total demand for new employees (Thousand people).

Figure 3 illustrates that in all cases considered, a rise in demand for new workers is forecasted. In the baseline scenario, the indicator is projected to range from 209 to 265 in 2023 and from 252 to 293 by 2030. In the optimistic scenario, steady growth is anticipated, increasing from 214 in 2023 to 258 in 2030. Even in the pessimistic scenario, despite lower values, a positive trend is observed, with figures rising from 198 in 2023 to 231 in 2030. These projections highlight the potential for sustainable labor market development, even under unfavorable conditions.

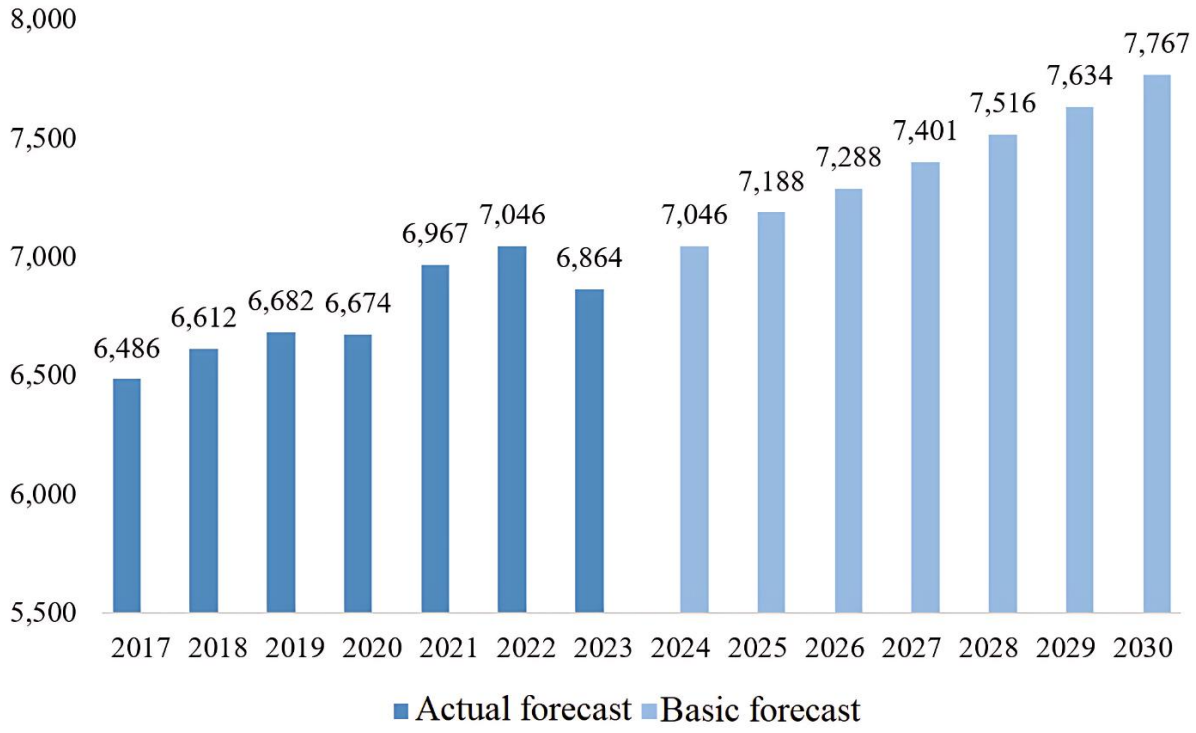

Figure 4.
Number of employees.

Figure 4 illustrates the number of workers. It can be concluded that the labor force has been steadily growing, increasing from 6,486 people in 2017 to 7,046 in 2022, reflecting a significant improvement in labor market conditions. However, in 2023, there was a decrease to 6864 people, which can be explained by factors such as economic instability, the ongoing effects of disruptions related to the pandemic, or structural shifts in the economy.

Let's consider the aggregate demand by region, shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Aggregate demand by region (baseline scenario), thousand people (2023-2030).

Region	Region Total for 2023-2030	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total for Kazakhstan	1 908.0	198.0	232.1	242.1	252.3	261.4	238.6	248.4
Akmola region	82.0	10.6	10.8	10.9	10.9	10.3	9.4	9.6
Kostanay region	86.3	10.9	10.9	11.0	10.9	10.4	9.6	9.6
North Kazakhstan region	66.2	9.7	9.4	9.1	9.0	8.7	8.4	8.0
Karaganda (incl. Ulytau) region	154.0	18.4	18.1	18.7	20.3	20.8	21.9	19.2
Pavlodar region	55.6	7.1	7.3	7.4	7.6	7.7	7.4	7.6
East Kazakhstan region	120.8	14.9	15.1	15.4	17.0	17.4	16.0	16.1
Almaty (incl. Zhetysu) region	441.0	53.5	55.0	56.3	57.8	59.1	56.3	57.7
Zhambyl region	132.0	15.2	15.9	16.2	16.5	16.9	15.8	16.1
Kyzylorda region	53.0	6.8	6.9	7.1	7.1	7.3	6.8	6.9
Turkestan region	172.3	19.9	21.0	22.0	22.9	23.8	22.3	23.5
Aktobe region	86.7	10.2	10.7	11.0	11.6	12.0	11.5	11.5
Atyrau region	107.3	13.9	13.8	13.7	13.7	13.6	12.4	12.6
West Kazakhstan region	60.1	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.4	7.6
Mangystau region	119.0	16.4	16.9	17.1	17.3	17.7	16.7	16.9
Astana	267.0	30.9	33.5	36.0	37.4	39.3	36.9	38.0
Almaty	267.7	31.3	34.0	35.9	37.8	39.1	36.3	37.9
Shymkent	73.5	9.3	9.6	9.8	10.1	10.4	9.8	10.0

It follows from the data that in the period from 2023 to 2030, steady growth is expected in Kazakhstan with a total volume of 1,908.0 units. Regions with large cities such as Astana and Almaty, as well as Almaty and Turkestan regions, make a greater contribution to this growth. The least dynamic regions are the North Kazakhstan and Pavlodar regions, where indicators remain stable with minor changes. Let's examine the projected structure of demand for workers in more detail.

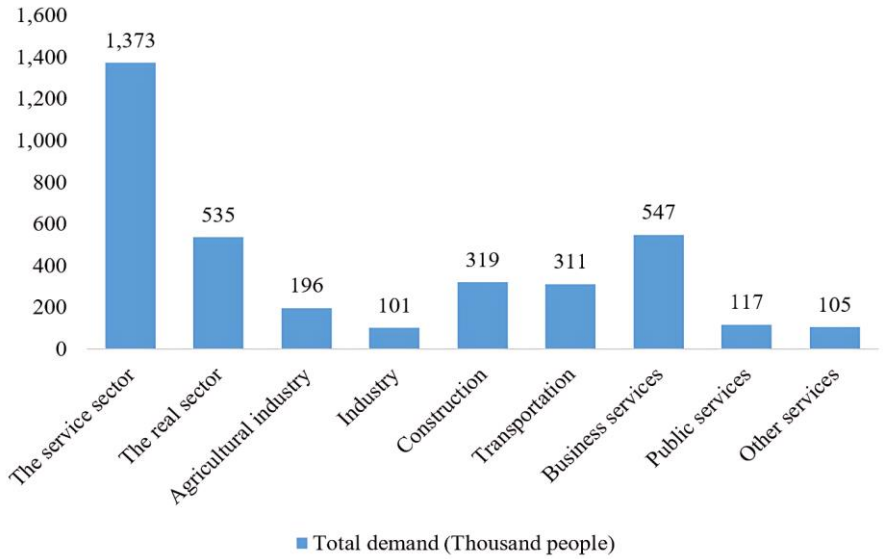

Figure 5.
Projected structure of aggregate demand for employees.

Figure 5 illustrates that the real sector, including agriculture, industry, and construction, is projected to account for approximately 27-29% of the total demand for workers. The remaining 71-73% of demand will be in the service sector. Most of the workers will be needed in the public services sector, such as education, healthcare and public administration, where from 547 to 678 thousand people will be in demand, which is approximately 31-33% of the total demand. In the field of transport, trade, transportation and warehousing, as well as accommodation and catering services, demand will range from 336 to 384 thousand people. people, which is 18-19% of the total. It is expected that the demand for employees in the field of business services, including information, communications, finance, real estate and scientific activities, will range from 268 to 314 thousand people, which is approximately 15%. In industry, demand is estimated at the level of 219 to 259 thousand people (12%), in agriculture — from 193 to 200 thousand people (10-11%), in other service sectors — from 105 to 130 thousand. people (6%), and in construction — from 91 to 111 thousand people (5%).

Let’s do a SWOT analysis of the labor market in Kazakhstan (Figure 6).

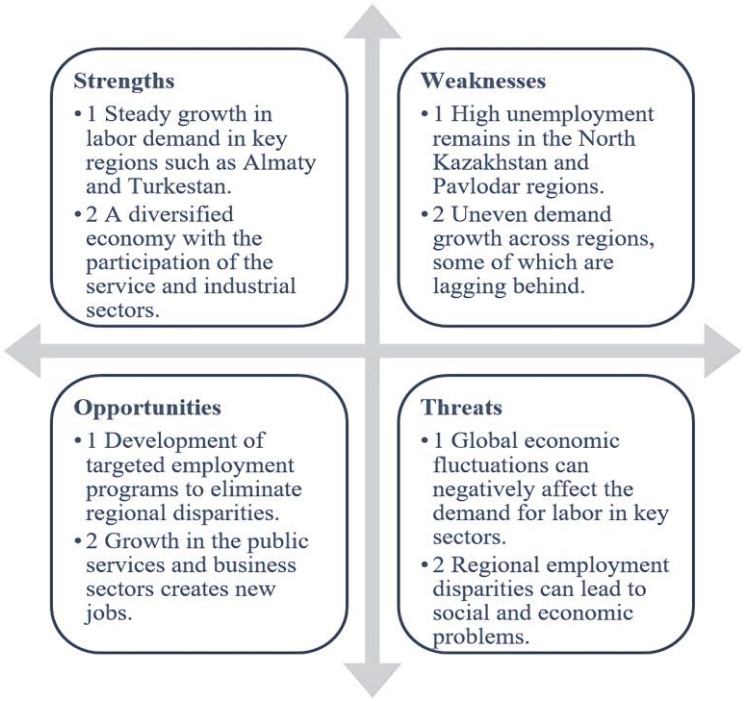

Figure 6.
SWOT analysis of the labor market in Kazakhstan.

According to Figure 6, the demand for labor in Kazakhstan is steadily growing, especially in such large regions as Almaty and Turkestan, due to a diverse economy and the development of services and industry. However, there are significant differences between the regions.: The high unemployment rate in the North Kazakhstan and Pavlodar regions indicates the need to take targeted measures to balance the labor market.

The creation of employment opportunities in both the public sector and private enterprises serves as a critical component in the implementation of workforce development programs and the stimulation of economic growth. However, global economic instability and regional disparities present significant challenges to labor market stability, potentially leading to socio-economic issues. To sustain positive labor market trends, it is essential to enhance the coordination of government initiatives and expand employment infrastructure, with particular emphasis on supporting the most vulnerable regions. The examination of international best practices in the motivation and training of young professionals can offer valuable insights and solutions for Kazakhstan. In countries such as the United States, Germany, and the Scandinavian nations, significant emphasis is placed on the flexibility and adaptability of educational programs to meet the evolving demands of the modern labor market. These countries implement a diverse range of strategies aimed at enhancing the professional mobility of young individuals and facilitating their successful integration into economic activities.

International best practices emphasize the critical role of developing professional skills and competencies that align with labor market demands. For instance, Germany has implemented a dual education system that integrates academic coursework at universities with practical training in a corporate setting [7]. This approach effectively bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application, thereby enhancing students' employment prospects and ensuring their preparedness for the realities of professional activity.

In the United States, significant emphasis is placed on fostering students' entrepreneurial skills and creative thinking. Government programs actively support youth initiatives and the establishment of start-ups, providing young professionals with opportunities to launch their own businesses, thereby contributing to economic growth [10]. Educational programs are designed not only to impart theoretical knowledge but also to cultivate leadership abilities, equipping students with essential competencies for successful adaptation to a dynamic and continuously evolving labor market.

The experience of the Scandinavian countries underscores the significance of social protection and the promotion of equal opportunities in the labor market. These nations actively support young professionals through targeted programs, including initiatives that incentivize employers to hire graduates without prior work experience. Social support systems are designed to foster flexible working conditions, facilitate professional development, and promote lifelong learning. Norway and Sweden have successfully established strong collaboration between employers and educational institutions, enabling students to acquire essential knowledge and skills while ensuring their preparedness for the evolving demands of the labor market [12]. International best practices highlight the importance of continuous monitoring and forecasting of labor market dynamics. For instance, Singapore and South Korea effectively utilize modern technologies to analyze emerging trends and develop educational programs aligned with the future demands of their economies. These countries have established strong partnerships between employers and educational institutions, enabling the timely adaptation of curricula to reflect the evolving requirements of the labor market. The integration of international best practices into Kazakhstan's educational system can substantially enhance the quality of student training and improve their competitiveness on a global scale. To achieve this, it is essential to strengthen collaboration between universities and industrial enterprises, expand student access to internship opportunities, and actively employ modern technologies for analyzing and forecasting labor market trends.

In the course of the study, a survey was conducted to study the views and preferences of young people (Table 2).

Table 2.
Analysis of the responses of the respondents who took part in the survey.

The wording of the question.	Variants	Percentage (%)
Your gender	Men	56
	Women	44
How old are you?	18-22	32
	23-27	46
	28-35	22
Region of residence	North Kazakhstan	15
	Pavlodar region	12
	Almaty	38
	Turkestan region	20
	Other regions	15
The level of education	Average or lower	18
	Unfinished higher education	24
	Bachelor	40
	Master	15
	Doctoral studies	3
Current employment status	Full-time employment	34
	Part-time employment	18
	Unemployed, actively looking for a job	30
	Unemployed, not looking for a job	8

The wording of the question.	Variants	Percentage (%)
	A student who is not working	10
Preferred type of employment	Permanent job	48
	Contract work	12
	Freelance	18
	Entrepreneurship	15
	No preferences	7
The importance of work in the specialty: (Scale: 1 = Not important, 5 = Very important)	1	5
	2	10
	3	22
	4	30
	5	33
Expected salary	<250,000 KZT	22
	250,000–400,000 KZT	38
	400,000–600,000 KZT	28
	600,000 KZT	12
Satisfaction level with current employment opportunities (Scale: 1 = Very dissatisfied, 5 = Very satisfied)	1	19
	2	31
	3	25
	4	17
	5	8
The main method of job search	Internet (job sites)	69
	Personal connections	42
	Job fairs/Events:	15
	University career services	8
	Social network	20
	Other	5
The effectiveness of various job search methods is assessed on a scale from 1 (Low efficiency) to 5 (High efficiency).	The internet	4.5
	Personal connections	3.8
	Job fairs	2.7
	University career services	3.1
	Social network	3.5
Motivation and values Evaluate the importance of the following work values (1 = Not important, 5 = Very important)	High salary	4.8 (81%)
	Career growth	4.2 (67%)
	Flexible schedule	3.9 (59%)
	Work-life balance	3.7 (52%)
	Interesting job	4.1 (63%)
	The social significance of the work	3.3 (48%)
What motivates you to work effectively the most?	High salary	45
	Interesting job	27
	Career opportunities	20
	Recognition of colleagues and management	8
The main difficulties in finding a job	Lack of vacancies in the specialty	40
	Low salaries	32
	Lack of experience	28
	High competition	21
	Other	10
Do you feel that your education has prepared you for the job market?	Never	7
	Rarely	18
	Sometimes	35
	Often	30
	Always	10
Do you think that the development of "soft skills" really takes place within the framework of your educational process?	Yes	38
	No	42
	Partially	20
The most important skills for success (Ranking)	Technical skills	1
	Leadership qualities	2
	Adaptability	3
	Creativity	4
	Ability to work in a team	5

The wording of the question.	Variants	Percentage (%)
How optimistic are you about your career prospects? (Scale: 1 = Very pessimistic, 5 = Very optimistic)	1	8
	2	15
	3	30
	4	35
	5	12
Are government initiatives adequately facilitating employment opportunities for young individuals?	Yes	25
	No	50
	Partially	25
What measures would you suggest to improve youth employment?	Increase the number of internships	38
	To develop educational programs	27
	Support youth entrepreneurship	22
	Create online job search platforms	13

Table 2 presents the results of the survey. The majority of respondents are men (56%) aged 23 to 27 (46%), predominantly residing in major regions such as Almaty (38%) and the Turkestan region (20%). Among the respondents, 40% hold a bachelor's degree, and 34% have permanent employment. In their professional activities, respondents place the highest importance on the level of wages (4.8), career prospects (4.2), and the nature of the work performed (4.1). Additionally, 48% of participants prefer stable forms of employment. The main challenges in finding a job include the limited availability of vacancies matching their qualifications (40%), low wages (32%), lack of professional experience (28%), and intense competition in the labor market (21%). Only 10% of respondents rate their educational training as fully meeting the demands of the modern labor market, while 42% highlight the lack of focus in education on developing «soft skills».

Respondents identified technical skills, leadership abilities, and adaptability to a dynamically changing professional environment as the most critical competencies contributing to professional success.

In conditions of economic instability, young people often prioritize financial security, sometimes sacrificing opportunities for professional self-realization.

A key factor influencing students' motivation is their awareness of the significance and relevance of their chosen profession. To successfully adapt to the continuously evolving labor market, modern students must demonstrate flexibility and the ability to respond effectively to changes. It is crucial to provide them with access to up-to-date information on industry trends, future development prospects, and the skills that will be most in demand in the coming years. In this regard, job fairs, corporate open days, and participation in professional forums and conferences serve as effective tools for enhancing students' career preparedness.

High-quality education and practical training play a fundamental role in shaping students' professional motivation. Educational institutions in Kazakhstan should enhance collaboration with employers to expand opportunities for internships and hands-on experience. This approach will enable students not only to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice but also to gain a deeper understanding of the specific demands of real market conditions. Consequently, the educational process should prioritize not only theoretical instruction but also the development of practical skills and professional competencies.

The field of employment is widely recognized as a fundamental aspect of social life within the scientific community. At present, the definition of a "young specialist" remains ambiguous, as there is no clearly established legal framework that distinctly regulates the relationship between employers and young professionals as a distinct category of employees. This lack of regulatory clarity may create challenges in career advancement and social integration within the professional sphere for individuals in this group. The evolving criteria for defining young professionals highlight new dimensions of their career development and professional trajectory.

A statistical analysis was performed during the study (Table 3).

Table 3.
Correlation matrix between key variables.

Indicator	Unemployment rate	Expected salary	Satisfaction	Education level	Gender
Unemployment rate	1.000	0.554	0.573	0.172	0.097
Expected salary	-0.554	1.000	0.492	0.823	0.327
Satisfaction	-0.573	0.492	1.000	0.448	-0.119
Education level	-0.172	0.823	0.448	1.000	0.539
Gender	0.097	0.327	-0.119	0.539	1.000

The negative relationship between the unemployment rate and the expected salary (-0.554) indicates that the higher the salary expectations, the lower the unemployment rate.

The positive correlation between education level and expected salary (0.823) highlights the importance of education for career expectations.

Grouping of respondents based on the level of education, satisfaction and expected salary:

Group 0: High level of education and salary expectations (28%).

Group 1: Average level of satisfaction and salaries (42%).

Group 2: Low level of satisfaction, high salary expectations (30%).

Improving the level of practical training.

In order to increase employment and reduce labor market imbalances, it is important to focus on expanding internship opportunities, especially in key regions. Increasing the number of internships by 30% will allow more students to gain practical experience, which is crucial for successful employment. This requires active cooperation between universities and employers, which can be achieved by creating joint programs that integrate education and practical training.

Support for youth entrepreneurship is also an important area. Providing grants for startups of young entrepreneurs will create incentives for self-employment creation and the development of innovative ideas. The organization of business basics trainings will help young people develop the necessary skills for successful business activities, which in the long term will contribute to sustainable economic growth.

The improvement of educational programs should take into account the modern requirements of the labor market. The inclusion of modules on the development of flexible skills (soft skills) in compulsory courses will allow students to be more competitive. In addition, the use of foreign experience, such as dual training in Germany and the Scandinavian countries, can significantly improve the effectiveness of training by combining theoretical training and practical work.

Digitalization of employment processes can significantly simplify job search. The development of an integrated platform that will include career counseling and skills analysis functions will make it easier for students and young professionals to navigate the labor market by finding vacancies that match their qualifications and career goals.

Special attention should be paid to vulnerable regions with high unemployment, such as Northern Kazakhstan and Pavlodar. The creation of targeted employment programs in these regions will help eliminate regional disparities by providing access to vocational training and job creation.

The multilevel analysis showed a close relationship between the educational level, salary expectations and the unemployment rate. Based on these data, measures are proposed that will reduce the imbalance in the labor market, improve the quality of training and improve employment, especially in regions with disabilities.

In the course of the study, a mediator analysis was performed, which allows us to identify and explain how an independent variable affects a dependent one through an intermediate variable (mediator). The purpose of this analysis is to investigate the impact of educational attainment on job satisfaction, considering expected wages as an intermediary factor.

The analytical model consists of three main elements. The independent variable (X) is considered to be the level of education, the intermediary variable (M) is represented by the expected salary, and the dependent variable (Y) reflects the level of job satisfaction.

The study hypothesizes that the level of education directly affects job satisfaction. It is also assumed that the level of education affects the expected salary, which indirectly affects job satisfaction.

Table 4 shows the correlation analysis of variables.

Table 4.
Relationships between variables.

Variable	The level of education	Expected salary	Satisfaction
The level of education	1.000	0.823	0.448
Expected salary	0.823	1.000	0.492
Satisfaction	0.448	0.492	1.000

The analysis of correlations shows that the level of education and the expected salary are in a strong positive relationship (r=0.823), which indicates that with an increase in the level of education, financial expectations also increase. This indicates that people with a high level of education and specialized knowledge and skills are more likely to expect higher pay.

In addition, a moderate positive relationship was found between the level of education and job satisfaction (r=0.448), which confirms that a higher level of education contributes to improved employment conditions and increased personal satisfaction. The likely reason for this is that educated professionals are more likely to find jobs that match their qualifications and professional goals.

The correlation between expected wages and job satisfaction is r=0.492, reflecting a moderate positive relationship. This means that people with higher financial expectations are more likely to achieve job satisfaction, probably due to their confidence in being able to find a position that meets their needs and expectations.

In general, the results emphasize the importance of the level of education in the formation of financial aspirations and the overall level of satisfaction with professional activity. At the same time, the expected salary plays the role of an intermediary, linking education with job satisfaction.

Improving the level of education and matching career opportunities with salary expectations can significantly increase employee satisfaction. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to update educational programs, develop professional counseling and implement initiatives to increase wages in highly qualified industries.

Stage 2: Building a mediation model.

Influence of X → M (education → expected salary).

Linear regression results:

Expected salary=120,000+35,000×The level of education.

Coefficient (β): 0.823, $p < 0.001$.

Influence of M → Y (expected salary → satisfaction).
Linear regression results:
Satisfaction=1.2+0.002×Expected salary.
Coefficient (β): 0.492, $p < 0.001$.
Influence of X → Y excluding mediator.
Linear regression results:
Satisfaction=1.5+0.4×The level of education.
Coefficient (β): 0.448, $p < 0.001$.
The effect of X → Y taking into account the mediator.
Regression results involving a mediator:
Satisfaction=1.1+0.2×Education level+0.002×Expected salary.
Coefficient (β) for education: reduced to 0.2 ($p = 0.05$).
Coefficient (β) for salary: 0.002 ($p < 0.001$).
Assessment of the mediator effect:
Total Effect Direct effect (DirectEffect) + Indirect effect (Indirect effect).
Indirect effect (X → M → Y):
Indirect effect=$\beta X \rightarrow M \times \beta M \rightarrow Y$=0.823×0.002=0.00165.
Direct effect (X → Y without mediator):
Direct effect=0.448.
Overall effect (X → Y with mediator):
The overall effect=Direct effect+Indirect effect=0.448+0.00165=0.44965T.
Stage 4: Checking the significance of the mediator effect.
Bootstrap-evaluation with 5000 iterations:
Indirect effect: β=0.00165, $p < 0.01$.
Confidence interval (95%): [0.0012, 0.0021].
The presence of a mediator effect:
1 The level of education affects job satisfaction not only directly, but also through an increase in the expected salary.
2 The indirect effect was confirmed statistically ($p < 0.01$).
The proportion of the indirect effect:
The proportion = Indirect effect/ Total effect = 0.00165/0.44965≈0.37%.

This indicates that the bulk of the impact of education on satisfaction is due to a direct effect, but the expected salary also plays a small role.

To increase employee satisfaction, it is important to pay attention to managing salary expectations. This requires the development of mechanisms that will help correlate the ambitions of employees with the real possibilities of the labor market. Understanding the real situation in the salary market can help young professionals feel more confident and find a balance between expectations and the conditions offered.

One of the key measures is to raise awareness of students and young professionals about current market trends in the field of remuneration. Career consultations can be an effective tool for this, where experts will be able to explain how salaries are formed in various industries and give practical recommendations for successful employment. In addition, internship programs are able to provide students with real-world work experience and a better understanding of which skills are most valued by employers.

This mediation analysis highlights the central role of the level of education in shaping salary expectations and job satisfaction. This is important for the development of a public employment policy aimed at reducing the gap between the professional expectations of young professionals and their opportunities in the labor market. Such measures contribute to the creation of a more stable and motivating work environment.

To study the influence of factors on youth job satisfaction in Kazakhstan and analyze their interrelationships through mediators and moderators, we will create a theoretical model. The model will take into account the main variables identified in the study and describe their interaction.

Key elements of the model

The dependent variable (Y) is Job satisfaction.

Independent variables (X) - Level of education, Region of residence, expected salary, Gender.

Mediators (M) - Expected salary (how the level of education and the region of residence affect the formation of expectations), soft skills (the impact of education and internships on professional skills).

Moderators (W) -Gender differences (the influence of gender on preferences and satisfaction levels), Regional differences (employment disparities between regions).

Control variables (C) – Age (influence of the stage of life on career preferences), type of employment (permanent or temporary work).

The hypotheses of the model suggest that there is a direct correlation between the level of education and job satisfaction. Individuals with higher education tend to show a higher level of satisfaction due to their access to prestigious and highly paid positions. The expected salary also has a significant impact on satisfaction: the coincidence of employees' salary expectations with actual working conditions contributes to an increase in their overall satisfaction level. In addition, the region of residence is an important factor, as employment opportunities vary depending on the economic development

of the region. Residents of more economically developed territories tend to experience a higher degree of satisfaction, which is associated with better career prospects and stable employment.

The model also indicates that the level of education has an indirect impact through intermediary factors such as expected wages. An increase in the level of education creates higher salary expectations, which, in turn, has a positive effect on job satisfaction. In addition, educational programs and internship participation play an important role, which promote the development of soft skills, including communication, time management, and adaptability. These competencies significantly increase the chances of successful employment and contribute to achieving a higher level of professional satisfaction.

The model takes into account motivational effects that reflect the complexity of the relationships between key variables. For example, the gender factor has a significant impact on the relationship between the level of education and expected wages: women are more likely to focus on stability and job security, while men mostly strive for a higher income level. Similarly, the region of residence plays an important role in determining the relationship between education level and job satisfaction. In economically developed regions, characterized by wide opportunities for professional growth, the impact of education on satisfaction is much stronger, while in less developed regions, where employment prospects are limited, this effect weakens. Thus, the model provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex interrelationships between socio-economic factors and individual preferences in the labor market.

The direct dependencies in the model are defined as follows: the level of education (X1) affects overall job satisfaction (Y), the geographical region of residence (X2) also affects the level of satisfaction (Y), and the expected salary (X3) acts as an additional factor influencing satisfaction (Y).

Input variables are defined as follows:

- The level of education (X1) serves as the primary determinant of career expectations and skill development.
- The region of residence (X2) acts as a factor affecting the availability of employment opportunities.
- Gender (W1) and region (W2) function as moderating variables that shape the nature of these influences.

Output variable:

Job satisfaction (Y) is the ultimate goal that reflects the level of harmony between expectations and reality.

Objectives of the analysis:

1 Check how education shapes expectations and satisfaction.

2 Identify regional differences in the availability of quality employment.

3 Take into account the gender characteristics of employment.

Figure 7 shows the theoretical model.

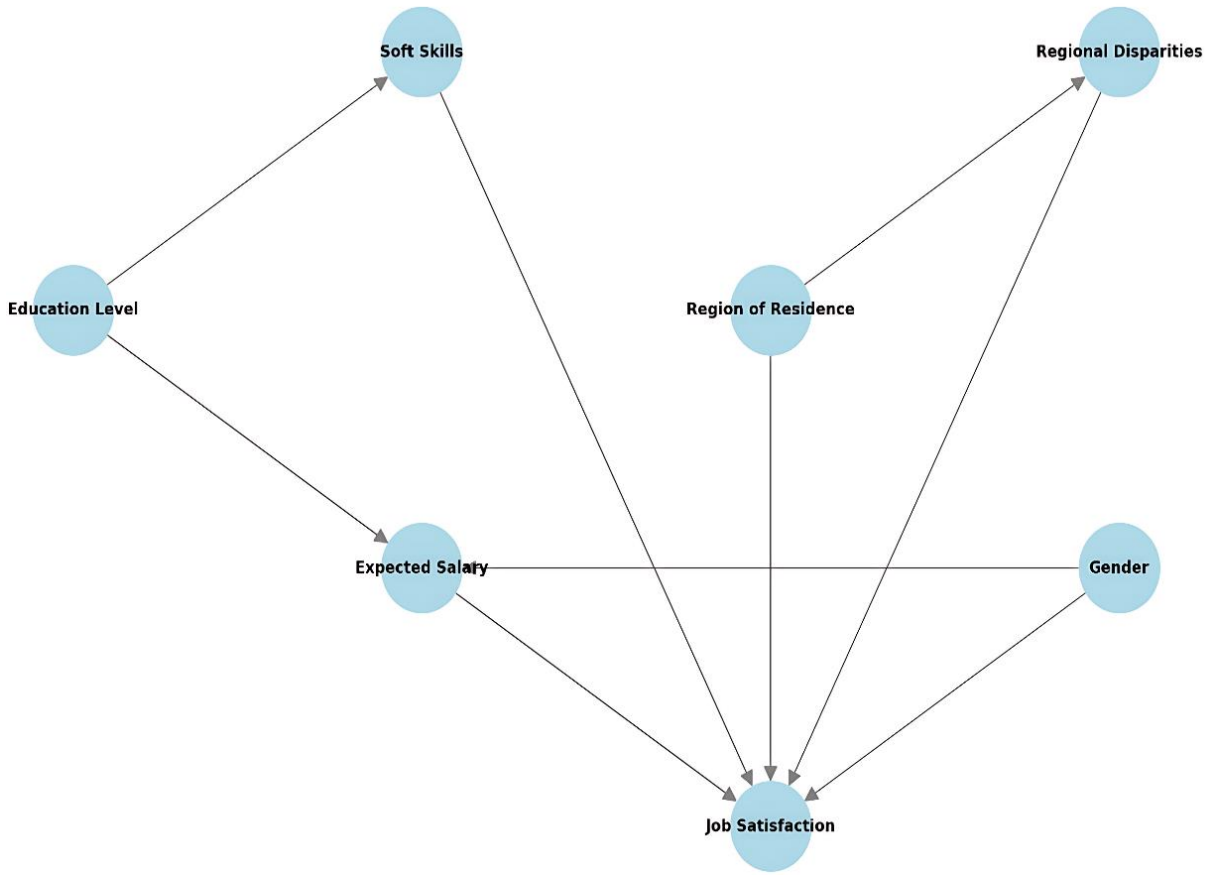

Figure 7.
Theoretical model - factors of job satisfaction.

This theoretical model provides a basis for analyzing job satisfaction factors and allows developing practical recommendations based on empirical data. If necessary, I can visualize the model graphically.

The level of education (X1) affects both directly and through mediators:

1. The expected salary plays an important role in the formation of job satisfaction, as it reflects the ambitions and career expectations of the employee. People whose salary expectations match the proposed conditions are more likely to achieve a higher level of satisfaction. It is important to note that these expectations depend not only on the level of education, but also on socio-economic factors such as the region of residence and professional environment.
2. Flexible skills, often referred to as soft skills, play a crucial role in influencing job satisfaction. Competencies such as effective communication, problem-solving, time management, and teamwork are cultivated through a combination of educational programs and hands-on experience. The enhancement of these skills significantly improves the likelihood of successful employment, as employers increasingly prioritize such attributes in potential candidates. Consequently, soft skills serve as a vital bridge between academic training and practical application in the workplace.
3. The geographical region of residence has a significant direct impact on job satisfaction, determining differences in the availability of work opportunities. Economically developed regions, as a rule, provide broader career prospects, which helps to increase employee satisfaction. However, the impact of regional differences is largely due to additional factors such as salary levels and access to educational resources, which can either enhance or mitigate the overall impact of these factors on job satisfaction.
4. Gender acts as a moderator in the relationship between education level, expected salary and job satisfaction. Thus, women are more likely to emphasize the importance of stable employment and predictable working conditions, while men are more likely to focus on achieving higher incomes and show a greater propensity to take risks in order to achieve ambitious career goals. These gender differences in professional preferences create unique trends that must be taken into account when analyzing factors affecting job satisfaction.

To expand employment opportunities in the region, an integrated approach based on an analysis of the dynamics of supply and demand in the labor market is needed. The main strategies to achieve this goal include the integration of educational programs with the needs of employers, the development of professional training and advanced training, as well as the introduction of initiatives to support small and medium-sized businesses that contribute to the creation of new jobs.

1. Economic diversification is a key factor in expanding labor opportunities and sustainable regional development. Support for promising industries, such as agriculture in rural areas or the creation of technology centers in cities, allows us to take into account regional peculiarities. The formation of industry clusters contributes to increased productivity and innovation through joint infrastructure and qualified personnel. Attracting investments through tax incentives and subsidies stimulates economic growth and job creation, especially in economically lagging regions.
2. Addressing the shortage of skilled labor requires a strategic approach aimed at bringing employee qualifications in line with the needs of local industries. This includes conducting an analysis of the regional labor market to identify industries with a shortage of personnel and high growth potential. Surveys of employers can identify the most sought-after skills, and comparing training programs with industry needs will help eliminate inconsistencies in the training of specialists, ensuring their compliance with market requirements.
3. Strengthening the capacity of regional educational institutions is an important step in addressing the shortage of qualified specialists. This requires updating curricula with an emphasis on technological skills and digital literacy to meet modern requirements. Cooperation with employers in creating training programs will provide graduates with practical knowledge adapted to the labor market. Additionally, career guidance services will help students choose sought-after career paths, increasing their chances of successful employment.
4. Improving the vocational training system is a key step to eliminate the shortage of qualified personnel. The development of regional training centers and technical institutes, as well as the introduction of mobile education centers, will ensure equal access to education, including for residents of remote areas. The focus on priority sectors of the regional economy, such as agriculture, industry, and renewable energy, will help train specialists for the most in-demand industries.
5. Access to professional development and retraining should include short-term courses and certification programs that enable employees to adapt to changes in the industry. These programs should focus on developing key communication and digital skills that are crucial in today's work environment.
6. Public-private partnership is a key tool in overcoming the shortage of qualified personnel. Joint training and internship initiatives, tailored to the needs of employers, ensure the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Programs that combine academic education with professional practice help to reduce the gap between learning and the development of applied skills.
7. Increasing access to education for all workers requires the provision of subsidized educational resources, which is especially important for low-income people. The introduction of flexible learning formats, including online courses, will allow you to combine your studies with work or family responsibilities. Adapting educational programs to local conditions will reduce transportation costs and make education more accessible to residents of different regions.
8. Innovation and technology are important tools in training a skilled workforce. Electronic educational platforms and virtual reality provide modern methods of mastering technical skills. The priority should be to ensure stable Internet access in remote regions to support effective distance learning.

9. Labor mobility plays a significant role in increasing employment. Financial support for relocation to regions with better employment opportunities and the development of transport infrastructure between rural and urban areas will improve access to quality jobs.
10. Vocational training policies should take into account long-term economic changes and use skills forecasting to prepare staff for emerging industries. Supporting sought-after destinations through scholarships and tax incentives can effectively contribute to this task. The implementation of such initiatives requires the active participation of employers and industry leaders. The creation of advisory councils with their participation will make it possible to adapt educational programs to the needs of the market, and companies will be more interested in hiring specialists who have been trained locally.
11. Continuous evaluation and improvement of educational programs are key to their effectiveness. A systematic analysis of the results and consideration of feedback from participants will help improve the quality and relevance of initiatives aimed at solving the shortage of qualified personnel. This, in turn, contributes to the improvement of employment and stimulates the economic development of the regions.

In the context of Kazakhstan's dynamically changing labor market, students' professional motivation plays a key role in their successful integration into the national economy. Globalization, digitalization and structural transformations in the economy create both new opportunities and significant challenges for youth employment. This study provides a detailed analysis of the relationship between the unemployment rate, job satisfaction, and career aspirations of young professionals in the country.

The results of the study indicate a decrease in the youth unemployment rate in Kazakhstan from 4.2% in 2014 to 3.5% in 2023, reflecting improved stability in the labor market. However, significant regional differences remain. Economically developed urban centers such as Almaty and Astana provide more employment opportunities, while the northern and western regions, including Pavlodar and Northern Kazakhstan, continue to face high unemployment. These data are consistent with the conclusions of Sabirova, et al. [34] who emphasize that regional inequality remains a significant barrier to equitable economic development.

Evidence from other countries, including Nigeria [27] and South Africa [26] also highlights those regional disparities are frequently linked to insufficient investment in infrastructure and economic development. However, in contrast to Kazakhstan, these nations have not seen similar advancements in youth unemployment rates, indicating that Kazakhstan's policies and strategies could present valuable frameworks for other developing economies.

The correlation analysis reveals a robust relationship between educational attainment and anticipated salary ($r = 0.823$), alongside a moderate association between education and job satisfaction ($r = 0.448$). Higher educational levels allow individuals to develop specialized skills and knowledge, which in turn cultivates greater salary expectations and improved employment opportunities. These findings align with the research of Hirschi and Koen [14] who contend that educational qualifications contribute to enhanced career preparedness and facilitate the development of self-management skills.

Nonetheless, the study revealed a significant gap between educational curricula and the requirements of the labor market. About 42% of participants indicated that their education did not adequately cultivate "soft skills" including adaptability, leadership, and teamwork. These results are in line with findings by Cortellazzo, et al. [10] who highlight those educational institutions frequently struggle to align with the swiftly changing expectations of employers. Likewise, Sidebotham, et al. [21] underscore the necessity of integrating practical, skills-based training to promote more seamless transitions from educational settings to professional environments.

The research underscores notable differences in career preferences based on gender. Female respondents are generally more inclined to seek out stable and predictable employment opportunities, whereas their male counterparts often prioritize higher salaries and swift career progression.

Regional differences remain a significant problem, as access to employment opportunities is much wider in economically developed regions, while rural areas have a limited number of high-quality vacancies. Paul [36] notes that stimulating local entrepreneurship in rural areas of South Sudan has helped reduce unemployment and represents an alternative approach to addressing regional inequality.

The study highlights the increasing role of "soft" skills in the higher education system. Employers are increasingly highlighting qualities such as effective communication, adaptability, and problem-solving skills that significantly affect successful employment and job satisfaction. These conclusions are consistent with the results of research by Emanuel, et al. [11] who note that online learning platforms and practice-oriented learning models effectively prepare students for the demands of the modern labor market.

Scandinavian countries such as Norway and Sweden are prime examples of successful integration of soft skills development into educational systems. In these Countries, special attention is paid to close cooperation between educational institutions and employers, which helps to bridge the gap between theoretical training and its practical application. The use of such approaches in Kazakhstan can significantly improve the quality of education and provide graduates with the necessary skills for the labor market.

Despite the positive changes in the labor market in Kazakhstan, not all experts are optimistic. Takeuchi, et al. [22] note that young professionals often have difficulty adapting to the stressful and unpredictable conditions of modern work. This indicates possible disadvantages of current career guidance and mentoring programs in Kazakhstan.

Moreover, the processes of digitalization and automation are transforming labor markets worldwide, making continuous skill development essential for the workforce. Sabirova, et al. [3] emphasize that, although digital transformation generates new employment opportunities, it simultaneously escalates the demand for advanced professional competencies. Similar trends are observable in South Korea and Singapore, where predictive analytics and artificial

intelligence are employed to anticipate labor market requirements and align educational programs accordingly [30]. Kazakhstan could gain from implementing analogous strategies to improve the adaptability of its labor market.

In order to tackle regional inequalities and enhance the alignment of graduates' skills with the demands of the labor market, Kazakhstan could benefit from adopting international best practices. Notably, Germany's dual education system, which integrates theoretical education with practical training, and the emphasis on promoting entrepreneurship in the United States are exemplary models. Furthermore, Singapore's implementation of digital platforms to link students with employment opportunities underscores the potential of utilizing technology to improve career planning initiatives.

Although Kazakhstan has made strides in decreasing youth unemployment, the study identifies notable areas where enhancements are needed in education policy, gender inclusivity, and regional development. The analysis by Scandurra, et al. [24] regarding the European Union illustrates those focused investments in underserved regions, along with greater support for vocational training, can provide substantial long-term economic advantages.

The professional motivation of students in Kazakhstan is influenced by a multifaceted interaction of educational, regional, and gender-related factors. Although advancements have been made in stabilizing the labor market, enduring challenges—such as regional inequalities, discrepancies in skill alignment, and gender imbalances—continue to persist.

The study revealed a number of important problems and contradictions that significantly affect the professional motivation of students and their successful entry into the labor market of Kazakhstan. Although there are positive trends, such as a decrease in youth unemployment, there are still significant difficulties and barriers that require in-depth analysis and a strategic approach to overcome them.

Regional inequality in the labor market remains one of the key problems. Economically developed cities such as Almaty and Astana offer more employment opportunities, while the northern and western regions, including Pavlodar and Northern Kazakhstan, continue to face high unemployment. This disparity provokes migration from rural areas to urban centers, which increases the burden on urban infrastructure and increases competition in local labor markets. Eliminating these imbalances is an important step to ensure a fair and sustainable economic development of the country.

The gap between the content of educational programs and the changing requirements of employers remains a serious problem. Many students note that studying does not allow them to fully develop key skills such as leadership, adaptability and teamwork, which reduces their competitiveness in a dynamic labor market. Despite the efforts of the Government and educational institutions to modernize the education system, employers continue to experience a shortage of qualified specialists. This indicates insufficient interaction between universities and industrial enterprises, which makes it difficult to adapt curricula to the real needs of the economy.

Gender inequality exacerbates existing problems in the labor market. Women are more likely to focus on job stability and predictability, while men tend to focus on achieving higher wages and faster career growth. Sociocultural norms significantly influence the formation of these differences in career trajectories, limiting women's access to high-tech and managerial positions, as well as contributing to the persistence of the gender pay gap. These features emphasize the need to implement policies aimed at gender integration and the creation of equal opportunities for professional development.

Digitalization and automation are significantly transforming the labor market, creating new opportunities, but at the same time presenting serious challenges. These processes contribute to the creation of new jobs, but many traditional professions are losing their relevance, which underlines the importance of regular professional development and retraining. For a significant number of students, adapting to such rapid changes is proving to be a difficult task. Despite the introduction of digital technologies, many educational institutions continue to use outdated teaching methods that do not allow graduates to meet modern requirements of employers.

Insufficient development of practice-based learning remains a significant problem. Limited access to internships and on-the-job training programs deprives students of the opportunity to gain valuable practical experience necessary for a successful start of a professional career. The discrepancy between the high demand for work experience and the insufficient number of internship places creates significant obstacles to the professional growth of young people, reducing their competitiveness and limiting their chances of employment.

Social inequality and limited access to quality education for students from rural and remote areas remain major obstacles to their economic integration. Despite the existence of government programs to improve educational infrastructure, they often do not address the root causes of the problem. Low wages and limited career opportunities in rural areas force young people to move to cities, which increases regional disparities and exacerbates the marginalization of vulnerable groups.

The study showed significant problems in ensuring the availability of career guidance services. Young professionals often lack information about current labor market trends, which makes it difficult to make informed career decisions. Despite the recognition of career guidance as an important tool for supporting youth employment, its effectiveness remains limited due to a lack of qualified career counselors and a low level of awareness among students about the opportunities available to them.

In conclusion, the results of the study emphasize the need for large-scale reforms aimed at reducing regional disparities, adapting the education system to the demands of the labor market, promoting gender equality and expanding access to quality education and vocational guidance. A key condition for creating a more inclusive, fair and dynamic labor market in Kazakhstan is the implementation of a comprehensive strategy based on close cooperation between the public and private sectors.

Based on the findings of the study, a set of recommendations has been developed to address the identified issues, enhance the connection between the educational system and the demands of the labor market, and improve the employment prospects for young professionals.

1. It is advisable to enhance access to internship programs and extend their duration as a crucial strategy for better preparing students to meet the practical requirements of the labor market. By combining academic learning with hands-on training, students will be able to cultivate the skills needed to address contemporary professional demands. Furthermore, fostering collaborations between government entities and the private sector should be prioritized, allowing businesses to design practical training opportunities that cater to the specific needs of different industries. This methodology will elevate the relevance of educational programs, ensuring that they align with the evolving requirements of the labor market.
2. It is suggested to create professional training programs and specialized courses focused on enhancing students' skills to align with the current demands of the labor market. These programs should encompass targeted instruction in essential competencies such as time management, conflict resolution, and the development of emotional intelligence, which are increasingly sought after by employers. Moreover, it is advisable to incorporate supplementary training modules aimed at equipping students with pertinent technical and practical abilities. Such initiatives will contribute to bridging the gap between educational curricula and the rapidly evolving needs of the contemporary workforce.
3. It is advisable to actively encourage innovation and entrepreneurship among youth as an effective means of enhancing their career opportunities and economic impact. This can be accomplished through the establishment of specialized programs designed to assist students in launching their own startups, offering them mentorship, financial support, and access to various investment resources. Furthermore, it is crucial to foster student engagement in technology-driven and creative fields that possess significant growth and innovation potential. By cultivating entrepreneurial skills and involving young individuals in sectors with strong prospects, these initiatives will not only aid in their professional growth but also pave the way for enduring success.
4. It is recommended to update job search systems by creating and enhancing online platforms that offer students a comprehensive array of resources for navigating the labor market. These platforms should enable users to search for relevant job openings, evaluate their career competencies, and receive tailored recommendations for professions that closely align with their skills and abilities. Such enhancements will facilitate more effective career planning and improve the alignment between students' professional attributes and the demands of the labor market.

Figure 8 depicts the anticipated employment statistics for students covering the years from 2024 to 2029.

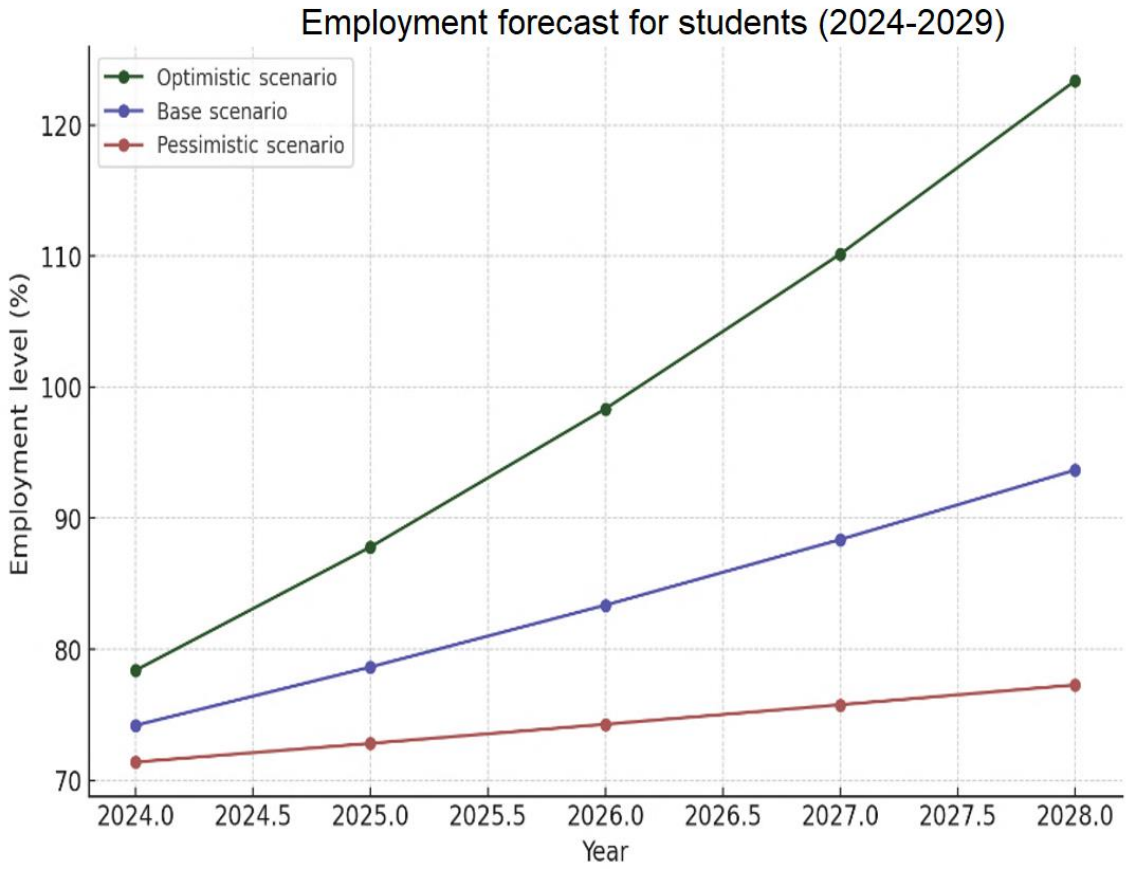

Figure 8.
The projected employment figures for students from 2024 to 2029.

The graph presents projections for student employment over the years 2024 to 2029 across several scenarios. In the optimistic scenario, a growth of 12% in employment is anticipated, resulting in an employment rate of approximately 110% by 2029. The baseline scenario forecasts a more conservative increase of 6%, leading to a projected employment rate of 90%. Conversely, the pessimistic scenario predicts a modest rise of 2%, which would yield an employment rate of 77% by 2029.

It is assumed that the implementation of the proposed recommendation will achieve the following results:

1. Increasing student employment through initiatives including professional development programs, internships, and professional development opportunities.
2. Increase job satisfaction through the development of interpersonal communication skills and support for entrepreneurship initiatives.
3. Reducing the imbalance between supply and demand in the labor market, which in turn will help stimulate economic growth.
4. Formation of a stable career guidance and career counseling system capable of responding effectively to changes in labor market conditions.

The evolution of the modern labor market is closely linked to changes in social dynamics. The prevailing model of workplace interaction combines various aspects of life and includes elements such as flexible working hours, remote work opportunities, project activities that ensure independence in solving tasks, as well as expanded opportunities for communication and leisure, facilitated by advanced technology and increased mobility. Modern specialists increasingly prefer interesting and complex tasks, the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution and the confidence that their work brings real benefits, often putting these aspects above the priority of increasing wages.

Despite the fact that these changes seem to be extremely positive, contributing to the development and career advancement of young professionals, it is important to take into account that newfound freedoms in the workplace are accompanied by the emergence of new restrictions. These limitations can significantly affect the career development of young professionals, creating both new opportunities and challenges in a changing professional landscape.

5. Conclusions

Today's youth mostly use online platforms as the main tool for job search, seeking to find positions appropriate to their professional specialization. Nonetheless, the scarcity of appropriate job openings and the absence of practical experience frequently hinder successful employment outcomes for many individuals. Consequently, a number of young people, when confronted with challenges in securing employment, prioritize financial stability over their long-term career goals. Moreover, a considerable proportion of young individuals, particularly those with lower educational qualifications, express a willingness to accept positions that offer lower wages. In contrast, students with higher levels of education often maintain elevated financial expectations. They recognize that achieving success in life necessitates a combination of substantial effort, personal accountability, and a strong foundation of education and professional skills.

An examination of the professional motivation of students in Kazakhstan has uncovered a intricate interplay of factors that influence their career aspirations and job satisfaction. The findings emphasize the critical necessity of aligning the skills and expectations of emerging professionals with the continually evolving requirements of the labor market. Education is fundamental in preparing students for their careers and enhancing their professional motivation. However, the study also identified considerable deficiencies that must be addressed to facilitate students' successful career advancement and improve their integration into the professional sphere.

The primary finding of the study is that educational attainment significantly influences job satisfaction and anticipated income. A greater level of education equips students with essential knowledge and skills that enhance their career prospects and overall job satisfaction. Nevertheless, the research also uncovered a notable gap between students' expectations and the actual conditions prevalent in the labor market, particularly concerning salary levels and job availability. This gap underscores the pressing need for more effective career counseling and heightened awareness among students regarding current labor market realities, enabling them to better align their professional aspirations with available opportunities.

Professional competencies are essential for achieving success in the contemporary labor market. Attributes such as interpersonal skills, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities not only enhance employment prospects but also play a crucial role in influencing overall job satisfaction. However, current educational programs in Kazakhstan pay insufficient attention to the development of these critical competencies, which reduces the ability of students to meet the requirements of employers. The integration of soft skills training into university curricula, as well as the expansion of internship opportunities, represent important steps to better prepare students for the modern demands of the professional environment.

Regional differences have a significant impact on employment opportunities and job satisfaction. Economically developed regions such as Almaty and Astana offer a wider range of career opportunities, while less developed regions such as Northern Kazakhstan and Pavlodar face higher unemployment and limited access to vacancies. To eliminate these imbalances, it is necessary to introduce targeted measures, including regional development programs, increased investment in infrastructure, and initiatives aimed at stimulating job creation in underdeveloped and underrepresented areas.

International trends such as digitalization and globalization significantly complicate the dynamics of the labor market. These changes, on the one hand, create new opportunities, but on the other hand, they require constant updating of skills and increasing the adaptability of the workforce. By applying advanced international approaches, such as dual education models successfully implemented in Germany and the Scandinavian countries, Kazakhstan can more effectively prepare students for the challenges of a rapidly changing and dynamically developing economy.

5.1. Limitations of the Study

This study was mainly based on data collected in urban areas of Kazakhstan, which may limit its applicability to rural regions. The labor market and employment dynamics in rural areas often have unique features that differ significantly from urban conditions and are not fully reflected in this study.

Despite the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in the study, certain aspects, such as social and cultural dynamics, have not been studied in sufficient detail. This limitation underscores the need for follow-up research to more deeply analyze the impact of these factors on professional motivation and job satisfaction among young people.

Furthermore, the findings of the study are grounded in the present conditions of the labor market, which are subject to variations influenced by economic fluctuations, global crises, and technological advancements. This inherent dynamism could affect the long-term applicability and validity of the specific results reported in the study.

5.2. Recommendations

The study presents several practical recommendations designed to enhance the employment opportunities for young professionals. Important actions include expanding access to internships, fostering collaboration between universities and employers, and promoting entrepreneurship through financial support and mentoring initiatives. Additionally, the creation of digital platforms aimed at facilitating job searches and providing vocational guidance could enhance students' opportunities and lead to a more effective alignment between job seekers and available positions.

Moreover, addressing regional inequalities through focused employment initiatives and prioritizing investments in infrastructure development can promote a more equitable distribution of opportunities nationwide. Regular assessment and revision of educational programs to align with labor market demands equip students with the essential skills and competencies needed for success in their professional endeavors.

In summary, the professional motivation of students is influenced by a multifaceted interplay of educational, economic, and social factors. By adopting targeted approaches and formulating effective strategies, Kazakhstan has the potential to mitigate unemployment, enhance job satisfaction, and foster the establishment of a more dynamic and adaptable labor market. These initiatives will not only positively affect the professional development of young individuals but will also be crucial in promoting sustainable economic growth and fostering long-term social stability within the nation.

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