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ASSESSMENT OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL TOWNS IN JAMBYL OBLAST

Achieving sustainable development of small towns as a special system is directly related, first of all, to maintaining socio-economic stability and creating a favourable environment for human life. Indeed, as a basis for the sustainability of small towns, the development of services, effective utilisation of local characteristics and diversification of socio-economic spheres are very important. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess the possibilities of socio-economic sustainable development of small towns in Zhambyl region. The study consisted of two stages: at the first stage a systematic analysis of statistical indicators of socio-economic development of Zhambyl region was conducted, the dynamics of sustainable development was assessed, at the second stage a survey was conducted and the information necessary for analysis was collected. The survey was conducted in the cities of Zhanatas, Karatau and Shu, which have the status of small towns in Zhambyl region. As a result of the survey, positive dynamics was noted for all indicators of socio-economic development of Zhambyl region. The volume of production in the region's manufacturing industry totalled 521.7 billion tenge, with a physical volume index of 111.1% compared to 2022. At the same time, the production of food products increased by 17.8%, chemical industry – by 5.5%, oil products – by 19.6%, finished metal products – by 31.9%, machine building – by 7.7%. However, according to the results of a survey conducted in the small towns of Zhanatas, Karatau and Shu, it became known that 31 per cent of respondents earn within 100-200 thousand tenge and 28 per cent within 60-100 thousand tenge. In addition, 66% of residents of small towns ask to increase the number of new jobs. Thus, the study revealed the need to modernise the socio-economic plan for sustainable development of small towns in Zhambyl region, the need to diversify the economy and improve the effective use of the environment.

Key words: Zhambyl region, small towns, sustainable development, socio-economic assessment.

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Жамбыл облысының шағын қалаларының әлеуметтік-экономикалық тұрақты даму мүмкіндіктерін бағалау

Шағын қалалардың тұрақты дамуына ерекше жүйе ретінде қол жеткізу, ең алдымен, әлеуметтік-экономикалық тұрақтылықты сақтаумен және адам өмірі үшін қолайлы орта құрумен тікелей байланысты. Шынында да, шағын қалалардың тұрақты дамуының негізі ретінде қызмет көрсету саласын дамыту, жергілікті ерекшеліктерді тиімді пайдалану және әлеуметтік-экономикалық салаларды әртараптандыру өте маңызды. Сондықтан бұл зерттеудің мақсаты – Жамбыл облысының шағын қалаларының әлеуметтік-экономикалық тұрақты даму мүмкіндіктерін бағалау. Зерттеу екі кезеңнен тұрды: бірінші кезеңде Жамбыл облысының әлеуметтік-экономикалық дамуының статистикалық көрсеткіштеріне жүйелі талдау жүргізілді, тұрақты даму динамикасы бағаланды, екінші кезеңде сауалнама жүргізілді және талдау үшін қажетті ақпарат жиналды. Сауалнама Жамбыл облысындағы шағын қалалар мәртебесіне ие Жаңатас, Қаратау және Шу қалаларында жүргізілді. Сауалнама нәтижесінде Жамбыл облысының әлеуметтік-экономикалық дамуының барлық көрсеткіштері бойынша динамика байқалды. Өңірдің өңдеу өнеркәсібіндегі өндіріс көлемі 521,7 млрд теңгені құрады, нақты көлем индексі 2022 жылмен салыстырғанда 111,1%. Сонымен бірге азық-түлік өндірісі 17,8%-ға, химия өнеркәсібі – 5,5%-ға, мұнай өнімдері – 19,6%-ға, дайын металл өнімдері – 31,9%-ға, машина жасау – 7,7%-ға ұлғайды. Алайда Жаңатас, Қаратау және Шу шағын қалаларында жүргізілген сауалнама нәтижелері

бойынша респонденттердің 31 пайызы 100-200 мың теңге, ал 28 пайызы 60-100 мың теңге шегінде табыс табатыны белгілі болды. Сонымен қатар, шағын қала тұрғындарының 66%-ы жаңа жұмыс орындарын көбейтуді сұрайды. Осылайша, зерттеу Жамбыл облысының шағын қалаларын орнықты дамытудың әлеуметтік-экономикалық жоспарын жаңғырту қажеттілігін, экономиканы әртараптандыру және қоршаған ортаны пайдалану тиімділігін арттыру қажеттілігін анықтады.

Түйін сөздер: Жамбыл облысы, шағын қалалар, тұрақты даму, әлеуметтік-экономикалық бағалау.

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Оценка возможностей социально-экономического устойчивого развития малых городов Жамбылской области

Достижение устойчивого развития малых городов как особой системы напрямую связано, прежде всего, с поддержанием социально-экономической стабильности и созданием благоприятной среды для жизни человека. Действительно, в качестве основы устойчивости малых городов очень важны развитие сферы услуг, эффективное использование местных особенностей и диверсификация социально-экономических сфер. Поэтому целью данного исследования является оценка возможностей социально-экономического устойчивого развития малых городов Жамбылской области. Исследование состояло из двух этапов: на первом этапе был проведен системный анализ статистических показателей социально-экономического развития Жамбылской области, оценена динамика устойчивого развития, на втором этапе был проведен опрос и собрана необходимая для анализа информация. Опрос проводился в городах Жанатас, Каратау и Шу, которые имеют статус малых городов Жамбылской области. В результате исследования была отмечена положительная динамика по всем показателям социально-экономического развития Жамбылской области. Объем производства в обрабатывающей промышленности региона составил 521,7 млрд тенге, индекс физического объема к 2022 году – 111,1%. При этом производство пищевых продуктов увеличилось на 17,8%, химической промышленности – на 5,5%, нефтепродуктов – на 19,6%, готовых металлических изделий – на 31,9%, машиностроения – на 7,7%. Однако по результатам опроса, проведенного в малых городах Жанатас, Каратау и Шу, стало известно, что 31 процент респондентов зарабатывает в пределах 100-200 тысяч тенге, а 28 процентов – в пределах 60-100 тысяч тенге. Кроме того, 66 % жителей малых городов просят увеличить количество новых рабочих мест. Таким образом, проведенное исследование выявило необходимость модернизации социально-экономического плана устойчивого развития малых городов Жамбылской области, необходимость диверсификации экономики и повышения эффективности использования окружающей среды.

Ключевые слова: Жамбылская область, малые города, устойчивое развитие, социально-экономическая оценка.

Introduction

Strengthening of territorial factors of national economy development at the present stage is directly related to different levels of socio-economic development and specialisation of regional development (Nurlanova, 2012: 156). Regional socio-economic differences can be divided into objective (the level of development of the region, its specialisation and economic structure, economic and geographical location) and subjective (the policy of authorities at all levels towards the region, entrepreneurial activity of the population, its support or resistance to reforms, changes in migration flows, etc.) (Tekenov, 2017: 23). To understand trends in regional development, it is necessary to identify the patterns, interrelationships, and degree of influence of these factors (Turysbekova, 2021: 98). However, when carrying out such work, there is a need to identify the main indicator that best reflects the progress of regional transformations towards sustainable development. Therefore, we support the view that the level of socio-economic development of the region can serve as such an indicator, since it is related to all other indicators and is the basis for reforming the regions.

Due to the differences in geographical location of all countries in the world, history of development and other factors – there are different levels of socio-economic development (Kaimuldinova, 2015: 456). This gives rise to many important socio-economic problems in the region. Each state strives to pursue

a regional policy aimed at improving the standard of living in its regions, i.e. levelling the conditions and increasing the level of their development (Agabekova, 2017: 46). Therefore, in accordance with the sustainable regional development goals, identifying disparities by analysing global social and economic indicators is relevant and important.

To date, sustainable development is an integration, a balance of economic, social, environmental (as well as institutional) dimensions (Mazza, 1997: 71). Within the framework of sustainable development, human settlements play a very important role as centres of environmental impacts as well as drivers of sustainable development (Rotmans, 2000: 265). Therefore, Meldon (1998) identifies several issues related to small town sustainability planning: in his view, the number of small towns of different sizes in a region and the spacing between settlements are of great importance. Meanwhile, O'Farrell (1979) believes that there is no single optimal settlement size, but rather that there can be a different size for each settlement and that settlements need planning to increase sustainability. By emphasising size and layout and spatial structure, planning is ineffective on a regional scale and is only focused on small towns (Akisheva, 2023: 181).

Thus, the purpose of this study is to assess the possibilities of socio-economic sustainable development of small towns in Zhambyl oblast. This is due to the fact that the economic structure of small towns of industrial-innovative development of the Republic of Kazakhstan was divided into types: the cities of Zhanatas and Karatau were included in the number of «industrial small towns», and the city of Shu – in the number of «transport-industrial small towns». Therefore, in the period from 2012 to 2020, appropriate measures to address the problems in these cities were implemented within the framework of the «Programme for the Development of Monotowns» (Program for the development of single – industry towns for 2012-2020, URL 1: 2012). However, it is very important to study the current socio-economic situation of small towns in Zhambyl oblast. In modern urbanism, as an interdisciplinary scientific knowledge, research is conducted on many urban problems. One of such actual directions is the analysis of evolution, geographical and geoecological processes of development of small towns. As a research task, the evolution of the above-mentioned urban system can be considered in the complex of factors of external and internal development on the example of small towns of Zhambyl region.

The *subject* of the study was the socio-economic situation of the cities of Zhanatas, Karatau and Shu in Zhambyl oblast.

Materials and methods

Small cities include cities with a population of less than 300 thousand people. The overwhelming majority of such cities are characterised by an unfavourable picture of industrial and innovative development, dependence on the activities of the city-forming enterprise (Beisenova, 2017: 160). As a basis for the future sustainability of cities we can name such a set of measures as the development of the service sector, effective use of local features, diversification of the economy, creation of a favourable environment for the population. That is, in modern terms, it is necessary to ensure the innovative development of these cities (Knox, 2013: 208). At the same time, it is necessary to pay attention to the concept of innovative urban development.

Urban development is a multidimensional and multidimensional process, considered as a set of various social and economic objectives. For the integrated development of small towns, in addition to the interconnection of socio-economic processes occurring on its territory, it is necessary that they interact harmoniously with the environment and meet the interests of state and local development (Khadzhieva, 2020: 175). Achieving sustainable development of small towns as an integral system is primarily related to maintaining socio-economic stability and increasing the suitability of the environment for human life. After all, the formation of sustainable, comfortable and environmentally friendly cities may become the greatest achievement in the history of mankind (Glazer, 2015: 394).

When it comes to small towns in Kazakhstan, researchers usually do not establish some upper dimension, but emphasise the functional dimension (agricultural activities, public utilities, infrastructure, etc.) and the social character of the town. After all, the total number of small towns in Kazakhstan is about 60, and the total number of people living in them is 1.5 million. In small towns 7.5 % are employed in the extractive industry, 7.5 % – in agro-industrial production, 5.6 % – in the mining industry, 0.8 % – in the military industry, 1.9 % – in the transport system (Final report on socio-economic development of Zhambyl region for January-July 2023, URL 2: 2023). The economic structure of small towns in the industrial-innovative

development of the Republic of Kazakhstan can be divided into the following types:

1) Small industrial cities – Abai, Aksu, Ridder, Zyryanovsk, Zhana-Uzen, Kentau, Zhanatas, Karatau, Arkalyk, Lenger, Zhetikara, Lisakovsk, Satpayev, Ekibastuz, Shakhtinsk, Karazhal, Khromtau, Aksai, Balkhash, Shar, Akkol, Kulsary.

2) Transport and industrial small towns – Shu, Arys, Ayagoz, Ereimentau, Aral, Kazaly, Shalkar, Zhem, Kandyagash, Irtysh, Atbasar, Makinsk.

3) Small agro-industrial towns – Yesil, Zhetysai, Kaskelen, Talgar, Issyk, Sarkant, Shardara, Zaisan, Zharkent, Shemun, Bulayev, Tayynsha, Stepnyak.

4) The towns that are considered administrative and economic centres are Sergeevka, Ushtobe, Temir, Alga, Mamlutka, Fort Shevchenko, and Aral.

In this regard, according to the study, the small towns of Zhanatas, Karatau and Shu of Zhambyl region play an important role in planning the strategy of socio-economic sustainable development of the region. Therefore, this study was aimed at assessing the opportunities for socio-economic sustainable development of small towns in Zhambyl region. The assessment of socio-economic sustainable development opportunities of Zhambyl region was based on economic, social, contextual and functional aspects.

The study was conducted in 2023 by scientists of the Kazakh National Pedagogical University named after Abai – within the framework of the scientific project AR14870750 «Creation of conceptual foundations of effective models of sustainable development of small towns in Zhambyl region» (2022-2024). At the first stage of the study, a systematic analysis of statistical indicators of socio-economic development of Zhambyl region was conducted and the dynamics of sustainable development was assessed. At this stage, statistical indicators of the development of the region's industrial sector, agriculture, construction, manufacturing, mining, metallurgical industry, small and medium-sized businesses were analysed and recommendations and forecasts were given to ensure macroeconomic stability and development of economic sectors, balanced regional development and improvement of the quality of human capital.

The second stage of the study was conducted in the cities of Zhanatas, Karatau and Shu, which have the status of small towns in Zhambyl oblast. At the second stage, the information necessary for analysis was collected by means of questionnaires. During the survey the subjective opinions of 499 respondents were obtained. The questionnaire consisted of 3 main blocks: 1) Opinions of the population about the socio-economic situation; 2) Opinions about improving the local ecology; 3) Opinions about improving the local economy. Also, the methods of analysis, systematisation, and evaluation were widely used in the course of the research. In the second phase, the correct data collection algorithm was ordered to be followed, starting with providing preliminary instructions to the research team that would visit each city and conduct the field study. In this way, the accuracy of the data obtained from respondents was ensured. In addition, the survey was targeted at men and women over 18 years of age working in the main sectors of the economy of each city and was conducted in central locations of the cities. For example, paper questionnaires were distributed in city parks, retail outlets, markets, squares, and crowded streets, while electronic versions (google forms) were distributed to representatives of other industries such as medicine and education. The survey was conducted in a completely anonymous form, and the socio-demographic data necessary for the study were obtained. At the end of the survey, the obtained data were digitised and statistically analysed.

Results and discussions

1. Socio-economic development of Zhambyl oblast

As a result of systematic analysis of statistical data obtained at the first stage of the study, we observe positive dynamics of socio-economic development of Zhambyl region by all indicators. The volume of gross regional product for the first six months of 2022 totalled KZT 1,057.4 billion, with a physical volume index of 103.1 per cent. There is progress in the industrial sector as well. For example: in 2022, the volume of industrial production in the region totalled 717.2 billion tenge, including in the mining industry – 84.4 billion tenge, in the manufacturing industry – 521.7 billion tenge. The agricultural sector produced 527.0 billion tenge, an increase of 4.9 per cent. The volume of construction totalled 154.8 billion tenge and increased by 4.3%. Consumer price index (inflation) in October 2022 compared to December 2021 was 115.5 % (Bureau of National Statistics, URL 3: 2022).

To date, Zhambyl oblast has chosen an independent path of industrial-innovative development and followed an accelerated course. That is, in order to strengthen the power of the economy and deepen its roots, it is creating a new structure of productive forces that meets modern requirements. In this

regard, the new draft development plan of Zhambyl oblast until 2025 demonstrates its effectiveness in developing agriculture and industry, creating permanent jobs for the population, improving living conditions and raising incomes. It paid special attention to the development of the manufacturing industry. Currently, 544 enterprises operate in the region. Of these, 523 are small, 15 medium and 6 large enterprises. There is a positive trend in the dynamics of the region's development in this sphere (Aliaskarov, 2023: 15).

The volume of production in the region's manufacturing industry is 521.7 billion tenge. Compared to last year, the index of physical volume amounted to 111.1%. In particular, the production of food products increased by 17.8%, chemical industry – by 5.5%, production of oil products – by 19.6%, production of finished metal products – by 31.9%, machine building – by 7.7.7 (Bureau of National Statistics, URL 4: 2023).

At the same time, the volume of production in the mining industry of Zhambyl region amounted to 84.4 billion tenge, or 98% of last year's level. The share of this industry in the total volume of industrial output is 11.8%. And the region's share in the mining industry of the country is 0.4 percent. The main share of the industry is accounted for 63.8 per cent of enterprises in Sarysu district, 12.1 percent in Talas district, 9.5 per cent in Moinkum district and 14.6 percent in a combination of the other 7 districts of the region (Bureau of National Statistics, URL 4: 2023).

The region's mining industry includes such large enterprises as Kazphosphate LLP, Sholaktau LLP and Karatau LLP – production of phosphate rock, Eurochem-Udobrenia LLP – production of crushed phosphate rock, Altynalmas JSC – extraction of gold-bearing ores, Jambulgips JSC – extraction of gypsum, Amangeldigas LLP – extraction of natural gas and gas condensate and others.

The metallurgical industry of the region from January to October 2022 produced products worth 70.8 billion tenge. The share in the structure of the manufacturing industry is 13.6%. The main enterprises of the industry are Taraz Metallurgical Plant LLP for the production of ferroalloys, Ak Altynalmas JSC for the production of precious metals (gold and silver), Golden Compass Capital JSC for the production of gold and silver and Zapchast JSC for the production of steel castings.

Undoubtedly, the mining and metallurgical industry has become an important sector of the country's economy in recent years. In this regard, the region has made a step towards a new modernisation of production facilities in the metallurgical industry. For example, Altynalmas JSC has implemented the Digital Mine project at its base. The aim of the project is to increase productivity and reduce costs by up to 15 per cent through digital innovation. «I don't know,» he said. The cost of the project is 2177 million tenge. Its annual capacity is 200,000 tonnes.

Within the framework of the «Implementation of the National Project for the Development of Agro-industrial Complex for 2021-2025» – 30.3 billion tenge was allocated for the development of the region's agro-industrial complex. In 2022 alone, it will produce products worth 526.9 billion tenge, which is 39.5 per cent more than in 2021. In 2022, 18.9 billion tenge was invested in fixed assets of agriculture, and 1.7 billion tenge in fixed assets of food production. In addition, 16 projects worth 19.2 billion tenge were implemented in 2022 and 324 new jobs were created. Currently, 8 projects worth 4.8 billion tenge are being implemented in Zhualyn, Korday, Merken, Shuysky districts and Taraz. In 2022, the area of various grain crops in the region reached 756.2 thousand hectares. Dikhanists, who sowed wheat seeds on 371.0 thousand hectares, harvested 17.1 centners per hectare. In 2023, 72.7 thousand hectares of vegetable crops were sown in the region and the harvest was even more abundant. In particular, more than 1.5 million tonnes of vegetables and 524 thousand tonnes of melons were harvested (Bureau of National Statistics, URL 4: 2023).

Currently, the region's leadership is making efforts to develop small and medium-sized businesses. This industry is the most important factor in eliminating unemployment, providing the market with necessary goods and stabilising the economy. Currently, there are 87,096 small and medium-sized businesses operating in Zhambyl oblast. This is 121.4% more than in the previous year. At the same time, the share of small and medium-sized businesses in the gross regional product in 2021 was 25.9% and gross value added was 585,655 million tenge; in 2022, the share of small and medium-sized businesses was 18. 0% and gross value added was 189,850 million tenge. In 2022, small and medium-sized businesses produced products worth 311.3 billion tenge, with a physical volume index of 113.4 compared to 2021 (Bureau of National Statistics, URL 4: 2023).

Thus, socio-economic development of the region is implemented through the Strategy «Kazakhstan-2050» aimed at sustainable growth

of the economy and welfare of the region in 2023-2027, Addresses of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the people of Kazakhstan, National Priorities and National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025, as well as the principles of implementation of national projects, etc. (Forecast of socio-economic development of Zhambyl oblast for 2023-2027, URL 5: 2023).

Ensuring macroeconomic stability in the future:

- improvement of the budget policy will continue, aimed at stimulating and expanding the tax base and strengthening budget revenues, reducing the shadow economy and efficient use of budget funds;

- in order to ensure balanced economic development, monetary policy plans to gradually reduce inflation to 7.5-9.5 percent in 2023, 4-5 percent in 2024, and then to 3-4 percent in 2025-2027.

For the development of economic sectors:

- development of industrial potential within the framework of the implementation of the national project «Sustainable economic growth aimed at improving the welfare of Kazakhstanis for 2021-2025», taking into account the implementation of the manufacturing industry, carrying out an effective industrial policy with a focus on technological modernisation of enterprises, development of competitive export-oriented industries with the introduction of digitalisation;

- accelerating investment growth rates by attracting domestic and foreign investment, strengthening investor protection, ensuring stable and non-burdensome conditions for doing business, and using public-private partnership tools;

- strengthening the development of trade relations, increasing exports, opening free trade zones within the EAEU, increasing exports of new goods;

- to improve the level and quality of life of the population, work will continue to create comfortable and convenient living conditions, develop water supply and wastewater disposal systems, provide effective social support to the population through preferential lending, and increase housing availability to 30 square metres per person;

- development of the transport and logistics complex and introduction of an intelligent transport system, improvement of the quality of highways, and increase in the volume of transit cargo flows as part of the national project «Strong Regions – Drivers of the Country's Development»;

- improving the environmental situation, planting trees in forests and settlements, implementing solid waste recycling projects, and creating a favourable environment within the framework of the National Project «Green Kazakhstan»;

- within the framework of the national project «Technological breakthrough through digitalisation, science and innovation» it is necessary to develop digitalisation and innovation economy through rapid introduction of digital technologies with strengthening of information security measures.

For balanced regional development:

- development of the region's development potential through «Points of growth» and improvement of the basic quality of life based on the system of regional standards;

- qualitative urbanisation through expansion of settlements, use of competitive advantages of regions, development of mono- and small towns, promising support and satellite settlements with creation of developed infrastructure, development of functional urban areas;

- within the framework of the special project « The cradle village of the country», the national project «Strong regions-drivers of the country's development» it is necessary to use the competitive advantages of advanced regions with the creation of developed infrastructure in rural areas.

To improve the quality of human capital:

- improving and enhancing the quality of education, narrowing the gap between urban and rural schools, improving the social status of teachers, and increasing funding for all levels of education;

- to improve the quality of educational services, including expanding the network of pre-school organisations by building and creating new facilities through private initiatives;

- ensuring access to quality medical services and increasing the availability of primary health care, especially in rural areas. Special attention will be paid to improving health literacy among the population. Special attention will be paid to improving health literacy among the population;

- social security aimed at improving the social protection of working citizens, disabled people and strengthening the targeted nature of social assistance, expanding productive employment and improving the pension system;

- the digital card of the personalized family within the framework of state social guarantees will be introduced through a programme aimed at creating jobs and developing employment, eliminating disparities in labour income, developing the production skills of citizens, increasing the

wages of public sector employees, and developing science and innovative technologies.

2. Research aimed at studying socio-economic problems of small towns in Zhambyl oblast

As a result of analysing the survey responses at the second stage of the study, of the 499 respondents from small towns in Zhambyl Oblast, 43.5% were from Shu town, 23.7% from Karatau town and 22.4% from Zhanatas town, while the remaining 10.4% of respondents did not specify their settlements. The majority of the surveyed respondents (23%) were aged 39-48 years and (24%) were aged 49-58 years. Consequently, these respondents can be considered among those who can give a correct and objective assessment of the socio-economic situation of the

local population, the situation in the region. In addition, the share of young people is similar to this cohort, which is 22%. This also needs to be taken into account, as young people are the driving force, the future of each locality. Their opinion also becomes very important when analysing the main issues. Among the few people who answered the survey questions were city dwellers aged 29-38 (16%), 59-68 (9%) and people over 69 (6%). We will separately focus on small towns where the survey was conducted; young people in Zhanatas (18-28 years old) were active in expressing their opinions, in the towns of Karatau and Shu people aged 39-48 years old voluntarily answered the questions of the research group (Figure 1).
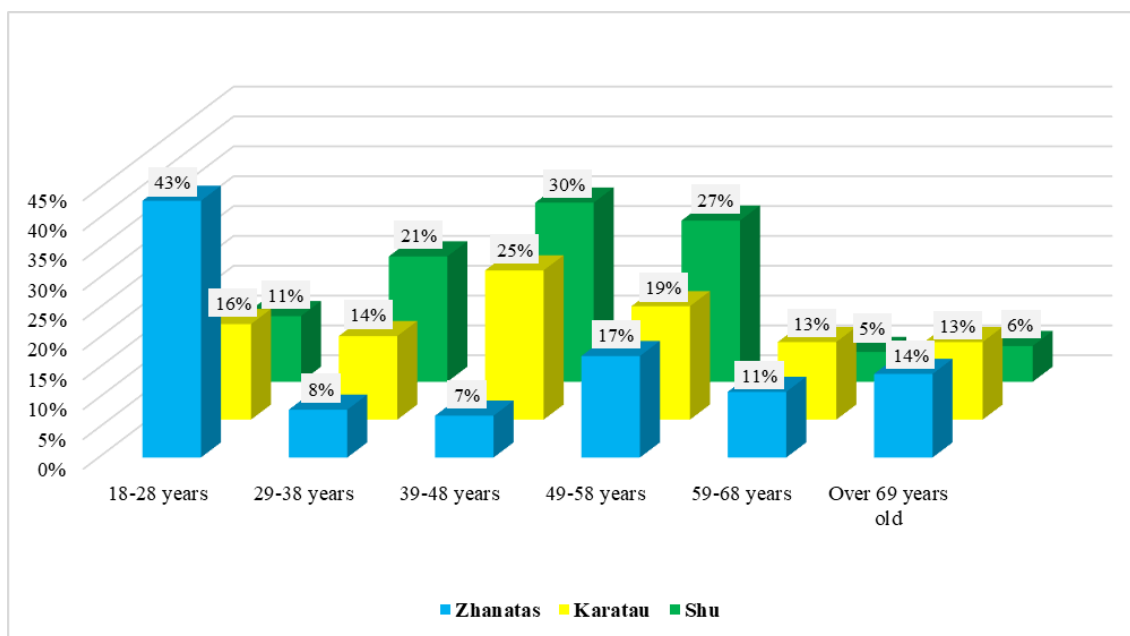

Figure 1 – Age of respondents, %

Having analysed the answers to the survey question «How many years have you lived in this city?», we found out that the majority (40%) of respondents have lived for more than 30 years (Figure 2).

This, in turn, indicates that among the respondents who took part in the survey, there is a high proportion of people who are aware of the problems of the city. This indicates that adults are not indifferent to the place of their residence, the state of the environment (ecology), and economic

development. As the results of the analysis showed, the surveyed residents of all small towns have lived for more than 30 years.

The survey was conducted by the research team in the cities in question in crowded streets, recreational areas, shopping centres, as well as in some institutions. One of the objectives of the research was also to check the economic situation of those who took part in the survey and answered the questionnaire. In this regard, a question was asked about their monthly per capita income (Figure 4).
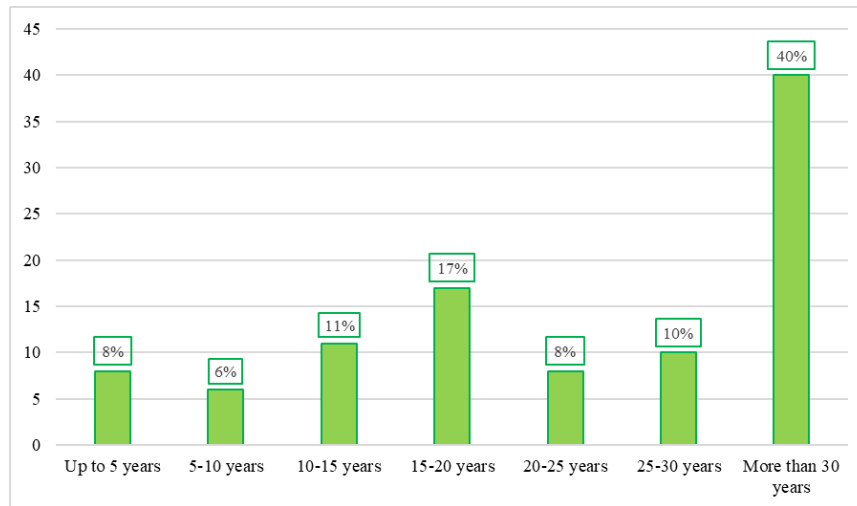
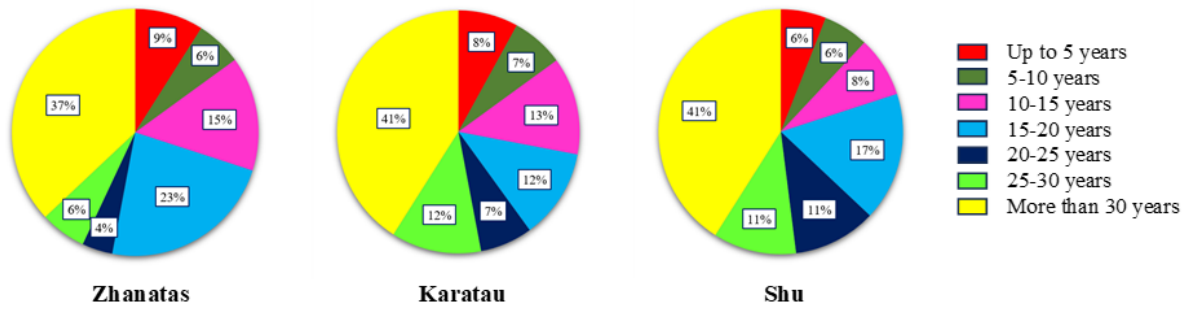**Figure 2** – Duration of stay in the city

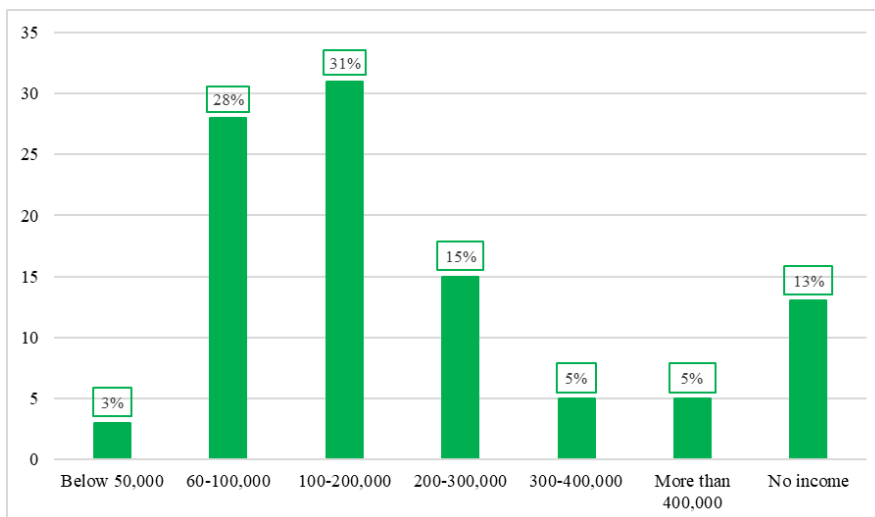**Figure 3 –** Population distribution indicators by city, %

Figure 4 – Monthly income of respondents, tenge

It turned out that the majority of respondents earn between 100-200 thousand tenge (31%) and 60-100 thousand tenge (28%). According to the analytical service of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs «Atameken», the average monthly salary for the first quarter of 2023 was 340,636 tenge (Bureau of National Statistics, 2023). If we analyse in comparison, the majority of survey participants do not reach this average indicator, according to the data only 5%. Of course, this is not an indicator of the whole region, but the respondents who were in the centre of attention of the research team gave

such information about their success. In addition, according to the official statement of the Bureau of Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy, from 1 January 2023, the minimum wage is set at 70,000 tenge. And this figure is 28% among the respondents. This means that 3/1 out of 3 surveyed residents of small towns receive the minimum monthly wage. According to the following official data from this office, the average monthly salary for Zhambyl oblast for 2022 is 254,646 tenge. Despite the fact that this indicator is decreasing across the country, only 15% of survey participants match this statistic.
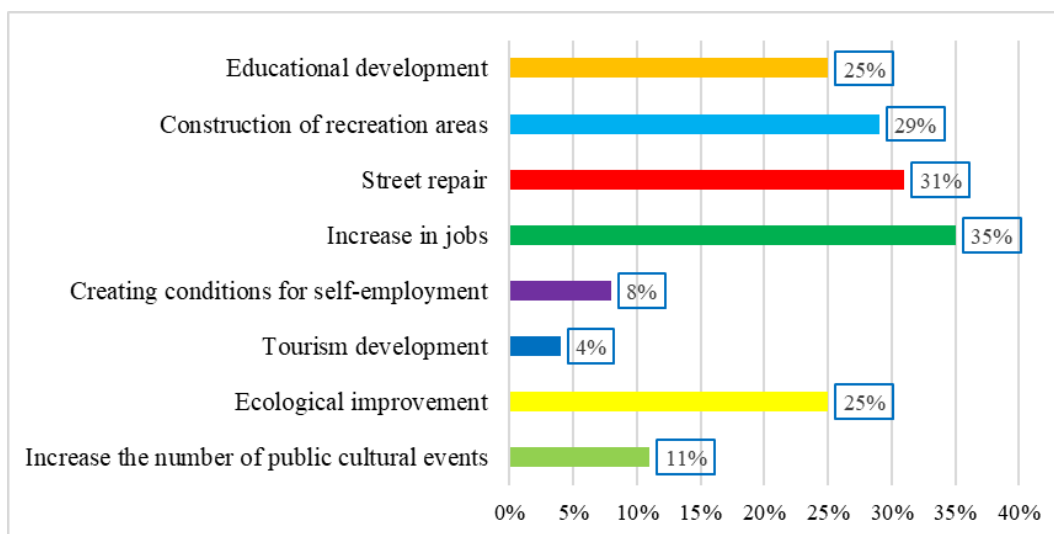

Figure 5 – Respondents' views on the city development

According to the residents of the three small towns under consideration, the overall development of the city should begin first of all with the provision of jobs. This answer was chosen by 35% of respondents (Figure 5). The availability of a large number of jobs will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the economy of a small town. The next issue that needs to be addressed is infrastructure, namely regulating the appearance of streets. 31% of residents say that city streets need to be repaired, including installing lights, paving roads, building ditches, etc. Besides, the growth of the population's well-being, their productive labour, and social contacts are certainly influenced by the sights of the city. In this regard, 29% of the survey participants warned of an increase in the number of recreational facilities in cities. This includes parks, squares, entertainment complexes. In addition, some respondents wrote separate opinions and informed

young people about whether there are few or no sports complexes. Few or not 25% of respondents asked to pay attention to the sphere of education as well.

According to the data obtained in the survey, residents see the improvement of the economy of small towns as follows: 66% – an increase in jobs (Figure 6). Correlating with the above question, we can see that this problem is especially important for the population. Consequently, it turns out that the authorities should put the issue of providing employment of the population in the foreground; 36% – elimination of corruption. That is, directly or indirectly, it is the opinion of people facing the epidemic of society that is crucial to the study; 34% is the solution of the problem of shelter. Solving housing issues to create socio-economic interest in the small town, attracting new specialists, providing employment for the local population; 33% is to

reduce the credit interest of banks. The purpose of demonstrating this option is not to influence the amount of money credit, but to find out the opinion of the local population related to the credit. 3/1 of the survey participants were asked to reduce the loan interest. So there is a problem and this could be one of the arguments in favour of the population consuming credit in various forms.
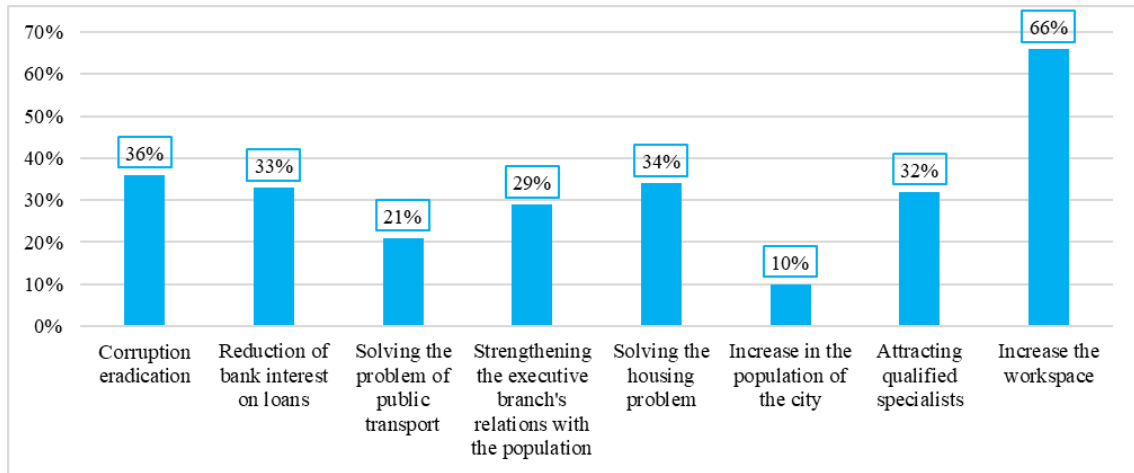
Figure 6 – Respondents' opinion on economic development of a small town

Survey participants shared their opinions about the ecology of their lands. According to the findings, the only way to improve the ecology, according to the overwhelming majority response (69%), is to start by avoiding rubbish. This indicates the need to increase the cultural capital of the society. 35% of survey participants note that from kindergarten and school age it is necessary to educate children in respect for the environment (Figure 7).
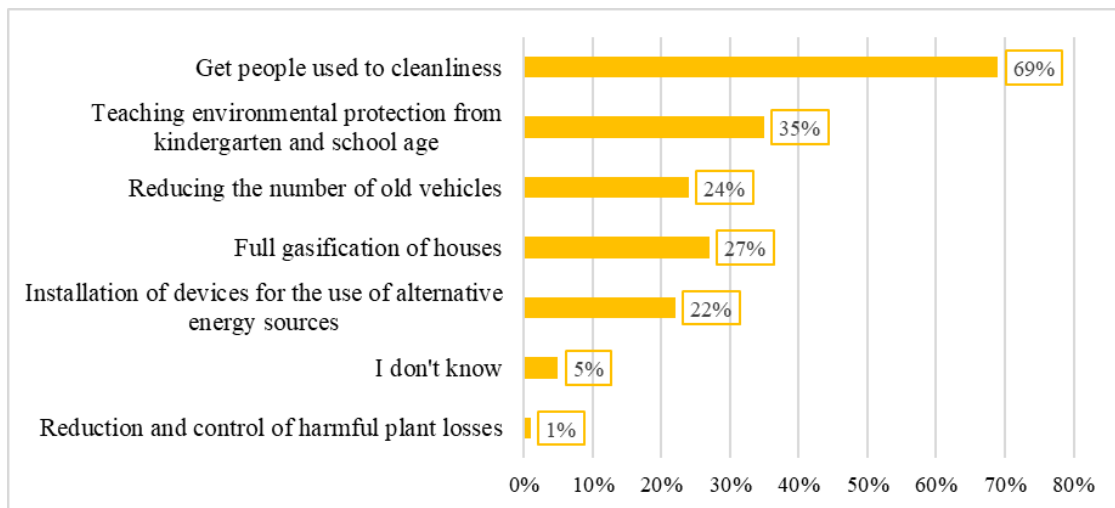
Figure 7 – Respondents' feedback on improving the city's ecology

At the same time, it should be noted that environmental education starts first of all from the family, not only in educational organisations. We can see that the roots of both options under consideration lie in the family, family values, the most important and smallest part of society. Consequently, we can conclude that the problem is not in following its noms aimed at preserving the stability of society, but in forming a model of education based on the right habits and relationships in the family.

The next last question was aimed at determining the level of communication of the survey participants with the locality in which they live (Figure 8).
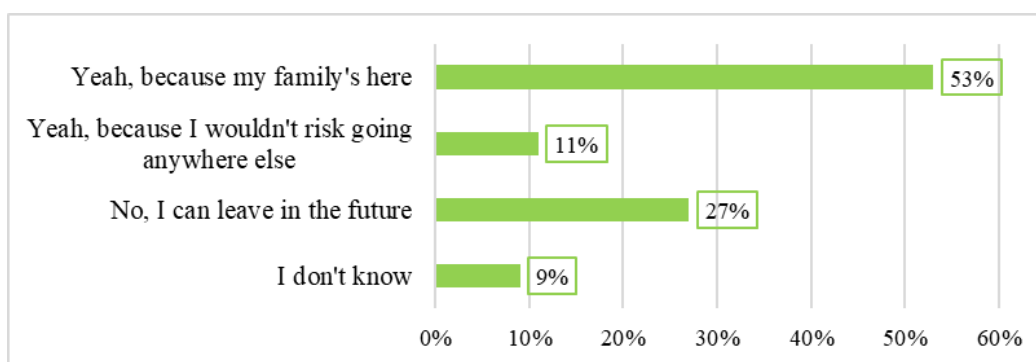

Figure 8 – Respondents' correlation of their future with the city they live in

As can be seen on the picture, the majority of respondents (53%) connect their future with the small town where they live. The first reason is the presence of families, persons in kinship relations. In addition, 11 % explain their stay in their place of residence by the fact that they cannot risk moving to another place. However, according to the findings, 27% of respondents shared that they are planning and planning to move elsewhere in the future. Although the figure is small, this information should be taken into account.

Conclusion

Thus, as a result of the assessment of opportunities for socio-economic sustainable development of small towns in Zhambyl region, we have come to the following conclusions:

- increase the wages of local workers employed at industrial enterprises;
- provide favourable loans to the population;
- organising public events to employ the unemployed;
- it is necessary to retrain the local population in necessary specialities;
- it is necessary to provide the city residents with clean water;
- creation of conditions for receiving quality medical services;
- agriculture should be supported;
- it is necessary to technologically modernise the base of outdated enterprises;
- creation of new industries using highly qualified engineering and technical personnel;
-it is necessary to create a scientific cluster on the basis of the Eurochemical mining industry.

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