

IRSTI 04.21.41

<https://doi.org/10.26577/jpcp.2022.v82.i4.06>

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SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARD LGBT+ IN KAZAKHSTAN

The article is devoted to the study of social attitudes towards LGBT+ people, as well as to the identification of factors that contribute to a positive or negative attitude on the part of Kazakhstani society. Nowadays, many countries of the world are observing a gradual change in the attitude of society towards LGBT+ people and extensive research is carried out globally on the attitude of society towards homosexuality and transgender. However, in the countries of Central Asia, due to the high level of homophobia, the attitude of society towards the LGBT+ community is still negative, if not hostile. The purpose of this study is to analyze the factors, which influence the formation of the image and attitudes towards LGBT+ among Kazakhstanis, as well as to establish the reasons that contribute to the positive acceptance of LGBT+. To fully understand the topic and achieve our goals, we conducted a quantitative study where participants completed an online questionnaire.

According to the results of the research, we discovered that the phenomenon of LGBT+ in Kazakhstani society is still socially unacceptable, despite the rather high percentage of benevolent and positive attitudes, which confirm the previously stated conclusions of researchers and experts. In addition, the analysis showed a low percentage of awareness of organizations and initiatives protecting the rights of LGBT+, which raises the question of increasing the audience coverage to be acquainted with such organizations and present the results of activities in the socio-political space. Nevertheless, a statistically significant relationship was found between the presence of relatives, friends, acquaintances who are representatives of LGBT+, and the status of attitude towards them. This is due to the fact that direct interaction with LGBT+ representatives affect the reduction of prejudices and stereotypes. Obtained data expand our understanding of the relationship between society's attitudes and gender identity and sexual orientation in Kazakhstani reality, explaining the factors that contribute to the formation of benevolent or negative attitudes. However, the limited number of collected data cannot possibly reflect a full picture of the attitudes toward LGBT+ in Kazakhstan, and representative sampling is required in future studies.

Key words: attitudes, LGBTQ+, identity, values, violence.

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Қазақстандағы ЛГБТ+ деген әлеуметтік көзқарас

Мақала ЛГБТ+ өкілдеріне деген әлеуметтік көзқарасты зерттеуге, сондай-ақ қазақстандық қоғам тарапынан оң немесе теріс қатынасқа ықпал ететін факторларды анықтауға арналған. Қазіргі уақытта әлемнің көптеген елдерінде қоғамның ЛГБТ+ адамдарға деген көзқарасы бірте-бірте өзгеруде және әлемнің түрлі елдерінде қоғамның гомосексуалдылық пен трансгендерлікке деген көзқарасы бойынша көптеген зерттеулер жүргізіліп жатыр. Дегенмен Орталық Азия елдерінде гомофобияның жоғары деңгейіне байланысты қоғамның ЛГБТ+ қауымдастығына деген көзқарасы жағымсыз. Бұл зерттеудің мақсаты – қазақстандықтар арасында ЛГБТ+ бейнесі мен көзқарасының қалыптасуына әсер ететін факторларды зерттеу, сонымен қатар ЛГБТ+ -ны оң қабылдауға ықпал ететін себептерді анықтау. Зерттелетін тақырыпты толық түсіну және мақсаттарымызға жету үшін сауалнама әдісі арқылы қатысушылар арасында сандық зерттеу жүргізілді.

Зерттеу нәтижелері бойынша авторлар қазақстандық қоғамдағы ЛГБТ+ феномені ізгілікті және позитивті көзқарастардың жеткілікті жоғары пайызына қарамастан, әлі де болса әлеуметтік тұрғыдан қолайсыз екенін тұжырымдайды. Бұл зерттеушілер мен сарапшылардың бұрын айтылған пікірлерін растайды. Сондай-ақ талдау ЛГБТ+ құқықтарын қорғайтын ұйымдар мен бастамалардың хабардар болуының төмен пайызын көрсетті, бұл ұйымдармен танысу және қоғамдық-саяси кеңістіктегі қызмет нәтижелерін ұсыну үшін аудиторияны қамтуды арттыру

мәселесін туындатады. Осыған қарамастан, туыс, дос, таныс араларында ЛГБТ+ өкілдерінің болуы және оларға деген көзқарас мәртебесі арасында статистикалық маңызды байланыс анықталды. Нәтижесінде, ЛГБТ+ өкілдерімен тікелей әрекеттесу түрлі теріс қалыптасқан наным мен стереотиптердің төмендеуіне әсер етеді. Алынған деректер қоғам көзқарастары мен гендерлік сәйкестік пен сексуалдық бағдардың қазақстандық шындықпен арақатынасы туралы түсінігімізді кеңейтіп, мейірімділік немесе теріс көзқарастардың қалыптасуына ықпал ететін факторларды түсіндіреді. Дегенмен жинақталған деректердің шектеулі көлемі Қазақстандағы ЛГБТ+ көзқарасының толық бейнесін көрсете алмайды және болашақ зерттеулерде қатысушыларды репрезентативті іріктеу қажет.

Түйін сөздер: көзқарастар, ЛГБТК+, сәйкестік, құндылықтар, зорлық-зомбылық.

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Социальные отношения к ЛГБТ+ в Казахстане

Статья посвящена изучению социального отношения к ЛГБТ+, а также определению факторов, способствующих положительному или отрицательному отношению казахстанского общества к сообществу ЛГБТ+. В настоящее время во все больше странах мира происходит постепенное изменение отношения общества к ЛГБТ+ и проводится множество исследований отношения общества к гомосексуальности и трансгендерности в различных странах мира. Однако, в странах Центральной Азии в силу высокого уровня гомофобии отношение общества к ЛГБТ+ сообществу все еще носит негативный, а то и враждебный характер. Целью данного исследования является изучение факторов, влияющих на формирование образа и отношений к ЛГБТ+ среди казахстанцев, а также установление причин, способствующих положительному принятию ЛГБТ+. Для полного понимания изучаемой темы и достижения поставленных целей авторами было проведено количественное исследование с использованием метода опроса.

По результатам исследований авторы делают вывод, что феномен ЛГБТ+ в казахстанском обществе все еще является социально неприемлемым, несмотря на довольно высокий процент доброжелательного отношения, что подтверждают ранее высказанные выводы исследователей и экспертов. Также анализ показал низкий процент осведомленности об организациях и инициативах, защищающих права ЛГБТ+, что ставит вопрос об увеличении охвата аудитории для ознакомления с организациями и представлении результатов деятельности в социополитическом пространстве. Тем не менее, обнаружена статистически значимая связь между наличием родственников, друзей, знакомых, являющихся представителями ЛГБТ+ и статусом отношения к ним, которая связана с тем, что непосредственное взаимодействие с представителями ЛГБТ+ влияет на снижение предрассудков и стереотипных представлений. Полученные данные расширяют понимание связи между отношением общества и гендерной идентичности, сексуальной ориентации в казахстанской реальности, объясняя факторы, способствующие формированию доброжелательного или отрицательного отношения. Однако ограниченное количество собранных данных не может отразить полную картину отношения к ЛГБТ+ в Казахстане и потому требуется репрезентативная выборка в будущих исследованиях.

Ключевые слова: отношение, ЛГБТК+, идентичность, ценности, насилие.

Introduction

The modern world is a variety of cultures, societies, where every year there are dynamic changes in the entire structure of society. For example, they can be changes in established traditions, customs, and rituals as well as economic and political changes, and a change in socially significant value orientations. This circumstance entails a rapid change in the social norms and values of society, which makes it acute for sociological science to study the development of the processes of interaction between man

and society in the framework of ongoing dynamic changes.

In this paper, the authors examined the attitude of Kazakhstani society towards members of the LGBT+ community, which are actively discussed in the world and particularly in popular culture, including the media, the film industry; this topic is directly or indirectly touched upon everywhere. However, historically attitudes towards LGBT+ people were not always the same, and members of this community had to overcome many obstacles to achieve a certain acceptance by society (Kuhn,

2011; Healey, 2012; Seksenbayev, 2018; Gulevich et al., 2022).

The abbreviation of LGBT+ encompasses a variety of people with sexual orientation, gender identity and is used to refer to homosexual, bisexual, transgender, and other individuals. The American Psychological Association defines sexual orientation as “one’s enduring sexual attraction to male partners, female partners, or both. Sexual orientation may be heterosexual, same sex (gay or lesbian), or bisexual” (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

Currently, there are more and more countries of the world that see a gradual change in the attitudes of society towards LGBT+ people and a lot of research is being carried out on the attitude of society towards homosexuality and transgenderism in various countries of the world. For example, based on the results of a study by the PeW Research Center (USA), a map of the global recognition of homosexuality by society was compiled, which considers such aspects as LGBT+ rights and the issue of same-sex relationships. Researchers have noted that age characteristics, level of education, degree of religiosity, as well as political views directly affect attitudes and acceptance of homosexuality in society (PeW Research Center, 2013; Pouchter & Kent, 2020).

On the other hand, there is a number of countries where the attitude towards LGBT+ is directly opposite and has clear differences compared to countries with equal rights for LGBT+. The reason for the negative attitude towards the LGBT+ community and the non-recognition of homosexuality is due to the fact that most people are often poorly informed,

do not know many aspects and definitions, which leads to the stigmatization of the LGBT+ group by society, certain risks in relationships with the family and social environment, clash with homo/biphobia, transphobia, discrimination based on one’s own sexual orientation or gender identity (Pouchter & Kent, 2020).

One of the first attempts to study the attitude of Kazakhstani society towards sexual minorities was carried out by the efforts of the Soros Foundation – Kazakhstan, where the purpose of the sociological study was to examine in detail the legal and social status of the LGBT community and assess the compliance of the situation with international standards. According to the research results, 81.2% of respondents indicated that society as a whole treats LGBT people with condemnation and disrespect, 64.8% of respondents deliberately hide their orientation from neighbors and homeowners (Belyaeva et al., 2009). The latter statement is supported by the data of the World Values Survey (hereinafter referred to as WVS) 6th and 7th waves collected by researchers, where **73.6%** (2011) and **73.4%** (2018) of the respondents were against living next door to people of homosexual identity (World Values Survey, n.d.). Nonetheless, after conducting a comparative analysis based on WVS data on the acceptance of homosexuality as a norm in Kazakhstan (see Figure 1), one can notice a slight decrease in the percentage of responses among respondents from 78% in 2011 to 71% in 2018 (World Values Survey, n.d.). However, such a slight decrease does not contribute to a tolerant attitude and acceptance of homosexuality in Kazakhstan, which is confirmed by a high level of non-acceptance in percentage terms among respondents of the WVS 6 and 7 waves.

	Kazakhstan	
	2010-2014	2017-2020
Low	78%	71%
Medium	17%	14%
High	5%	5%
Missing	-	10%
(N)	1,500	1,276

Source: World Values Survey. Online Data Analysis. Wave 6-7: Time series

Figure 1 – Comparative analysis of data on the acceptance of homosexuality among Kazakhstani people

Also, the study revealed a dismissive and discriminatory attitude towards LGBT people by healthcare workers, which subsequently makes respondents to conceal their orientation and gender identity (Soros Foundation, 2009: 108). In another study, Wu et. al (2017) conducted a nationwide assessment of the number of men who have sex with men (MSM) in Kazakhstan and identified the social and structural barriers MSM face when testing for human immunodeficiency virus.

The influence of religious institutions and beliefs is also important. For example, researchers using 16 countries as an example found that religious affiliation has an impact on the degree of acceptance of homosexuality in general. Thus, respondents who identified themselves as Muslims were the least tolerant of homosexuality ($M=2.07$), followed by Orthodox Christians ($M=2.21$) and those who had no religious affiliation ($M=2.38$) (McGee, 2016: 22). However, a research team led by Yasin Koc et al. (2021), using a sample of gay Muslims living in Turkey as an example, concluded that public acceptance of LGBT+ by society and intra-group stability are important for resolving identity conflicts, as well as for integrating religious and sexual identities in people who identify themselves as gay Muslims.

A study of the attitude of Kazakhstani society towards members of the LGBT+ community, conducted by the international non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch (hereinafter referred to as HRW), showed a number of issues: harassment, discrimination, the threat of physical and psycho-emotional violence, etc. When collecting information, HRW talked with members of the LGBT+ community of which 10 people refused to talk because of the fear that has penetrated all areas of their lives. The participants of the study described their experiences of suffering in the past. Surveys confirm that most LGBT+ people hide their gender/sexual identity out of concern for the consequences. There have also been cases where people who came out, turning to the authorities for help, deal with indifference and aggression on their part (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

In his report on the topic “Stigmatization of the LGBTQ community on the example of interaction with law enforcement bodies in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, A. Pushilin noted that the stigmatization of this community “is associated with the historical, social and cultural context” formed due to the post-Soviet vacuum. During the interview, representatives of the LGBT+ community noted the following reasons for stigmatization: social labels from

society, a negative image in the media space, stereotypes, support, and encouragement by the state of homophobic statements and movements. Due to the high level of stigmatization and homophobia, LGBT+ people face cases of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity (hereinafter referred to as SOGI). For example, respondents reported cases of discrimination and violence from family, close friends, colleagues, government institutions, and strangers accompanied by insults, harassment, psychological or physical abuse. However, most of the victims did not apply to law enforcement bodies or the courts, but those who applied did not receive proper assistance, but were subjected to additional discrimination from the police and medical personnel (A. Pushilin, 2016:23). The excerpts from the narratives of LGBT+ respondents who were discriminated against or abused by law enforcement bodies are given below.

There was an incident in an old gay club when our friends were sitting there. There were few people in the morning. Suddenly, a police squad arrived, the policemen said that they were contacted by a man who was beaten on the street. It happened near the club. They interrogated my gay friends. They knew about their sexual orientation and treated them very badly – they beat them, tried to pin this hooliganism on them, but they did not achieve anything. I noticed that if the police are not involved, then they are on the side of homophobic hooligans (quoted in A. Pushilin 2016:16).

The police officers got all judgemental about the nationality and constantly said: “Do you really sleep with this one?” or “Of course, you don’t look like these homosexuals, but your friend ...”. They asked why we go to a club where there are only perverts and pedophiles; they asked if I was normal or like them. Moreover, all this happened in an atmosphere when T. and I constantly heard both obscenities and laughter” (quoted in Feminita 2017:64).

According to the report of the Kazakhstan Feminist Initiative “Feminita” on the observance of the rights of lesbian, bisexual, and queer women, almost half of the respondents – 44.3% stated that they had experience of violence or negative attitudes on the basis of SOGI, and 2% of the respondents had an experience of illegal detention by law enforcement bodies. Regarding the places where respondents are subjected to violence, the researchers note that 21.5% of participants indicated the space around gay clubs where aggressive homophobes attack and

blackmail the LGBT+ members. This is followed by their places of residence, where almost 17% said they were subjected to insults and violence from close ones (Feminita, 2017).

In general, based on the conducted review, it can be said that a negative attitude towards LGBT+ members prevail both in society and among the closest people (parents, relatives, friends), which is expressed in an increase in the level of homophobia and discrimination, covering all areas from education to religion, moral and physical violence. By analyzing previously reported data on public attitudes towards LGBT+ people, we aim to contribute to the body of knowledge about the LGBT+ community and possible consequences in contemporary Kazakhstan.

Materials and Methods

This study includes 330 participants living in the seven regions of Kazakhstan, who responded to online survey based on the *OneClick Survey* platform. Several sampling methods were used together to recruit respondents. The online survey was published on various social networks and instant messengers, where everyone could voluntarily participate in it. In addition, a snowball method was used for data collection, when the participants of the study sent a link to the survey to their acquaintances, friends, etc. The rationale for using this method is to cover most of the regions of Kazakhstan without any obstacles using popular social networks and instant messengers like Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp and Telegram as well as to preserve the anonymity of some of the study respondents who identify themselves as LGBT+. The limitations of the data should be noted, however, since the limited number of collected data cannot possibly reflect a full picture of the attitudes toward LGBT+ in Kazakhstan.

Ethical principles: The research program and online survey were developed in accordance with the international requirements of the ethical code of social sciences (International Sociological Association, 2001; American Sociological Association, 2018). It should be noted that respondents were included in the study if they were aged 18 or older; were able to read and write in Kazakh or Russian; and were citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. All respondents agreed to participate in the study by selecting one of the suggested answers in the corresponding field of the survey. The data collection method was completely anonymous and no personal identifiers such as names, mobile phone number or emails of the respondents were collected. Respon-

dents were not expected to receive monetary or other rewards for participating in the study. The survey consisted of 45 questions and statements, divided into Kazakh and Russian languages respectively, which was developed on the *OneClick Survey* platform and the received data was saved in the *SPSS Data File* (SAV) data file format. The participants were given the opportunity to choose their preferred language for completing the survey: Kazakh and Russian. In order to avoid the influence of gender stereotypes, prejudice, the questions and statements of the survey were designed taking into account gender-neutral language (inclusiveness) (Wasserman & Weseley, 2009; Sarassin et al., 2012). To correct the statements, the survey was pre-tested on a small group of respondents.

The survey was divided into three blocks: block 1 measured demographics (sex, age, ethnicity, religion, education, sexual orientation, occupation, and region); block 2 included questions aiming to study the state of LGBT+ in Kazakhstan and the attitude of the participants to LGBT+ members; block 3 consisted of a set of statements describing various types of attitudes towards homosexuals (gays and lesbians) and homosexuality, which were taken from the Russian questionnaire on attitudes towards homosexuals (Gulevich et al., 2018). The collected data were analyzed in the SPSS 22.0 statistical data processing software version.

Characteristics of the sample. The study involved 330 participants, of which 58,5 % were female, 40,9 % were male, and 2 respondents (0,6 %) identified themselves as a non-binary. The participants varied from 16 to 45 years of age and were from seven regions of Kazakhstan (Pavlodar, Almaty, Astana, and other regions). The average age of the respondents was $M_{age} = 23,5$. According to the place of residence, a significant part of the respondents was represented by residents of the Pavlodar region (60,2 %). However, due to the snowball method and the conduct of an online survey, it was possible to collect a certain number of respondents from other regions: Almaty – 10,6 %, Astana – 19,4 %. The percentage in the category “Other city” comprised 9,7 % and was represented by such regions as Karagandy, Kokshetau, Petropavlovsk, Uralsk.

The ethnic composition of the participants was as follows: the number of participants who identified themselves as Kazakhs comprised 76,1 %, 14,2 % were Russians and 9,7 % were representatives of another ethnic groups. In the “Other” category, Tatars were represented by 12 people, Germans – 5 people, Poles – 3 people and others.

According to the preferred language for completing the online survey, the majority of participants (87 %) chose Russian, while the remaining 13 % were the share of the Kazakh-speaking population.

In terms of education, more than half of the study respondents had higher/postgraduate education (56 %), 33,9 % of respondents indicated that at the time of the study they were still studying at a higher educational institution, 7 % had vocational education, and 3 % had only secondary education.

In the context of this study, respondents had to answer a question regarding sexual orientation, where, according to the results of the analysis, a significant proportion of participants (77,9 %) identified themselves as heterosexual, 12,4 % of participants noted bisexual orientation, the proportion of homosexuals was 7 %, the remaining 2,7 % of participants do not identify themselves with the previous three types of orientations and marked the option “other”.

Religious affiliation is also an important parameter in studying the attitude of society towards LGBT+ people and the LGBT+ phenomenon as a social norm. According to the research, it was revealed that religiosity is one of the strongest socializing determinants that explains the rejection

of homosexuality. This conclusion is supported by the fact that religious institutions, as a socializing agent, influence people’s negative attitudes towards LGBT+ people (Ultee, 1996). While most religions emphasize that people should respect others, many religions tend to classify homosexuality as something “unnatural” or “impure” (Yip, 2005). In this regard, Janssen and Scheepers (2019) emphasize the importance of changing attitudes towards homosexuality not only on the part of religious followers, but also on the part of religious institutions themselves.

According to the results of our study, most participants 49,7 % identify themselves as belonging to Islam, about 7,6 % – Christianity / Catholicism, and 37 % of respondents indicated the option of “Atheist”, “Non-religious”. The percentage of participants who chose other religious directions was more than 5,8 %.

In terms of employment areas, the analysis showed that many respondents represented the area of education and science (140 people), 63 people chose the area of industry, construction, transport and communications, 25 and 18 respondents come from trade, services and healthcare respectively. The table below presents the data of respondents by employment areas.

Table – Respondents’ employment areas ($N=330$)

Employment areas	Frequency	Percent
Education and science	140	42,4
Healthcare	18	5,5
Civil service	14	4,2
Law enforcement bodies/ Military field	5	1,5
Trade, service sector	25	7,6
Industry, construction, transport and communications	63	19,1
Agriculture	7	2,1
Other	58	17,6
Total	330	100,0

Results and Discussion

The main block of the online survey aims to study the participants’ understanding of the LGBT+ phenomenon in Kazakhstan, their attitudes towards LGBT+, assessment of Kazakhstani society, the degree of influence of the LGBT+ phenomenon on

culture, social institutions, interpersonal communication, etc. According to the data obtained, 79,1 % of participants know about the existence of LGBT+ people in Kazakhstan, 13,6 % of participants do not know about the existence, and 7,3 % found it difficult to answer. At the same time, the respondents’ high rate of awareness of the presence of LGBT+

people in society are also confirmed by the fact that 51,2 % participants familiar or have members of this community among their friends/relatives. Less than 27% of participants answered that they knew but had not met them personally.

According to reports and analytical reviews of the Soros Foundation (2009), Human Rights Watch (2015), Feminita (2019), ADC Memorial (2020), LGBT+ people in Kazakhstan face homophobia, discrimination, stigmatization, persecution, and other contradictory actions on the part of society.

The results of a study conducted by Seksenbayev (2018) showed that about 55% of homo/bisexual men (on the example of the sample) have a rather alarming prevalence of suicidal behavior. At the same time, LGBT+ members in Kazakhstan seem to be the most “rightless” and do not have suf-

ficient rights to protect themselves (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Kazakhstan, 2020). In this regard, the respondents had to characterize the Kazakh society in relation to LGBT+ people on an interval scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is an aggressive attitude, 5 is neutral, and 10 is a benevolent attitude. According to the results of the descriptive analysis, the mean value was $M=4.18$, which, according to the established interval scale, is interpreted as a more negative attitude towards LGBT+ people. In terms of gender, 55,6 % of men consider Kazakhstani society to be aggressive towards LGBT+ people, which has a slight difference compared to women (54,5 %). The percentage of female respondents who characterized the society’s attitude as benevolent is 33,1 %, the percentage of males is lower by 0,6 % and total 32,5 % (see Figure 2).

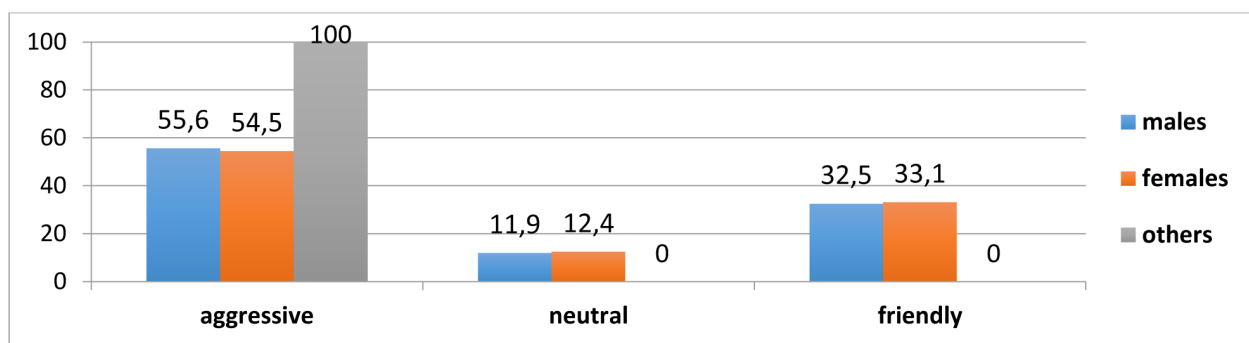


Figure 2 – Societal attitudes towards LGBT+ members across the gender (%)

On the other hand, according to a sociological survey, the results differ greatly in terms of the degree of attitude of the participants themselves towards LGBT+ members. For example, the proportion of participants who had “calm” and “positive” attitude comprised 56% in total, while the proportion of participants who were “cautious”, “with irritation and disgust” was 19.4%. At the same time, 21.5% of respondents were neutral, and 2.4% of respondents classified themselves as “other”.

In terms of religious affiliation, the results showed a positive attitude towards LGBT+ members. Thus, 84.2% of the total number of respondents who identified themselves as atheists had a positive/calm attitude; the proportion of agnostic respondents who were positive/calm was 66%, the percentage of positive/calm attitude was 52.2% for “Christianity”. Figures for a positive attitude among respondents in the category “their own version”

amounted to 52,6%. In addition, 42,1% of Islam followers had a positive/calm attitude, which noticeably has a positive trend compared to previous studies and there is a shift towards a tolerant attitude and equality of members of the LGBT+ community.

Overall, 20% of participants in six categories of religious affiliation had a negative attitude towards LGBT+ people. The results of the study confirm the earlier findings of researchers and experts that the LGBT+ phenomenon in Kazakhstani society is still socially unacceptable, despite a rather high percentage of benevolent/positive attitudes.

In the context of our study, it was also interesting for us to look at the degree of influence of the LGBT+ phenomenon on culture, social institutions, interpersonal communication, etc. So, the respondents rated the degree of influence on a summative Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is negative; 2 – rather negative; 3 – something in between; 4 – rather

positive; 5 – positive. According to the results of the descriptive analysis by the degree of influence, the average value for each item was:

– $M=2.72$ for the influence on the culture of Kazakhstan, where 40.6 % of respondents noted a negative impact, 35.5 % noted the option of something in between, and 23.9 % of respondents considered the impact of LGBT+ people on culture positive;

– $M=2.68$ for the institution of family and marriage, where the proportion of respondents who believed that LGBT+ had a negative impact was 43.4 %, something in between – 32.1 %, and 24.5 % – a positive impact;

– $M=3.05$ for the institute of education, where the majority of respondents (37.3%) expressed an average value, 28.8% of respondents noted a negative impact, while 33.9% of respondents indicated a positive impact;

– $M=2.57$ for demographics, among which 44.9 % of the participants said that LGBT+ had a negative impact. The average value was 36.1%, and 19 % of respondents noted a positive impact;

– $M=3.22$ for interpersonal communication where, 42.4 % of participants thought that the LGBT+ phenomenon had a positive impact, while 31.5% indicated the option – something in between. However, 26.1 % of participants indicated a negative impact.

In the course of the study, an attempt was made to analyze the acceptability of the presence of LGBT+ members among such groups as relatives, friends, study/work colleagues and neighbors. Respondents were asked to rate the degree of acceptability on a summative Likert scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is totally unacceptable, 4 is not sure, and 7 is totally acceptable. Analysis of the data across the four groups showed positive results, and most of the research participants expressed a tolerant attitude, which is implied in the acceptability of the presence of LGBT+ people among these groups, such as relatives, friends, colleagues, etc. For example, more than 60% of respondents expressed a positive attitude towards LGBT+ among friends, colleagues, classmates, and neighbors, whereas among relatives the figure was 43.9 %. The Figure 3 below presents comparative data in percentage terms.

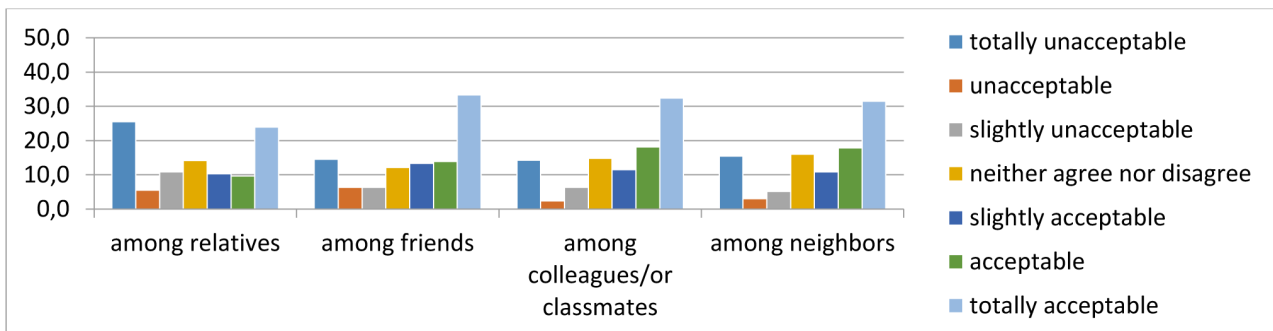


Figure 3 – Level of acceptability of LGBT+ people among the groups represented

At the same time, the obtained data for the group of neighbors make it possible to carry out a comparative characterization of the previously presented data. Thus, according to a sociological survey of youth in Kazakhstan conducted by the F. Ebert Foundation and professor Hurrelmann (2016) in Central Asia, 15.6% of respondents expressed a desire not to have homosexuals as a neighbor. In addition, in a study of the values of Kazakhstani society, more than 70% of respondents noted that they “would not like to live with members of the LGBT community” (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Kazakhstan, 2020, p. 134).

In this study, we examined the question of whether participants have LGBT+ members among

their relatives, friends, and acquaintances. According to the results of the study, 48,2 % of participants answered “yes”, while 36,7 % answered “no”, and the remaining 15,1 % marked the option “I don’t know”. A similar picture is observed in the answers to the question regarding “if they found out that one of their friends, relatives, or acquaintances is LGBT+”: 47,9 % had a positive attitude and they would continue communication; 9,4 % had a negative attitude and would stop communication; 14,2% of participants found it difficult to answer, and 28,5 % expressed a neutral position. The correlation analysis showed that there is a statistically significant relationship ($p=0.01$) between the pres-

ence of relatives, friends, acquaintances, who are LGBT+ and attitude towards them. Also, a relationship was found between the “sexual orientation” and the presence of relatives, friends, acquaintances, who are LGBT+, exactly as well as the status of attitude towards this group. In our opinion, this relationship is consistent with the intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), where according to this theory, personal interaction with members of a different group contributes to an improvement in attitudes towards this group as a whole and towards individuals included in it. The data obtained confirm this hypothesis, showing that direct interaction with LGBT+ people and the presence of homosexual friends affect the reduction of prejudice, stereotypes, which further has an impact on the decrease in the level of homophobia.

Due to the negative attitude of the Kazakhstani society towards LGBT+ members, the online survey included a question about participants’ awareness of organizations protecting the rights of LGBT+. In particular, to the question “Do you know organizations/communities that protect the rights of LGBT+ people in Kazakhstan”, 83,6 % of participants noted that they did not know about the existence of such organizations, while only 16,4 % of participants knew some LGBT+ organizations. Among the most frequently mentioned Public and Non-governmental organizations, Community centers are the following: Feminita, Safe Space, Kok.Team, AmanBol, UNI, United Nations Women, Liberty, Labrys, AlmaTQ, Gerlita and others.

Block 3 of the online survey included a set of 4 positive and 3 negative statements, which were used from the Russian questionnaire on attitudes towards homosexuals (Gulevich et al., 2018). The questionnaire describes various attitudes towards gays and lesbians and towards homosexuality in general. The respondent rated the degree of agreement with each statement on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is completely disagree; 3 – something in between (not sure); 5 – totally agree. So, based on the results obtained, we derived the average value for each statement:

the average value was $M=3.26$ for the statement “*Homosexuality is one of the natural forms of sexuality for a person*”;

the average value was $M=2.98$ for the statement “*Homosexuality is a completely alien phenomenon for Kazakh culture*”;

the average value was $M=3.62$ for the statements “*Hatred of homosexuals indicates a bad moral cli-*

mate in society” and “*Homosexuals need legal protection from harassment and discrimination*”;

the average value was $M=3.80$ for the statement “*Homosexuals do not threaten society in any way*”;

the average value was $M=2.93$ for the statement “*There are more and more homosexuals as a result of the spread of Western values*”;

the average value was $M=2.84$ for the statement “*Homosexuals are a threat to the traditional family*”.

We also examined how the categories of age and the presence of LGBT+ people in the circle of relatives, friends and colleagues affect the degree of formation of beliefs and prejudices. According to the results of the analysis, younger participants aged 18 to 34 showed a low level of prejudice and a rather high level of friendly attitude towards LGBT+ compared to older respondents. These results confirm previous findings by researchers that attitudes toward homosexuality are predominantly formed at an early age and that susceptibility to attitude change declines throughout adulthood (Ekstam, 2022).

Conclusion

In this article, based on analysis of secondary data and a quantitative study, we explored on the one side, the attitude of Kazakhstani society towards LGBT+, on the other side, what influences the formation of these attitudes towards the community, whether positive or negative. Our results show that LGBT+ in kazakhstani society (based on sample data) is still socially unacceptable, which is reflected in discriminatory attitudes, aggression, harassment, and a high level of prejudice against LGBT+. The influence of religious affiliation on the formation of attitudes towards LGBT+ members was revealed. At the same time, based on the results of the analysis, we concluded that the presence of an LGBT+ members in the circle of relatives, friends, colleagues or neighbors and direct relationship with them affects the reduction of prejudice, the level of homophobia, as well as the formation of a positive attitude towards LGBT+. However, it is worth noting that most of the respondents in the study were young people studying at the university and who have relatively friendly attitudes towards LGBT+. Moreover, the limited number of collected data cannot possibly reflect a full picture of the attitudes toward LGBT+ in Kazakhstan. Therefore, more representative samples are needed in future studies.

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