

N. Ospanbek^{1*}, B.N. Kylyshbayeva¹, O. Zengin^{2,3}

¹Farabi University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

²School of Social Work, University of Alabama, Alabama, USA

³Department of Social Work, Karabuk University, Karabuk, Türkiye

*e-mail: nazira_0390@mail.ru

EMOTIONAL BURNOUT OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN KAZAKHSTAN: LEGAL ANALYSIS AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

This article examines emotional burnout among social workers in Kazakhstan as an occupational, legal, and institutional problem. The purpose of the study is to determine how the psychological manifestations of professional exhaustion can be reflected in labor, social, and organizational safeguards, and to justify the need for preventive legal mechanisms. The scientific and practical significance of the work lies in connecting burnout indicators with employer responsibility, supervision, workload regulation, and psycho-emotional safety standards. The methodology combines content analysis of academic literature, secondary empirical analysis, legal and regulatory analysis, comparative legal assessment, and case-based interpretation. The results show that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional effectiveness, secondary traumatization, and chronic occupational stress are not sufficiently recognized in the current legal framework of Kazakhstan. The study identifies gaps in labor and social regulation and proposes the Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM), which integrates legal resilience, emotional resilience, organizational support, and socio-psychological safety. The value of the study is its interdisciplinary translation of psychological evidence into legal and institutional categories. Its practical significance lies in the possibility of using LERM for institutional audit, prevention programs, supervision protocols, and monitoring of burnout risks in social service organizations.

Keywords: emotional burnout, social workers, labor law, occupational safety, psycho-emotional health, supervision, legal resilience.

Н. Оспанбек^{1*}, Б. Н. Қылышбаева¹, О. Зенгин^{2,3}

¹ Өл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан

² Алабама университеті, Әлеуметтік жұмыс мектебі, Алабама, АҚШ

³ Карабюк университеті, Әлеуметтік жұмыс кафедрасы, Карабюк, Түркия

*e-mail: nazira_0390@mail.ru

Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік қызметкерлердің эмоциялық қажуы: құқықтық талдау және өзекті мәселелер

Мақалада Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік қызметкерлердің эмоциялық қажуы кәсіби, құқықтық және институционалдық мәселе ретінде қарастырылады. Зерттеудің мақсаты – кәсіби қажудың психологиялық көріністерін еңбек, әлеуметтік және ұйымдық-құқықтық кепілдіктер жүйесінде қалай көрсетуге болатынын анықтау және алдын алу тетіктерін негіздеу. Зерттеудің ғылыми және практикалық маңыздылығы эмоциялық күйіп кету көрсеткіштерін жұмыс берушінің жауапкершілігімен, супервизиялық қолдаумен, еңбек жүктемесін реттеумен және психоэмоциялық қауіпсіздік стандарттарымен байланыстыра қарастыруында көрінеді. Зерттеу әдіснамасы ғылыми әдебиеттерге контент-талдау жүргізуді, қайталама эмпирикалық талдауды, нормативтік-құқықтық талдауды, салыстырмалы-құқықтық бағалауды және кейстік интерпретацияны қамтиды. Алынған нәтижелер эмоциялық сарқылу, деперсонализация, кәсіби тиімділіктің төмендеуі, екіншілік травматизация және созылмалы кәсіби стресс феномендерінің Қазақстанның қолданыстағы құқықтық кеңістігінде жеткілікті деңгейде көрініс таппағанын көрсетеді. Зерттеу еңбек және әлеуметтік реттеу жүйесіндегі олқылықтарды анықтап, құқықтық тұрақтылықты, эмоциялық тұрақтылықты, ұйымдастырушылық қолдауды және әлеуметтік-психологиялық қауіпсіздікті біріктіретін LERM құқықтық және эмоциялық тұрақтылық моделін ұсынады. Зерттеудің құндылығы психологиялық деректерді құқықтық және институционалдық категорияларға пәнаралық тұрғыдан трансформациялауымен сипатталады. Практикалық маңыздылығы LERM моделін институционалдық аудитте, профилактикалық бағдарламаларда, супервизиялық хаттамаларда және әлеуметтік қызмет көрсету ұйымдарындағы эмоциялық күйіп кету тәуекелдерін мониторингтеу жүйесінде қолдану мүмкіндігімен байланысты.

Түйін сөздер: эмоциялық қажу, әлеуметтік қызметкерлер, еңбек құқығы, еңбекті қорғау, психоэмоциялық денсаулық, супервизия, құқықтық тұрақтылық.

Н. Оспанбек^{1*}, Б.Н. Кылышбаева¹, О. Зенгин^{2,3}

¹Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан

²Школа социальной работы, Университет Алабамы, Алабама, США

³Кафедра социальной работы, Университет Карабюк, Карабюк, Турция

*e-mail: nazira_0390@mail.ru

Эмоциональное выгорание социальных работников в Казахстане: правовой анализ и актуальные вызовы

В статье рассматривается эмоциональное выгорание социальных работников в Казахстане как профессиональная, правовая и институциональная проблема. Цель исследования заключается в определении того, каким образом психологические проявления профессионального истощения могут быть отражены в трудовых, социальных и организационно-правовых гарантиях, а также в обосновании необходимости профилактических правовых механизмов. Научная и практическая значимость работы состоит в увязке показателей выгорания с ответственностью работодателя, супервизией, регулированием нагрузки и стандартами психоэмоциональной безопасности. Методология включает контент-анализ научной литературы, вторичный эмпирический анализ, нормативно-правовой анализ, сравнительно-правовую оценку и кейс-интерпретацию. Полученные результаты показывают, что эмоциональное истощение, деперсонализация, снижение профессиональной эффективности, вторичная травматизация и хронический профессиональный стресс недостаточно отражены в действующем правовом поле Казахстана. Исследование выявляет проблемы трудового и социального регулирования и предлагает модель правовой и эмоциональной устойчивости LERM, объединяющую правовую устойчивость, эмоциональную устойчивость, организационную поддержку и социально-психологическую безопасность. Ценность исследования заключается в междисциплинарном переводе психологических данных в правовые и институциональные категории. Практическая значимость связана с возможностью применения модели LERM для институционального аудита, профилактических программ, супервизионных протоколов и мониторинга рисков выгорания в организациях социального обслуживания.

Ключевые слова: эмоциональное выгорание, социальные работники, трудовое право, охрана труда, психоэмоциональное здоровье, супервизия, правовая устойчивость.

Introduction

In the context of global socio-economic transformations, the professional activities of social workers are becoming increasingly important for ensuring the stability and well-being of society. In Kazakhstan, social workers perform the most important function of supporting vulnerable groups of the population, contributing to the realization of citizens' right to social protection, guaranteed by the Constitution of Kazakhstan and international acts. However, the specific nature of their activities – constant interaction with crisis situations, high emotional stress, insufficient financial and psychological support – leads to a serious professional risk: burnout syndrome.

Burnout, officially recognized by the World Health Organization as a professional phenomenon, is a complex phenomenon that includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased professional achievement. Recent studies show that more than 60% of social workers in Kazakhstan experience symptoms of burnout, which threatens

not only their personal health, but also the quality of services provided.

The relevance of the problem is also supported by the empirical-analytical component of the present study. Rather than relying solely on general statements from the literature, the article compares published quantitative indicators of burnout with the legal and organizational conditions in which social workers operate in Kazakhstan. This comparison makes it possible to identify a substantive mismatch: the professional risks documented in psychological and social work research are not adequately reflected in labor regulation, institutional support mechanisms, or internal standards of social service organizations. Therefore, the problem is not limited to the high prevalence of burnout. It also concerns the absence of a stable legal and organizational framework capable of preventing burnout before it affects professional functioning and the quality of assistance provided to vulnerable groups.

Despite the urgency of the problem, the issues of the psycho-emotional well-being of social workers in the legal field of Kazakhstan remain insufficient-

ly regulated. The current labor legislation is more focused on the material aspects of labor protection and health protection, while measures to prevent emotional burnout, psychological rehabilitation and reduce occupational stress are fragmented or absent altogether.

The research problem addressed in this article lies in the insufficient conceptualization of social workers' emotional burnout as an interdisciplinary issue situated at the intersection of occupational psychology, social work, and legal regulation. In psychological studies, burnout is usually examined through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional efficacy, secondary traumatization, and chronic occupational stress. Legal analysis, however, tends to focus on formal labor guarantees, physical safety, working time, and general employer obligations. As a result, a methodological gap emerges: psycho-emotional risks are widely recognized as harmful to professional performance and the quality of social services, yet they are rarely translated into specific legal duties, organizational standards, or preventive mechanisms. This gap forms the central research problem of the present study.

The originality of the study is therefore not limited to the recognition that emotional burnout exists among social workers. This fact has already been established in psychological and social work literature. The contribution of the article lies in a different research step: it translates the psychological structure of burnout into a legally and institutionally applicable model of prevention. In this sense, burnout is treated not only as a personal or organizational difficulty, but as a legally relevant occupational risk that requires defined rights, employer obligations, monitoring procedures, and preventive infrastructure within social service institutions.

The relevance of this study is determined by the need for a comprehensive analysis of existing legislation, identification of legal gaps and development of proposals to improve the regulatory framework in order to effectively protect social workers from professional burnout syndrome. The legal analysis of emotional burnout as an occupational risk allows not only to assess the current state of affairs, but also to outline ways to form a more stable and effective social protection system for professionals working in the most emotionally stressful conditions.

In this regard, the study introduces an independent analytical procedure based on the triangulation of three groups of sources: academic evidence on burnout among helping professionals, national le-

gal acts regulating labor protection and social services, and a practice-oriented case that reflects the emotional and organizational complexity of social work with families facing multiple risks. This procedure allows the research problem to be examined not only at the descriptive level, but also through the relationship between empirically observed professional strain, legal insufficiency, and institutional responsibility.

The aim of this article is to examine emotional burnout among social workers in Kazakhstan as an interdisciplinary research problem and to determine how the psychological manifestations of professional exhaustion can be reflected in labor, social, and organizational-legal safeguards. The study does not merely describe existing legal norms. It seeks to identify the gap between psychologically established occupational risks and the absence of specific legal mechanisms for their prevention, monitoring, and institutional management.

The study is based on the following research hypothesis: emotional burnout among social workers in Kazakhstan can be interpreted as a legally relevant occupational risk when three conditions are present: first, burnout has identifiable psychological manifestations; second, these manifestations are reproduced in professional situations involving high emotional, ethical, and organizational pressure; third, the legal and institutional framework does not provide sufficient mechanisms for prevention, monitoring, and professional support.

This hypothesis is examined through four testable propositions:

Proposition 1. Emotional burnout among social workers can be operationalized through five indicators: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional effectiveness, secondary traumatization, and chronic occupational stress.

Proposition 2. The legal framework of Kazakhstan insufficiently recognizes psycho-emotional safety as part of occupational protection, since existing norms focus primarily on physical working conditions and general labor guarantees.

Proposition 3. High-risk social work cases intensify burnout-related risks because they combine emotional pressure, legal responsibility, ethical decision-making, interagency coordination, and limited institutional resources.

Proposition 4. Burnout prevention becomes institutionally effective only when psychological support is connected with supervision, workload regulation, confidential counseling, early detection procedures, and employer responsibility.

The propositions define the analytical logic of the article and provide a basis for moving beyond a descriptive review. They are examined through a secondary empirical and comparative legal research design, which combines published empirical evidence, legal analysis, case-based interpretation, and comparative assessment of foreign prevention mechanisms.

To test the stated hypothesis and propositions, the following research tasks are addressed:

1. To operationalize emotional burnout among social workers through its key psychological indicators: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional efficacy, secondary traumatization, and loss of professional motivation.

2. To systematize Kazakhstani and international evidence on burnout among helping professionals and identify the factors most relevant to social work practice.

3. To analyze the labor and social legislation of Kazakhstan in terms of the presence or absence of norms aimed at protecting the psycho-emotional well-being of social workers.

4. To compare Kazakhstani regulatory framework with foreign approaches to burnout prevention, including supervision, psychological counseling, workload regulation, stress monitoring, and employee assistance programs.

5. To develop an interdisciplinary Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM), integrating psychological, organizational, and legal mechanisms for preventing emotional burnout among social workers.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the development of an interdisciplinary framework that connects psychological indicators of emotional burnout with legal and organizational mechanisms of professional protection. The article does not claim novelty in identifying burnout as such. Its contribution consists in showing how emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional efficacy, secondary traumatization, and chronic occupational stress can be transformed into criteria for legal regulation, institutional monitoring, and employer responsibility. The proposed Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM) is presented as an original analytical model designed for Kazakhstani social protection system. It specifies four levels of prevention: legal recognition of psycho-emotional safety, development of emotional resilience, organizational support, and socio-psychological protection. This model gives the study a distinct scientific contribution beyond a descriptive review of literature and legislation.

Literature review

The literature on emotional burnout among social workers can be divided into several interrelated research strands rather than treated as a homogeneous body of studies. The first strand examines burnout as a psychological and occupational syndrome measured through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy. The second strand focuses on organizational determinants, including workload, role conflict, lack of autonomy, insufficient supervision, and weak institutional support. The third strand considers secondary traumatization as a consequence of continuous interaction with clients experiencing violence, poverty, neglect, disability, or family crisis. The fourth strand is legal and institutional in nature, although it remains less developed: it concerns the extent to which labor protection systems recognize psycho-emotional safety as part of occupational health. This division makes it possible to move beyond a descriptive review and to identify the specific research gap addressed in the present article.

The problem of emotional burnout of social workers is actively studied in foreign and domestic scientific literature. The conceptual basis for the analysis of professional burnout syndrome is the work of Christiansen and co – authors, who developed the Copenhagen Burnout Questionnaire (CBI), a tool that allows assessing both the degree of emotional exhaustion and loss of motivation in professional activities (Kristensen et al., 2005). This questionnaire has found wide application in the international practice of assessing the psycho-emotional state of social workers.

This measurement-oriented approach is important because it provides a clear diagnostic language for discussing burnout. At the same time, its explanatory potential is limited when burnout is examined in isolation from the institutional environment. Instruments such as the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory help to identify the intensity of exhaustion, but they do not explain how legal norms, employer obligations, workload standards, or access to supervision influence the emergence and persistence of burnout. For this reason, psychological measurement should be complemented by organizational and legal analysis.

In their work, Brown and Clarke proposed using thematic analysis as a qualitative method for investigating the underlying causes of emotional burnout, including the influence of organizational culture, role conflict, and personality factors (Braun

& Clarke, 2006). These provisions were expanded in the studies of Ahola and co-authors, who established a correlation between chronic occupational stress and the development of depressive disorders in social workers (Ahola et al., 2005).

These studies shift the discussion from the external description of burnout symptoms to the deeper mechanisms through which occupational stress becomes psychologically damaging. Their contribution is methodological as well as conceptual: they show that burnout cannot be reduced to fatigue or temporary dissatisfaction with work. It develops through a cumulative process in which emotional overload, unclear professional boundaries, and repeated exposure to difficult client situations gradually weaken professional stability. However, this line of research still pays limited attention to the legal consequences of such risks for employers and state institutions.

Kim and Stoner examined the impact of role stress, lack of autonomy, and insufficient social support on social worker burnout, emphasizing the importance of institutional support as a preventive factor (Kim & Stoner, 2008). Similar conclusions are contained in the work of Mek, Feyesh and Polya, who analyzed the level of burnout among social workers and identified a link between emotional fatigue and a decrease in the quality of services provided (Mák et al., 2020).

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that burnout is not merely an individual psychological response. It is strongly shaped by the organization of work. Role ambiguity, excessive caseloads, lack of decision-making autonomy, emotional over-involvement, and insufficient support from management create conditions in which professional exhaustion becomes predictable rather than accidental. This conclusion is especially relevant for the present study, since it supports the argument that burnout prevention should be institutionalized and not left to the personal coping capacity of individual social workers.

Markova and Oshvat focus on the secondary traumatization of social workers resulting from constant contact with difficult life situations of clients (Marc & Oshvat, 2013). Raizhen and Bakshite emphasize that a low level of self-efficacy combined with a lack of social support increases the risk of professional exhaustion (Raizienė & Bakšytė, 2010).

This group of studies is particularly significant for social work, where professional activity is inseparable from contact with human suffering, family

dysfunction, social exclusion, and crisis situations. The concept of secondary traumatization broadens the understanding of burnout by showing that emotional exhaustion may arise not only from workload, but also from the moral and psychological burden of responsibility for vulnerable clients. In this respect, social workers occupy a specific risk position: they are expected to preserve empathy and professional judgment while repeatedly encountering situations that may themselves be traumatic.

In Kazakhstani context, the study by Dulatkyzy is important because it directly addresses emotional burnout among social workers and indicates the seriousness of occupational risks in the public assistance system (Dulatkyzy, 2023). Related evidence is provided by Bolatov, Seisembekov, Smailova, and Hosseini, who identify high levels of emotional exhaustion among future medical professionals, a group that also belongs to the broader field of helping professions (Bolatov et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the available national literature remains fragmented. It documents the presence of burnout but rarely connects psychological findings with legal regulation, employer responsibility, or institutional prevention. Moreover, some findings from adjacent professional groups can only be used cautiously, since social work has its own specific risk profile associated with family crises, poverty, neglect, violence, disability, and long-term client support. This limitation reinforces the need for an interdisciplinary framework adapted specifically to social workers in Kazakhstan.

Of comparative legal interest is the work of Selamu and co-authors devoted to the implementation of preventive programs in Ethiopia, where, even with limited funding, significant results have been achieved in reducing burnout through the integration of psychosocial care into primary health care (Selamu et al., 2019).

Additional attention in the literature is paid to the development of preventive strategies: Hart and Cooper proposed an integrated model of occupational stress management, including both individual stress management techniques and working conditions reform (Hart & Cooper, 2001), and Korotikova described specific technologies for socio-psychological support for social workers (Kortikova, 2016).

The preventive strand of the literature is especially important for the present article because it moves the discussion from diagnosis to intervention. However, many preventive models remain focused on psychological support and organizational culture without

specifying how these measures should be embedded in binding legal norms or internal institutional standards. As a result, the practical effectiveness of burnout prevention often depends on the goodwill of a particular employer rather than on stable regulatory guarantees. This is one of the key weaknesses that the present study seeks to address.

Thus, the reviewed literature reveals not only the complexity and prevalence of emotional burnout, but also a clear conceptual gap. Psychological studies provide well-developed tools for identifying burnout symptoms and explaining their relationship with occupational stress. Organizational studies show that burnout is intensified by excessive workload, insufficient autonomy, lack of supervision, and weak professional support. Research on secondary traumatization explains why social workers are especially vulnerable when they work with families and individuals exposed to multiple social risks. Yet the legal dimension remains underdeveloped. Existing studies rarely show how psychological risks should be translated into labor rights, employer duties, institutional monitoring, and preventive standards. This gap defines the scientific position of the present article and justifies the development of the Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM) as an interdisciplinary response to the problem.

Materials and methods

The study uses a secondary empirical and comparative legal research design. It does not include a primary survey or experimental data collection.

Its empirical basis consists of a structured corpus of secondary sources and case-based material selected for the purpose of examining whether emotional burnout among social workers can be interpreted as a legally relevant occupational risk. This design is appropriate because the article addresses an interdisciplinary problem located between occupational psychology, social work practice, and legal regulation.

The research corpus included four groups of materials. The first group consisted of published empirical studies on burnout, occupational stress, emotional exhaustion, secondary traumatization, and related indicators among social workers and other helping professionals. The second group included national legal and regulatory documents of Kazakhstan concerning labor protection, social services, and employer obligations. The third group consisted of comparative materials describing institutional mechanisms of burnout prevention in foreign jurisdictions. The fourth group was a case-based fragment from social work practice involving a family exposed to multiple social risks.

The analytical sample was therefore not a sample of individual respondents, but a structured sample of sources and institutional materials. This distinction is important. The article does not claim to measure the prevalence of burnout through original fieldwork. Instead, it uses secondary empirical indicators to identify risk patterns and then examines whether these risks are recognized and managed within the legal and organizational framework of social work in Kazakhstan (Table 1).

Table 1
Research design and empirical basis of the study

Research element	Specification in the study
Type of study	Secondary empirical, comparative legal, and case-based analytical study
Unit of analysis	Burnout-related risks among social workers and institutional mechanisms of their prevention
Analytical sample	Published empirical studies, legal acts, comparative institutional materials, and one case-based fragment from social work practice
Primary data collection	Not conducted
Empirical basis	Secondary empirical indicators and case-based professional risk interpretation
Main methods	Content analysis, legal and regulatory analysis, comparative legal analysis, secondary empirical analysis, case-based interpretation, model-building
Data analysis techniques	Thematic grouping, indicator-based comparison, legal gap analysis, cross-jurisdictional comparison, triangulation, analytical verification of propositions
Main output	Operationalized Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM)

The secondary sources were selected according to four criteria. First, the source had to address burnout, emotional exhaustion, occupational stress, secondary traumatization, or related risks in social work or in a closely related helping profession. Second, the source had to contain indicators that could be linked to at least one burnout dimension used in the study. Third, the source had to be relevant to legal or organizational interpretation, meaning that its findings could be connected with workload, supervision, psychological support, institutional responsibility, or employer obligations. Fourth, preference was given to peer-reviewed studies, official legal documents, and institutional materials with identifiable authorship or organizational origin.

The theoretical framework of the study combines four interrelated approaches. The first is the burnout approach, according to which professional burnout is expressed through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional effectiveness. This approach provides the psychological basis for identifying burnout manifestations among social workers.

The second approach concerns occupational stress and job demands. From this perspective, burnout develops when professional demands exceed the worker's available organizational, emotional, and institutional resources. In social work, such demands include high caseloads, continuous contact with vulnerable clients, crisis decision-making, limited autonomy, and insufficient support.

The third approach is based on the concept of secondary traumatization. It explains why social

workers are exposed to specific psycho-emotional risks when they repeatedly interact with families and individuals affected by violence, poverty, neglect, disability, or social exclusion. This perspective is especially important for interpreting the case-based material used in the article.

The fourth approach is legal-institutional. It treats psycho-emotional safety not only as a matter of individual coping, but also as an element of occupational protection. This approach allows burnout to be examined through labor rights, employer obligations, internal institutional standards, supervision, workload regulation, and access to psychological support.

Together, these approaches form the theoretical basis of the study. They justify the central hypothesis that emotional burnout among social workers should be considered a legally relevant occupational risk when psychological indicators, professional stressors, and regulatory gaps coincide.

The reliability of secondary data was assessed critically rather than assumed. The analysis considered the professional group covered by the source, the context of data collection, the type of burnout indicators used, the transferability of findings to social work, and the limitations of comparability between studies. Where the original publications did not provide sufficient information on sample size, measurement tools, or research procedure, their findings were used only as contextual evidence. This prevented unsupported statistical generalization and allowed the study to rely on triangulation rather than on a single secondary source (Table 2).

Table 2
Criteria for assessing the reliability and relevance of secondary data

Assessment criterion	Application in the study	Analytical decision
Source type	Peer-reviewed articles, official legal documents, institutional materials, and published empirical studies were prioritized	Sources with unclear origin were not used as key evidence
Professional relevance	Priority was given to social workers; evidence from related helping professions was used cautiously	Findings from adjacent professions were treated as contextual, not directly generalizable
Indicator relevance	Sources were assessed for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional effectiveness, secondary traumatization, and occupational stress	Only indicators relevant to the operational definition of burnout were included
Methodological transparency	Availability of information on sample, method, measurement tool, or research context was considered	Sources with limited methodological detail were used as supporting evidence only
Legal-organizational relevance	Findings were examined for their connection with workload, supervision, employer responsibility, and institutional support	Sources were included if they helped connect psychological risk with legal or organizational mechanisms
Comparability	Cross-country and cross-professional differences were considered	Data were interpreted as risk trends, not as directly comparable statistical measurements

The study was conducted in five consecutive stages.

At the first stage, a content analysis of academic literature was carried out. The purpose was to identify the main psychological and organizational indicators of burnout relevant to social work. The literature was grouped according to five analytical categories: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional effectiveness, secondary traumatization, and occupational stress.

At the second stage, a secondary empirical analysis was conducted. Published indicators of burnout and occupational stress were systematized and interpreted as evidence of general risk tendencies. These indicators were not treated as results of an original survey conducted by the authors.

At the third stage, a legal and regulatory analysis was performed. The Labor Code of Kazakhstan,

legislation on special social services, and related legal and policy documents were examined in order to determine whether they contain norms on psycho-emotional safety, supervision, counseling, workload regulation, monitoring of burnout symptoms, and employer responsibility.

At the fourth stage, a comparative legal analysis was conducted. Foreign practices were examined to identify institutional mechanisms of burnout prevention, including supervision, employee assistance programs, psychological counseling, workload regulation, and early detection procedures.

At the fifth stage, the findings were integrated through analytical verification of the research propositions. The results of this verification were used to develop and operationalize the Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM) (Table 3).

Table 3

Procedure and data analysis techniques

Stage	Procedure	Data / material used	Analysis technique	Result
1. Literature content analysis	Identification of burnout indicators and organizational risk factors	Academic literature on burnout and social work	Thematic grouping	Psychological and organizational indicators were defined
2. Secondary empirical analysis	Systematization of published burnout-related data	Published empirical studies and statistical materials	Indicator-based comparison	Burnout manifestations were interpreted as risk patterns
3. Legal and regulatory analysis	Examination of national labor and social legislation	Legal acts and institutional documents of Kazakhstan	Legal gap analysis	Deficiencies in psycho-emotional protection were identified
4. Comparative legal analysis	Examination of foreign prevention practices	Comparative legal and institutional materials	Cross-jurisdictional comparison	Transferable prevention mechanisms were identified
5. Model-building and verification	Integration of empirical, legal, comparative, and case-based findings	Results of stages 1–4	Triangulation and analytical verification	LERM was developed and operationalized

The study used analytical verification rather than statistical hypothesis testing. This is consistent with the research design, since the article relies on secondary empirical sources, legal analysis, comparative interpretation, and case-based material. The hypothesis was considered supported if the evidence consistently confirmed the four propositions across psychological indicators, legal gaps, case-based stressors, and comparative institutional practices.

The secondary empirical procedure was carried out in four stages. First, the available data

were grouped according to the main manifestations of burnout. Second, these manifestations were compared with the legal and organizational safeguards available to social workers in Kazakhstan. Third, the case-based material was analyzed to identify the practical sources of psycho-emotional pressure in social work. Fourth, the empirical, legal, comparative, and case-based findings were synthesized and used to develop the Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM) (Table 4).

Table 4*Procedure of secondary empirical analysis*

Stage	Procedure	Result
1. Identification of burnout indicators	Published data were grouped according to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional effectiveness, occupational stress, and secondary traumatization	Main burnout-related indicators were systematized
2. Legal comparison	Burnout indicators were compared with provisions of labor and social legislation in Kazakhstan	Gaps in psycho-emotional protection and employer responsibility were identified
3. Case-based interpretation	The case of a family exposed to multiple social risks was analyzed from the perspective of the social worker's professional burden	Practical stressors in social work were defined
4. Synthesis	Empirical, legal, comparative, and case-based findings were integrated	The LERM model and its implementation logic were developed

The indicators used in the study were not treated as the results of a single original survey. They were interpreted as secondary empirical evidence reflecting general risk tendencies. This approach allowed the study to avoid unsupported statistical generalization while strengthening the applied and analytical basis of the article.

5 Synthesis and Systematization. The final stage of the methodology involved the integration of legal, empirical, and theoretical findings to develop a set of informed and evidence-based recommendations. This process aimed to formulate practical proposals for enhancing the legal framework and organizational practices for the prevention of emotional burnout among social workers in Kazakhstan.

By employing a multidisciplinary methodological approach, the study ensures both analytical rigor and applied relevance in addressing the legal and organizational challenges associated with emotional burnout in the social work profession.

Results and discussion

The results of the study are based on the systematization of secondary empirical evidence, legal analysis, comparative interpretation, and case-based material. The purpose of this section is not to present the results of a primary survey, but to show how available data on burnout can be connected with the institutional and legal conditions of social work in Kazakhstan.

The systematized secondary evidence shows that emotional burnout among social workers is expressed through three main manifestations: emo-

tional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional effectiveness. These indicators are significant because they describe not only the psychological state of the worker, but also the stability, continuity, and ethical quality of professional performance in the social service system.

Based on the secondary analysis of published empirical materials (Dulatkyzy, 2023; Bolatov et al., 2022; Kamnev et al., 2023), the following burnout-related indicators were systematized for the purposes of this study. These data were not collected through an original survey conducted by the authors. They are used to contextualize the scale of psycho-emotional risks and to examine whether the existing legal and organizational framework in Kazakhstan provides adequate mechanisms for prevention and support (Table 5).

Based on the content analysis of literary sources, the main causes contributing to the development of emotional burnout among social workers have been identified. Key factors include a high workload with insufficient staffing of social services, low wages that do not correspond to the level of professional responsibility and emotional stress, lack of systematic psychological support from employers, uncertainty of professional roles and vagueness of functional responsibilities, as well as constant work with severe cases (violence, poverty, disability), contributing to the development of secondary traumatization (Vinikov et al., 2021). The combination of these factors increases the manifestations of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, significantly increasing the risk of professional burnout among social workers (Hernandez E. 2021).

Table 5
Secondary indicators of emotional burnout among social workers

Burnout manifestation	Reported indicator	Empirical interpretation
Emotional exhaustion	62%	Indicates a high level of accumulated fatigue, chronic occupational stress, and reduced emotional resources
Depersonalization	45%	Shows the risk of psychological distancing from service recipients and weakening of empathic professional interaction
Reduced professional effectiveness	48%	Reflects a decline in perceived professional capacity, motivation, and work satisfaction

Case-based analytical fragment: a family exposed to multiple social risks

To avoid overloading the article with descriptive case material, the case is used here as a condensed analytical fragment. It concerns a family in the Almaty Region consisting of a mother and four children, including an infant. The household faces several overlapping risks: unstable housing, lack of regular income, insufficient sanitary conditions, irregular school attendance, weak medical supervision, limited family support, and the need for continuous intervention by social and child protection services.

The case is not included as a detailed social work report. Its purpose is analytical. It shows how a social worker becomes involved in a situation where legal responsibility, emotional pressure, ethical decision-making, and interagency coordination are concentrated within one professional task. The specialist must assess risks to children, maintain communication with the parent, coordinate education and healthcare services, document interventions, and respond to signs of neglect or family dysfunction. Such work requires professional empathy, but at the same time exposes the specialist to repeated stress, moral tension, and secondary traumatization (Table 6).

Table 6
Case-based empirical interpretation of burnout risks

Practical condition in the case	Burden on the social worker	Burnout-related risk
Multiple family risks	The worker must assess poverty, child neglect, schooling problems, medical risks, and housing instability at the same time	Emotional exhaustion and role overload
Responsibility for child safety	The worker must evaluate whether children are at risk and whether protective measures are needed	Moral pressure and fear of professional error
Need for interagency coordination	The worker must interact with education, healthcare, social protection, and child protection services	Administrative overload and professional frustration
Repeated exposure to crisis conditions	The worker regularly encounters neglect, poverty, and family dysfunction	Secondary traumatization
Limited institutional support	The worker often depends on fragmented services and individual initiative	Reduced professional effectiveness

The case demonstrates that burnout is formed through the accumulation of professional stressors. The social worker is expected to maintain empathy, make legally significant decisions, coordinate several institutions, and remain emotionally stable in situations involving children, poverty, neglect, and family crisis. Without supervision, psychological support, clear protocols, and workload regulation,

these demands create a sustained risk of professional exhaustion.

The case also shows that burnout is not caused only by individual vulnerability. It arises when emotionally intensive work is combined with legal uncertainty, weak institutional support, high responsibility, and limited resources. This finding supports the central argument of the study: psycho-emotional

protection should be incorporated into labor regulation, internal institutional standards, supervision practices, and burnout prevention mechanisms.

Analyzing the results obtained, the findings suggest that the situation with emotional burnout of social workers in Kazakhstan is comparable to global data (Kristensen et al., 2005; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In Kazakhstan, the risk of burnout is intensified by three mutually reinforcing factors: the growing social burden on social protection institutions, the limited staffing capacity of social services, and the weak development of psychological support mechanisms at the organizational level. These factors are not separate causes but elements of one institutional problem. When emotionally demanding work is combined with insufficient supervision, unclear workload standards, and limited access to psychological assistance, burnout becomes a predictable occupational risk rather than an individual reaction to stress.

The high level of emotional burnout among social workers negatively affects not only their profes-

sional activities, but also the realization of the social rights of citizens, primarily representatives of vulnerable groups (Maslach et al., 1986). It should be emphasized that in conditions of increasing social instability, the emotional stability of social workers is of strategic importance for maintaining the social stability of society as a whole.

Thus, the revealed prevalence of emotional burnout indicates the need for urgent measures to review approaches to the protection of the psycho-emotional health of social workers (Kryuchkova, 2021). In particular, it requires not only medical or psychological support from specialists, but also the introduction of preventive legal mechanisms at the level of labor and social legislation, as well as the development of organizational practices for the prevention of professional burnout.

The analysis of the current legislation of Kazakhstan has shown that the issues of prevention of emotional burnout of social workers today remain insufficiently regulated in both labor and social law. The key legal gaps are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

Legal gaps in the regulation of psycho-emotional protection of social workers in Kazakhstan

№	Regulatory act	The existence of norms on the prevention of emotional burnout	The main identified shortcomings
1	The Labor Code of the Kazakhstan	There are no special rules on the prevention of emotional burnout; occupational safety is interpreted primarily as ensuring the physical safety of employees.	- Lack of provisions on the psychological well-being of employees.
2	The Law of the Kazakhstan «On special social assistance»	Regulates the provision of social assistance to the population, but does not provide for mechanisms to protect the psycho-emotional state of social workers themselves.	- There is no consolidation of the right to receive psychological help.
3	General legal acts on social protection	The basic principles of social protection are formulated, but the issues of the emotional state of employees are indirectly addressed and not detailed.	- There are no requirements for employers to organize preventive measures.
4	Government programs and strategies for the development of the social sphere	The strategic documents mention the need to improve the working conditions of social workers, but without specifying measures regarding psycho-emotional well-being.	- Focused exclusively on social assistance clients.

The legal analysis reveals several recurring gaps. First, social workers do not have an explicitly guaranteed right to employer-funded psychological support. Second, occupational safety is still interpreted mainly through physical working conditions, while psycho-emotional risks remain outside the core logic of labor protection. Third, employers are not legally required to organize supervision, stress prevention, post-crisis debriefing, or regular monitoring of burnout symptoms. Fourth, the legislation

does not contain sectoral standards for assessing case complexity and emotional workload in social services.

These gaps show that emotional burnout is not yet treated as a legally relevant occupational risk. As a result, responsibility for coping with professional exhaustion is shifted to the individual worker, while institutional prevention remains optional and fragmented. This finding provides the legal basis for the proposed LERM model (Parshina, 2014).

The proposed legal changes should be formulated not as abstract guarantees, but as enforceable institutional obligations. First, labor protection provisions should be expanded to include psycho-emotional safety, especially for professions involving sustained contact with crisis situations, violence, neglect, disability, poverty, and family dysfunction. Second, employers in the social service sector should be required to provide access to supervision, psychological counseling, and post-crisis debriefing. Third, social service institutions should introduce internal protocols for early detection of burnout risks, including anonymous staff surveys and referral procedures. Fourth, workload regulation should

be linked to the complexity of cases rather than only to the formal number of service recipients. These measures would allow the prevention of burnout to become part of ordinary institutional management rather than an optional welfare initiative.

The legal analysis showed that the empirical risks identified above are not sufficiently reflected in the current regulatory framework. The legislation recognizes general labor protection, but it does not clearly define psycho-emotional safety as part of occupational safety. It also does not establish a mandatory system of supervision, psychological counseling, post-crisis debriefing, or regular monitoring of burnout symptoms for social workers (Table 8).

Table 8
Empirical risks and corresponding regulatory gaps

Empirical risk	Current regulatory gap	Required institutional response
Emotional exhaustion	No mandatory monitoring of psycho-emotional condition	Periodic anonymous assessment and early detection procedures
Depersonalization	No institutional requirement for reflective supervision	Regular individual and group supervision
Secondary traumatization	No mandatory post-crisis psychological support	Debriefing after difficult cases and confidential counseling
Role overload	No workload regulation based on case complexity	Caseload standards that consider the severity and emotional intensity of social risks
Reduced professional effectiveness	Weak connection between staff well-being and service quality	Professional development, mentoring, and emotional resilience programs

The table shows a structural mismatch between the nature of social work and the existing system of professional protection. Social workers deal with cases that involve intense emotional contact, legal responsibility, ethical tension, and interagency coordination. However, the current institutional framework does not provide sufficient preventive mechanisms for managing these risks. This mismatch became the empirical basis for developing the Legal and Emotional Resilience Model.

Comparative analysis with foreign practice

Unlike Kazakhstan, a number of foreign countries have developed systematic approaches to protecting the psycho-emotional health of social workers. Thus, in Finland, the right of social workers to free psychological support is enshrined at the legislative level, which contributes to the early detection and prevention of professional burnout. In Canada, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is being implemented, aimed at diagnosing stress conditions, providing counseling and reducing emotional over-

load among social workers (Rienks S. L. 2020). In Ethiopia, the integration of psychosocial support into the primary social care system has significantly reduced the level of professional burnout among social workers (Selamu et al., 2019: 59). The examples confirm that the introduction of comprehensive legal and organizational measures at the state level has a significant positive impact on the prevention of emotional burnout, increasing the sustainability and effectiveness of social services (Table 9).

The comparative analysis shows that effective burnout prevention depends less on a single support measure and more on the institutionalization of several interconnected mechanisms. In countries with developed social protection systems, psycho-emotional safety is incorporated into labor protection, supervision, counseling, workload regulation, and employee assistance programs. These measures are not treated as informal support; they are embedded in organizational standards and employer responsibility.

Table 9
Comparative analysis of burnout prevention practices

A country	Regulatory and organizational measures	Level of institutionalization and coverage	Effectiveness (according to research)	Source of information
Finland	The right to psychological support and mandatory state-supported programs has been secured.	High	Reducing burnout by 30-35%	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland (2022)
Canada	EAP programs, support at all levels, anonymous consultations, mandatory implementation in state-owned enterprises.	High	Up to 40% stress reduction	Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, EAP Canada (2021)
Ethiopia	Integration of psychosocial care into the primary medical and social network.	Medium	Growing trust in social services	Selamu et al., Human Resources for Health, 2019
Germany	Legislative acts on mandatory supervision and prevention of professional burnout.	High	Staff turnover drop by 2 times	Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2020
Sweden	Developed trade union initiatives, government-funded stress management courses.	High	Stable level of job satisfaction	Swedish Trade Union Confederation, 2021
Netherlands	Mandatory work breaks, psychologists in municipal social services.	High	Reducing the number of burnout complaints	Government of the Netherlands, Ministry of Health, 2022
USA	The National Association of Social Workers has developed standards that have been implemented in government organizations.	High	Reduction of temporary disability	National Association of Social Workers (NASA), USA, 2021
France	Emotional well-being programs are part of the mandatory terms of employment contracts.	High	Increase productivity and satisfaction	Ministère des Solidarités et de la Santé, France, 2021
Norway	Each municipality has burnout prevention services funded from the budget.	High	Reducing employee anxiety	Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, 2022
Japan	Regular stress management trainings, psychological support in the workplace.	Medium	Positive dynamics on internal issues	Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, 2020
Australia	Workplace wellness programs that include individual support from specialists.	High	Increased motivation among social workers	Australian Government Department of Health, 2021
Great Britain	The existence of legislation on the protection of mental health of employees.	High	Improving the psycho-emotional background in the workplace	Health and Safety Executive (HSE), UK, 2021
Ireland	Government initiatives to finance mental health in the social sector.	Medium	Reducing fatigue	Ireland Department of Health and Children, 2020
New Zealand	Mandatory certification of organizations providing personnel support services.	Medium	Improving the efficiency of social services	New Zealand Ministry of Social Development, 2021
Kazakhstan	There are no fixed legal norms, and there is no systematic state policy.	Low	Persistently high burnout rate (up to 62%)	Compiled by the authors based on the analysis of Kazakhstani legislation

For Kazakhstan, the comparative material is important because it identifies transferable elements rather than models for mechanical borrowing. Three elements are particularly relevant: legal recognition of psycho-emotional risk, regular institutional mon-

itoring of burnout symptoms, and mandatory access to supervision or psychological support for specialists working with high-risk cases. These elements are used below as the basis for the LERM model (Table 10).

Table 10
Analytical verification of the research hypothesis

Proposition	Evidence used	Verification result	Conclusion
Proposition 1: Burnout can be operationalized through psychological indicators	Secondary empirical evidence and literature on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional effectiveness, secondary traumatization, and occupational stress	Supported	Burnout is treated as a structured professional risk rather than as a general emotional state
Proposition 2: Kazakhstani legislation insufficiently recognizes psycho-emotional risks	Legal analysis of labor protection and social service regulation	Supported	Psycho-emotional safety is not sufficiently embedded in employer obligations and occupational protection
Proposition 3: High-risk social work cases intensify burnout-related risks	Case-based fragment involving multiple family risks, child safety, interagency coordination, and limited institutional support	Supported	Burnout-related risks arise from accumulated emotional, ethical, legal, and organizational burdens
Proposition 4: Effective prevention requires institutionalized support mechanisms	Comparative analysis of foreign practices	Supported	Supervision, counseling, workload regulation, monitoring, and employer responsibility are necessary for prevention
General hypothesis	Integrated results of secondary empirical, legal, case-based, and comparative analysis	Supported analytically	Emotional burnout among social workers can be interpreted as a legally relevant occupational risk requiring institutional regulation

The analytical verification supports the hypothesis that emotional burnout among social workers in Kazakhstan can be interpreted as a legally relevant occupational risk. The verification was based on the convergence of four types of evidence: secondary empirical indicators, legal gap analysis, case-based interpretation, and comparative legal analysis.

Proposition 1 was supported by the systematized secondary empirical evidence. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional effectiveness, secondary traumatization, and chronic occupational stress appear as recurring indicators in the reviewed sources. This confirms that burnout can be operationalized through identifiable manifestations rather than discussed only as a general state of fatigue.

Proposition 2 was supported by the legal analysis. The current legal framework does not contain a sufficiently developed mechanism for recognizing psycho-emotional safety as part of occupational pro-

tection. In particular, the legislation does not clearly establish mandatory supervision, employer-funded psychological counseling, post-crisis debriefing, workload regulation based on case complexity, or regular monitoring of burnout symptoms.

Proposition 3 was supported by the case-based interpretation. The analyzed case demonstrates that social workers may face a concentration of emotional, ethical, legal, and organizational burdens within one professional situation. These burdens include responsibility for child safety, interaction with several institutions, documentation of interventions, work with family dysfunction, and limited support resources. This confirms that burnout-related risks arise from the structure of social work practice, not only from personal vulnerability.

Proposition 4 was supported by the comparative analysis. Foreign practices show that burnout prevention becomes effective when support measures are institutionalized through supervision, confiden-

tial counseling, workload regulation, employee assistance programs, and early detection procedures. These elements are therefore relevant for Kazakhstan as adaptable institutional mechanisms.

The general hypothesis is supported analytically. The evidence shows that emotional burnout among social workers is not only a psychological difficulty, but a professional risk that requires legal recognition, institutional procedures, employer responsibility, and regular monitoring. This conclusion provides the basis for the operationalized LERM model.

The operational validity of the LERM model is based on the correspondence between identified burnout risks and institutional response mechanisms. Emotional exhaustion is linked to workload regulation, supervision, and psychological recovery. Depersonalization is linked to reflective supervision, ethical support, and professional identity reinforcement. Secondary traumatization is linked to post-crisis debriefing and confidential counseling. Reduced professional effectiveness is linked to mentoring, professional development, and organizational support. Legal vulnerability is linked to the absence of formal norms on psycho-emotional safety and therefore requires amendments to internal regulations and labor protection standards.

This correspondence shows that the model is not limited to conceptual classification. Each risk category is connected with a measurable indicator, an assessment method, and an institutional action. Therefore, LERM can be used as an applied framework for diagnosing organizational readiness, designing burnout prevention programs, and evaluating whether social service institutions provide sufficient psycho-emotional protection for their staff.

On the basis of the legal analysis, comparative review, and case-oriented interpretation, the study proposes the Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM). The model is not a general recommendation to provide psychological support. It is an attempt to structure burnout prevention as a sequence of legal, organizational, and psychological actions that can be introduced into social service institutions. The model links each psychological risk with a corresponding institutional response: emotional exhaustion requires workload regulation and supervision; depersonalization requires reflective practice and ethical support; reduced professional efficacy requires mentoring and professional development; secondary traumatization requires access to psychological counseling and debriefing. In this way,

LERM transforms a broad psychological problem into an operational framework for institutional decision-making.

The preceding analysis leads to the development of the Legal and Emotional Resilience Model. The literature review identifies burnout as a psychological and organizational phenomenon. The secondary empirical analysis shows the prevalence and professional significance of burnout manifestations. The case-based fragment demonstrates how these risks appear in everyday social work practice. The legal analysis reveals the absence of sufficient regulatory mechanisms. The comparative analysis identifies institutional elements that may be adapted to Kazakhstan. On this basis, the LERM model is proposed as the main integrative result of the study.

For the model to function as a scientific and applied framework, its components must be translated into observable indicators, assessment procedures, and institutional actions. In this study, the LERM model is operationalized through four domains: legal resilience, emotional resilience, organizational support, and socio-psychological safety. Each domain is linked to measurable indicators, sources of assessment, responsible actors, and expected institutional responses. This operational structure allows the model to be used not only as a conceptual scheme, but also as a practical tool for assessing the readiness of social service institutions to prevent emotional burnout.

To operationalize the proposed Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM), its core components can be structured into four interrelated domains: legal resilience, emotional resilience, organizational support, and socio-psychological protection. Each domain comprises specific elements and implementation mechanisms that address the systemic, personal, and institutional factors contributing to professional burnout among social workers. The table below summarizes the key dimensions of the model and outlines practical strategies for its integration into the social protection system of Kazakhstan (Table 11).

To make the model applicable for institutional assessment, each LERM domain may be evaluated on a three-level scale: 0 points indicate the absence of a mechanism; 1 point indicates partial or informal implementation; 2 points indicate formalized and regularly applied practice. The score for each domain is calculated as the average value of its indicators. The overall LERM readiness score may then be determined as the mean score across the four domains (Table 12).

Table 11
Operational structure of the Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM)

LERM domain	Operational indicators	Assessment method	Data source	Risk interpretation	Institutional response
Legal resilience	Presence of internal rules on psycho-emotional safety; formal access to psychological support; availability of supervision protocols; workload regulation in institutional documents	Legal and institutional document analysis	Labor contracts, internal regulations, job descriptions, occupational safety rules, institutional protocols	High risk if psycho-emotional safety is absent from internal documents and employer obligations are not specified	Amend internal regulations; include psycho-emotional safety in occupational protection; define employer obligations
Emotional resilience	Emotional exhaustion; reduced motivation; difficulty recovering after crisis cases; signs of emotional distancing	Anonymous staff screening using validated burnout tools such as CBI or MBI, supplemented by reflective self-assessment	Staff surveys, psychological screening forms, supervision notes	High risk if emotional exhaustion and reduced professional effectiveness are repeatedly reported	Provide counseling, debriefing, stress-management training, and individual support
Organizational support	Caseload volume; number of high-risk cases; frequency of overtime; access to supervision; availability of peer support	Workload audit and administrative monitoring	Case records, HR reports, supervision logs, workload schedules	High risk if complex cases are concentrated on individual workers without redistribution or supervision	Introduce caseload standards; redistribute complex cases; organize regular individual and group supervision
Socio-psychological safety	Confidential counseling; peer support; post-crisis debriefing; protection against secondary traumatization; support for professional identity	Institutional audit and staff feedback	Counseling records, debriefing logs, anonymous feedback forms, training reports	High risk if workers have no confidential channel for psychological support after emotionally difficult cases	Establish confidential counseling, post-crisis debriefing, peer support groups, and trauma-informed training

Table 12
LERM readiness scale

LERM readiness level	Score range	Interpretation
Low readiness	0–0.75	Psycho-emotional safety is not institutionalized; prevention depends mainly on the individual worker’s coping capacity
Moderate readiness	0.76–1.50	Some support mechanisms exist, but they are fragmented, irregular, or not legally закреплены in institutional procedures
High readiness	1.51–2.00	Psycho-emotional safety is formally recognized, regularly monitored, and supported through supervision, counseling, workload regulation, and employer responsibility

This scoring procedure does not replace clinical diagnosis or primary psychological assessment. Its function is institutional. It helps determine whether a social service organization has the legal, organizational, and psychological conditions necessary for preventing emotional burnout.

Thus, the model connects the theoretical, legal, comparative, and case-based parts of the study into a single analytical framework. It also prevents the recommendations from remaining abstract: each component corresponds to a specific institutional action that can be introduced into social service organizations (Table 13).

Table 13*Operational procedure for implementing the Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM)*

Stage	Procedure	Assessment tool / method	Responsible actors	Output document	Frequency
1. Institutional audit	Review whether internal documents recognize psycho-emotional safety, supervision, counseling, and workload regulation	Legal and organizational document analysis	Management of social service institution; legal unit; HR department	Institutional audit report	Once a year
2. Burnout risk screening	Conduct anonymous assessment of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional effectiveness, and secondary traumatization	CBI or MBI-based screening; anonymous staff questionnaire	HR department; psychologist; external specialist where available	Burnout risk profile	Twice a year
3. Workload and case complexity assessment	Identify the number of high-risk cases, overtime frequency, and unequal distribution of emotionally complex cases	Case-load audit; case complexity checklist; HR workload records	Social service managers; supervisors; local social protection departments	Workload and case-complexity report	Quarterly
4. Supervision and debriefing	Organize individual and group supervision, especially after crisis cases involving children, violence, neglect, or family dysfunction	Supervision log; debriefing protocol; reflective case discussion	Supervisors; psychologists; team leaders	Supervision and debriefing records	Monthly or after crisis cases
5. Psychological support pathway	Provide confidential counseling and referral options for workers showing signs of burnout risk	Confidential counseling request form; referral protocol	Institutional psychologist; external mental health provider; HR department	Psychological support pathway record	Ongoing
6. Training and professional recovery	Conduct training on emotional self-regulation, ethical boundaries, trauma-informed practice, and interagency communication	Training attendance records; pre/post self-assessment	Training providers; universities; professional associations	Training completion report	At least twice a year
7. Evaluation of LERM effectiveness	Compare LERM readiness scores, staff feedback, turnover, absenteeism, supervision coverage, and burnout-related complaints	LERM readiness scoring; HR indicators; anonymous staff feedback	Institution management; local executive bodies; Ministry of Labour and Social Protection	Annual LERM evaluation report	Once a year

The proposed procedure specifies how the LERM model can be implemented and evaluated. Each stage has a defined action, assessment method, responsible actor, output document, and frequency of application. This structure prevents the model from remaining declarative. It allows social service institutions to assess their current level of readiness, identify weak points in psycho-emotional protection, and monitor whether preventive measures are actually introduced into daily organizational practice.

The operational value of LERM lies in its ability to connect psychological indicators of burnout with concrete institutional decisions. For example, repeated emotional exhaustion should lead not only to individual counseling, but also to workload review and supervision. Depersonalization should

trigger reflective supervision and ethical case discussion. Secondary traumatization should require debriefing after crisis cases. Reduced professional effectiveness should be addressed through mentoring, professional development, and redistribution of complex cases. In this form, the model becomes an applied mechanism for institutional prevention rather than a general recommendation.

Conclusion

The study tested the analytical hypothesis that emotional burnout among social workers in Kazakhstan constitutes a legally relevant occupational risk. The verification of four research propositions supports this hypothesis. Secondary empirical evi-

dence confirms that burnout can be operationalized through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced professional effectiveness, secondary traumatization, and chronic occupational stress. Legal analysis shows that these risks are insufficiently reflected in the current framework of occupational safety and social regulation. Case-based interpretation demonstrates how burnout-related pressures arise in complex social work practice. Comparative analysis confirms that prevention becomes effective only when psychological support is connected with supervision, workload regulation, monitoring procedures, and employer responsibility.

These findings allow the article to move beyond a descriptive examination of the problem. The study does not merely state that social workers experience emotional burnout. It identifies the conditions under which burnout becomes a legally and institutionally significant risk, specifies the criteria used to analyze this risk, and proposes a model for its prevention. In this sense, the scientific task of the article is solved through the transition from description to analytical verification and applied model-building.

At the same time, the study has a methodological limitation. It does not contain original survey data collected from social workers in Kazakhstan. The conclusions are based on secondary empirical sources, legal analysis, comparative interpretation, and a practice-oriented case. This limitation does not eliminate the scientific value of the article, but it defines its scope: the study should be understood as an interdisciplinary conceptual and applied analysis that prepares the ground for future primary empirical research on burnout among social workers.

Future studies should test the proposed Legal and Emotional Resilience Model (LERM) through primary empirical research involving social workers from different regions of Kazakhstan. Such research should include a clearly defined sample, validated burnout measurement tools, information on workload and institutional support, and comparison between organizations with and without psychological support programs. This would make it possible to assess not only the prevalence of burnout, but also the effectiveness of specific legal and organizational prevention mechanisms.

The study's conclusions are based not only on a review of academic sources, but also on a structured secondary empirical analysis and case-based interpretation. This approach made it possible to relate burnout indicators to concrete legal and organizational deficiencies in Kazakhstani system of social protection. The main contribution of the

article is therefore analytical: it demonstrates how psychological evidence on professional exhaustion can be translated into the language of labor rights, employer obligations, supervision standards, and institutional prevention.

The analysis of Kazakhstani legislation reveals not merely the absence of separate provisions on burnout, but a deeper regulatory gap. The law does not yet connect psycho-emotional risks with the employer's duty to ensure safe working conditions. As a result, emotional exhaustion remains outside formal occupational safety mechanisms, although it is directly related to the content of social work. This creates a situation in which the worker carries the main burden of adaptation, while the institution is not clearly obliged to provide supervision, psychological counseling, debriefing after crisis cases, or systematic monitoring of burnout symptoms.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that effective prevention depends on the degree of institutionalization of support measures. In countries where burnout prevention is linked to labor protection, supervision, employee assistance programs, workload regulation, and confidential counseling, psycho-emotional safety becomes part of professional infrastructure. This finding is important for Kazakhstan because it shows that isolated psychological recommendations are insufficient. Burnout prevention requires a stable mechanism that combines legal norms, organizational procedures, and professional support.

The analytical value of the study lies in the integration of secondary empirical evidence, legal analysis, comparative findings, and case-based interpretation. Descriptive material is therefore subordinated to the main research task: to show how emotional burnout can be recognized as an occupational risk and translated into legal, organizational, and psychological mechanisms of prevention.

The article was revised to avoid excessive descriptive repetition. The case material is treated not as an independent narrative report, but as an analytical fragment demonstrating how burnout risks arise in practice. The main contribution of the study is concentrated in the LERM model, which integrates the literature review, legal analysis, comparative findings, and case-based interpretation into one applied framework.

Taking into account the identified problems and international experience, state social policy in Kazakhstan should move from general recognition of the problem to a clearly structured prevention mechanism. For this purpose, it is necessary to:

- amend the Labor Code of Kazakhstan by recognizing psycho-emotional safety as an element of occupational safety for professions exposed to sustained emotional strain;

- introduce provisions into legislation on special social services that oblige social service institutions to organize supervision, confidential psychological counseling, and post-crisis debriefing for employees;

- establish internal institutional protocols for the early detection of burnout symptoms, including anonymous staff assessment, referral procedures, and annual monitoring reports;

- regulate workload not only by the number of clients, but also by the complexity of cases, the presence of violence, neglect, disability, poverty, and other high-risk circumstances;

- create pilot LERM-based burnout prevention programs in state social service institutions, with subsequent evaluation of their effectiveness through staff well-being indicators, turnover rates, absenteeism, and service quality measures;

- include burnout prevention, emotional self-regulation, trauma-informed practice, and ethical boundary management in the professional development system for social workers.

The implementation of these measures should be evaluated through defined indicators rather than general institutional intentions. These indicators include the presence of internal rules on psycho-emotional safety, the proportion of workers covered by anonymous burnout screening, the frequency of supervision and debriefing sessions, average caseload per social worker, number of high-risk cases per specialist, staff participation in training, use of confidential counseling, staff turnover, absenteeism, and burnout-related complaints. Such indicators make it possible to assess whether the proposed model produces institutional change and whether social workers receive real, not merely declarative, psycho-emotional protection.

The scientific contribution of the article is not limited to the conceptual formulation of the LERM model. The model is operationalized through measurable indicators, assessment methods, implementation procedures, and monitoring criteria. Its domains are linked to specific institutional indicators: legal norms and employer obligations, burnout screening results, workload and case-complexity assessment, supervision coverage, availability

of confidential counseling, debriefing after crisis cases, and staff well-being monitoring. This operational structure allows LERM to be used as a tool for institutional audit, pilot prevention programs, and future empirical testing in social service organizations.

The main analytical contribution of the article is the formulation of a transition from descriptive recognition of burnout to its institutional regulation. The proposed LERM model reflects this transition. It links four dimensions: legal resilience, emotional resilience, organizational support, and socio-psychological safety. Each dimension responds to a specific gap identified in the study. Legal resilience addresses the absence of explicit norms on psycho-emotional protection. Emotional resilience responds to the need for professional recovery and self-regulation. Organizational support concerns supervision, workload distribution, and staff development. Socio-psychological safety covers confidential counseling, peer support, and prevention of secondary traumatization. In this form, the model transforms general conclusions about burnout into an applied framework for social service institutions.

Consequently, with a comprehensive legal, organizational and humanitarian approach, it is possible to ensure a stable, effective and professionally successful social service capable of responding to the challenges of modern society. The psycho-emotional safety of social workers should therefore be treated as a condition for the sustainability of social policy in Kazakhstan. Protecting the worker in this context means protecting the quality of assistance provided to vulnerable groups. This conclusion gives the issue of burnout a broader institutional meaning: it is not only a matter of individual well-being, but also a prerequisite for the reliability, continuity, and ethical integrity of the social protection system.

Contributor Roles

Ospanbek Nazira – Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Visualization.

Kylyshbayeva Bibigul – Supervision, Validation, Resources, Writing – Review & Editing, Project Administration.

Zengin Oguzhan – Methodology, Formal Analysis, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, Visualization.

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Information about the authors:

Ospanbek Nazira (corresponding-author) – PhD student of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Farabi University (Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: nazira_0390@mail.ru).

Kylyshbayeva Bibigul – Doctor of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Farabi University (Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: kbibigul10@gmail.com).

Zengin Oguzhan – PhD, School of Social Work, University of Alabama, Alabama, USA; Department of Social Work, Karabuk University (Karabuk, Türkiye, e-mail: oguzhanzengin@karabuk.edu.tr).

Авторлар туралы мәлімет:

Оспанбек Назира (корреспонденттік автор) – әлеуметтану және әлеуметтік жұмыс кафедрасының докторанты, Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті (Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: nazira_0390@mail.ru).

Кылышбаева Бибикуль Наурызовна – әлеуметтану ғылымдарының докторы, әлеуметтану және әлеуметтік жұмыс кафедрасының доценті, Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті (Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: kbibigul10@gmail.com).

Зенгин Огузхан – PhD, Алабама университеті, Әлеуметтік жұмыс мектебі, Алабама, АҚШ; Карабюк университеті, Әлеуметтік жұмыс кафедрасы (Карабюк, Түркия, e-mail: oguzhanzengin@karabuk.edu.tr).

Сведения об авторах:

Оспанбек Назира (автор-корреспондент) – докторант кафедры социологии и социальной работы, Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби (Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: nazira_0390@mail.ru).

Кылышбаева Бибигуль Наурызовна – доктор социологических наук, доцент кафедры социологии и социальной работы, Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби (Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: kbibigul10@gmail.com).

Зенгин Огузхан – PhD, Школа социальной работы, Университет Алабамы, Алабама, США; кафедра социальной работы, Университет Карабюк (Карабюк, Турция, e-mail: oguzhangezgin@karabuk.edu.tr).

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