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CULTURAL ADAPTATION? MIGRATION FROM RUSSIA TO KAZAKHSTAN.

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**Abstract.**

This thesis analyzes the experiences of Russian migrants who came to Kazakhstan after the announcement of the mobilization process in Russia in 2022. The topic is relevant for modern Kazakhstan due to the novelty of the trend of people coming from Russia to Kazakhstan. The main suggestion of this study is that migrants from Russia may face limited acceptance from the local community which shapes their adaptation experiences in Kazakhstan. Using the qualitative research method in the form of semi-structured interviews and digital ethnography, I examine the challenges faced by Russian migrants and their strategies for adaptation. The findings indicate that migrants had a different experience in Kazakhstan; some of them could effectively adapt to professional and social aspects, and others struggled with social adaptation. Gender also played an important role in shaping Russian migrants' experiences in Kazakhstan. Males took more responsibility for documentation and accommodation and thus complained more about the difficult bureaucratic processes in the state. Females needed to adapt to the gender norms present in Kazakhstan. These findings point to the presence of certain stereotypes in Kazakhstan.

**Key words.**

Migration to Kazakhstan, Mobilization in Russia, Adaptation Strategies, Challenges of Migration.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

Global migration can be conditioned by economic, political, or ecological changes. Migration patterns between Russia and Kazakhstan, two neighboring countries, changed throughout history. However, the main pattern of migration in Central Asia was from smaller countries to larger ones, meaning that Russia was the main state accepting migrants. According to the Migration Data Portal (2024), there were 7.8 million migrants worldwide in 2020; 63% of them resided in the Russian Federation. In the past two years, after the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the number of people migrating from Russia to Kazakhstan significantly increased because of the internal and external politics of the Russian government. In particular, the daily influx of migrants reached 30,000 persons between September 21 and September 30, 2022 (Turlybek, 2022). This wave of migration can be explained by the Russian Federation President's announcement of military mobilization. This migration from Russia to Kazakhstan brought new challenges to both nations' citizens. The focus of this research is on the migration experience of Russian people in Kazakhstan who moved in the last two years. Due to the common Soviet past and resembling social and economic ties, the study of migration between these two countries will provide insight into the adaptation of people. Even though Russia and Kazakhstan have some similarities in their past, Russian migrants tried to navigate the cultural landscape of Kazakhstan. The adaptation strategies of Russian migrants in Kazakhstan are the primary interest of this work.

The trend of Russian citizens moving to Kazakhstan was new in both states since in the last decade people mainly migrated from Central Asian countries to Russia. The International Organization for Migration (2020) estimates that about 5 million Central Asian migrants dwell in the Russian Federation. Even though there are no specific statistics on Kazakhstani migrants in

Russia, it can be seen that the scale of people migrating from Central Asia to Russia was huge. In the last two years, the tendencies changed, and people started to migrate from Russia to Kazakhstan. Even though Russian-Kazakhstan ties are well explored, and there is several research regarding the past relations between the states, there is a gap in research on Russian migrants' experiences in the Kazakhstan society context because of the recency of the trend. The phenomenon of migration from Russia to Kazakhstan raises essential questions regarding the adaptation strategies, common struggles, and behavior patterns of migrants in the multinational, multicultural, and multilingual state. The primary objective of this study is to analyze the level of nationalism, inequality, accommodation, and language problems that Russian migrants may face in Kazakhstan. Also, I am interested in studying the Kazakhstani community from an outsider's perspective. The main three research questions that I am planning to address in this work are: What are the adaptation experiences of Russian migrants in Kazakhstan? What strategies do Russian migrants employ to facilitate their adaptation? What challenges do hinder their integration?

The study of migration from Russia to Kazakhstan contributes to the broader understanding of migration processes in the Eurasian region. Considering the novelty of migration from larger states to smaller ones, this research will contribute to the understanding of not only migration in the Eurasian region but also similar cases of people's movement. Even though Kazakhstan is one of the largest and most developed countries in Central Asia, it remains understudied. This research will contribute to the understanding of the migration process in the region and the struggles migrants may face in Kazakhstan. The perspective of Russian migrants on Kazakhstan society will help understand the community from an outsider's perspective. Overall, this research will expand the understanding of Kazakhstan and the Eurasian region.

Additionally, this research will have practical implications in terms of influence on the policy-making process in Kazakhstan. The study of common challenges among migrants may contribute to the changes in policies that prevent people from migrating or force them to move back. Data collection and its analysis may help policymakers understand people's struggles in Kazakhstan.

In this work, I will discuss the historical background of migration between Russia and Kazakhstan, meaning the migration patterns during the Soviet Union. In this part, the main reasons for migration from Russia to Kazakhstan will be discussed as well as the process of identity construction in Kazakhstan. Then, the theoretical framework for the data analysis will be explained. After that, the research design of this thesis will be explained in terms of the participants' descriptions and the data collection process. Lastly, I will focus on data analysis and finding common patterns in the interviewee's experiences. The data collected will be analyzed with N. Hutnik's theory.

## **Historical Overview**

Before studying migration to Kazakhstan, it is important to see the history of migration in the state as well as the identity construction of Kazakhstan citizens. The experience of migrants may depend on the national situation in Kazakhstan because of the ability of people to tolerate and accept other nationalities. Migration from Russia to Kazakhstan escalated during the USSR. Pedro Ramet, in the article "Migration and Nationality Policy in Soviet Central Asia," focused on the analysis of governmental control over the migration process during the Soviet period. Some of the reasons why Kazakhstan was one of the most attractive Soviet Republic countries for migrants during the Soviet period include the number of workplaces, housing availability,

and fluency of local people in the Russian language (Ramet, 1978). It can be seen that Kazakhstan was a desired destination for migration during the Soviet Union because of the opportunities that existed in this part of Eurasia at that time. According to the author, there were two main purposes of migration to Kazakhstan. Firstly, the migration from Russia to Kazakhstan was directed at the diffusion into the local community. The desired result was the Russification of the region and a decrease in the level of nationalism among Kazakh people (Ramet, 1978). Supposedly, the desire to Russify Kazakhs during the Soviet period still has an impact on the local community. The main reason for that is the important role of the Russian language in Kazakhstan. Also, the migration to Kazakhstan can be explained by the convenience of using the Russian language in the state. Secondly, the reason for migration from Russia to Kazakhstan during the Soviet period was a desire to modernize the region in terms of medicine, education, and construction (Ramet, 1978). The result of the promotion of migration from Russia to Kazakhstan was the gradual increase in the percentage of the ethnic Russian and Ukrainian population in Kazakhstan that the author showed in the form of statistics (Ramet, 1978). It can be seen from the article that the main reason for the migration from Russia to Kazakhstan was the modernization and colonization of the region. It can be seen that throughout history there were moments when people migrated from Russia to Kazakhstan. However, the reasons for migration from Russia to Kazakhstan during the Soviet period differ from the reasons for migration in the modern times.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the migration trend changed, and people started to move from Central Asia to Russia in search of better opportunities and living conditions. Finke et al (2013) analyzed the identity construction process and migration in Central Asia. The authors focused on the impact of people, goods, and ideas mobility on people's identities. The

scholars state that even though the trend of migration is from Central Asian countries to larger states such as Russia and China, migration to Central Asia was also quite high (Finke et al., 2013). The main reasons for that were World War II and the employment opportunities in cotton fields (Finke et al., 2013). However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the trend of migration from Russia to Central Asia changed because of the Central Asian states' economic decline. The economic decline of the Central Asian countries was defined as a push factor for migration by the authors (Finke et al., 2013). The pull factor was the need for Russia to have a cheap labor force (Finke et al., 2013). The most interesting part of the article for my research is regarding the formation of people's identities in periods of high mobility before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Regarding the Kazakhstan case, the authors stated that the lack of national conflicts happened due to the celebration of multiethnicity as well as the ability of the president to attract ethnic Kazakhs back to the state (Finke et al., 2013). However, Finke et al. (2013) stated that the local Kazakh people and returning Kazakhs differed in their national identities and did not always manage to avoid conflicts. Summing up, the article provided an overview of the migration history and background in Central Asia, concentrating on the changing patterns of migration between Kazakhstan and Russia. From the above article, it can be seen that the main motivation for migration from Central Asia to Kazakhstan was job opportunities.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The data collected during the summer research will be analyzed using Hutnik's theory. In the article "Ethnic Minority Identity: Twenty Years On" by Nimmi Hutnik and Martyn Barrett, the authors establish four main patterns of self-categorization for ethnic minorities. Self-categorization and cultural integration can take the form of assimilation, acculturation, marginality, or dissociation. Assimilation implies a high level of association with the majority

group and a low level of identification with the minority group (Hutnik & Barrett, 2003).

Considering the case of Russian migrants in Kazakhstan, it means that Russian migrants would associate themselves with the Kazakhstani community more than with their home community.

Acculturation is high identification with the majority and minority groups (Hutnik & Barrett, 2003). In other words, acculturation may be described as a dual identity for people. Marginality is the opposite of acculturation and leads to low identification with the minority and majority groups (Hutnik & Barrett, 2003). The last one is dissociation, which is high identification with the minority group and low identification with the majority group (Hutnik & Barrett, 2003).

Dissociation may lead to the creation of a diaspora because of the unity of minority groups.

Overall, N. Hutnik's theory will be used for the categorization of Russian migrants' behavioral patterns in Kazakhstan.

Gurieva et al (Year) analyzed the challenges and adaptation strategies of labor migrants in Russia. The authors focused on migrants from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. For the understanding of the adaptation of minority groups in the majority group, the authors used N. Hutnik's theory. According to this theory, in the adaptation process of the minority group, two factors have a significant impact: the first is the way people categorize themselves, and the second is adaptation techniques in cultural aspects such as beliefs, relations, and values (Gurieva et al., 2020). According to Hutnik's theory, there are four main ways of self-categorization and cultural integration: assimilation, acculturation, marginality, and dissociation (Gurieva et al., 2020). Assimilation implies the association of migrants with the majority group only (this can be connected to place attachment theory), while acculturation is associated with the majority as well as a minority group (dual identity, in other words) (Gurieva et al., 2020). The adaptation process depended heavily on proficiency in the local language since it contributed to the establishment of

connections with local people and work qualifications since more qualified workers experienced higher self-esteem and life satisfaction (Gurieva et al., 2020). Overall, in the article, the authors presented Hutnik's theory and described the challenges and solutions that migrants face in the host countries. In the article, the authors discuss the adaptation process of migrants and the factors that affect this process. In the article "Community Influences on the Occupational Adaptation of Vietnamese Refugees" by Finnan C. R., the author also discussed factors that impact migrants' adaptation to new environments. The author argued that the term adaptation is more suitable in the context of Vietnamese migrants than integration, since the migrants were promoted to adapt to the new culture while preserving their identities. According to the author, the community of migrants also plays an important role in approving individuals' occupational status and places (Finnan, 1982). From Finnan's article, it can be seen that some migrants create diasporic communities that assist migrants with the self-identification process and adaptation. It would be interesting to analyze the pattern of adaptation that Russian migrants in Kazakhstan tend to follow. Also, the role of the community is the question for the analysis in the context of migration from Russia to Kazakhstan.

Overall, N. Hutnik's theory is mostly used for cases when migrants live in a new state for several years. The trend of people migrating from Russia to Kazakhstan is new, meaning that N. Hutnik's theory will be more applicable further. However, the four patterns and definitions suggested by Hutnik can be noticed even now.

### **Limitations**

This work aims to analyze the cultural adaptation of Russian migrants in Kazakhstan while some limitations should be acknowledged. First of all, due to the limited time and resources, the findings of this work cannot be generalized to the whole Russian migrant

population. The main focus of this work is close analysis of several migration stories, which makes the sample size too small to accept the findings as universal for the migration experiences in Kazakhstan. Secondly, the geographical scope of this work is also limited since I focus only on Almaty and Astana. Migrants who moved to other urban or rural areas may have different migration patterns and experiences. Possibly, people who moved to rural areas may have the opposite experience because of the better preservation of traditions and wider Kazakh language usage than in Almaty and Astana. Thirdly, I focus only on the last two years, meaning the period between 2022 and 2024. This period is conditioned by Russian invasion of Ukraine, leading to people's urgent migration from Russia. These specific political conditions may affect migrants' experiences in Kazakhstan, making it unique for this period of time. Taking into account the long relations between Kazakhstan and Russia, the analysis of two specific years cannot describe the whole picture of migration history between these two countries. Lastly, the primary way of data collection is interviews. It means that there may be a bias in people's interpretations of their own experiences. Taking into account the fact that people are located in a foreign country, migrants may be limited and careful in their responses. Even though confidentiality was established during the interviews and honest responses were encouraged, people may still feel uncomfortable and limited in their responses. Overall consideration of these limitations contributes to the better understanding of the results and proper analysis of the migrants' experiences in Kazakhstan.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review.**

The question about the adaptation strategies applied by Russian migrants in Kazakhstan is open, meaning that migrants may either assimilate in Kazakhstan or create their own diasporic community, separating from the Kazakhstani community. This literature review will start with the contextual analysis of Kazakhstan, meaning the study of the nation-building process in the

state, the nationalism level, and the historical background of migration in the state. Secondly, the debate present in the migration studies will be established and discussed. Lastly, the general issues that migrants face will be discussed.

### **Cases of migration and main challenges faced by migrants.**

The scholars also argued about the factors that shape migrants' experiences in the host communities. Dubuisson and Genina (2011) stated that the newcomers create their own shared identities without assimilation into the larger society. Dubuisson and Genina (2011) discussed the formation of national identity in the example of Kazakh people who live outside Kazakhstan. The conclusion that the authors made in their work is that Kazakhs in Mongolia used common ancestry to construct their Kazakh identity in Mongolia (Dubuisson & Genina, 2011). Specifically, there were non-governmental organizations and groups of Kazakh people in Mongolia with the purpose of their identity preservation (Dubuisson & Genina, 2011). In other words, migrants can create their own separate identities through the presence of shared ancestry and their own experiences. Another scholar highlighting the importance of common ancestry for national identity construction in the diaspora was Isik Kusku (2016) in the work "Changing Perception of Homeland for the Kazakh Diaspora." The author focused on Kazakh people living in Turkey and Europe and analyzed their perception of Kazakhstan in the context of living abroad. The author stated that Kazakh people living outside the state tend to create organizations based on their historical background (Kusku, 2016). Precisely, the author highlighted the case of creating Kuriltay for the preservation of Kazakh national identity among migrants (Kusku 2016). In other words, Kusku agreed with Eva-Marie Dubuisson and Anna Genina on the question of remembering their history and ancestry to save their national identity in the different states. It raises the question of whether migrants from Russia to Kazakhstan want to preserve their

national identity while living in Kazakhstan or if they will recreate their identities connected to their new place of residence. In other words, it may mean that migrants who come to Kazakhstan from Russia may not only want to assimilate with the rest of the Kazakhstan community but also create their own identities as Russians who moved to Kazakhstan. In these terms, Dinere, Hagen, Eva-Marie Dubuisson, and Anna Genina's conclusions differ since the first group of scholars states that the adaptation of the newcomers depends on their assimilation with the rest of the community and attachment to the new places, while the second group of scholars describes the process of migrants creating their own identities regardless of the rest of the community.

The next group of scholars discussed the internal migration in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, meaning the migration from rural to urban areas. Even though migrants from rural areas face disregard in the cities, they improve their skills after the migration and develop rural areas because of the remittances. Lira Sagynbekova (2017), in the article "Environment, Rural Livelihoods, and Labor Migration: A Case Study in Central Kyrgyzstan," discussed the migration from rural to urban areas in Kyrgyzstan, caused by environmental and economic challenges. According to the author, labor migration within Kyrgyzstan and other states from Kyrgyzstan contributes to the development of the rural areas through migrants sending their incomes to the rural areas as well as providing migrants with new opportunities and skills to increase their income after their return to the homeland (Sagynbekova, 2017). Overall, labor migration mostly has a positive impact on the economic development of Kyrgyzstan. On the other hand, migration hurts social matters since people traveling from rural to urban areas face disrespect from the locals. Precisely, Saulesh Yessenova, in her work "Routes and Roots' of Kazakh Identity: Urban Migration in Postsocialist Kazakhstan " described the process of Kazakhstan's community division into urban and rural. According to the author, urban citizens

consider rural immigrants an obstacle in the process of development (Yessenova, 2005). Also, the author highlighted that urban citizens tend to disregard rural immigrants and experience power towards them (Yessenova, 2005). One of the reasons behind the disrespect that rural citizens face in the cities is the general view of rural areas as underdeveloped (Yessenova, 2005). In other words, even within Kazakhstan, migrants need to adapt to the new environment and integrate into the urban community in an inferior position. People of the same cultural background face the same problems as people traveling from one state to another. It would be interesting to see if migrants from other states need to adapt to the new environment from the perspective of the local population of the host country. As mentioned above, the reason for disrespect is the general perception of rural areas as barbaric. It would be interesting to see if migrants in other states experience the same pressure. As it was shown in Yessenova's article, Kazakhstani urban citizens find it hard to accept migrants, even from Kazakhstan; thus, migrants from other countries may face an even harder reality.

Almost all the scholars agreed that migrants tend to experience difficulties in social aspects such as building new connections, homesickness, and loss of connections with the homeland. Yuying Tong and Eric Fong (2022), in the work "Well-Being of Migrants and Immigrants: Perspectives in Asia and from Asians in North America," closely analyzed the migrants to and from Southeast Asia. According to the authors, the difference between the earnings of immigrants and local people with the same educational level tends to differ (Tong & Fong, 2022). It shows that the migrants in the host states face difficulty finding prestigious work or receiving competitive salaries. The same conclusion about the dependence of the migrants' earnings on their educational level was made by Svetlana Gurieva, Kristi Kõiv, and Olga Tararukhina (2020) in "Migration and Adaptation as Indicators of Social Mobility Migrants." In

this paper, the authors concluded that the knowledge of the host country's language contributes to the better adaptation of the migrants and the success of the work (Gurieva, Koiv, & Tararukhina, 2020). Gurieva, Koiv, and Tararukhina reached the same conclusion as Yuying Tong and Eric Fong (2020) in the matter of migrants struggling to find jobs with the same salaries as local people, while one of the differences was the knowledge of language contributing to better adaptation. Overall, migrants still receive unjust attitudes from the employees, even though they have qualifications and knowledge of the local language. These challenges with finding employment opportunities can be called economic ones. The preservation of family ties is one of the social challenges that was discussed in the work "Labor Migration from Mountainous Areas in the Central Asian Region: Good or Evil?" (Olimova & Olimov, 2007). After the analysis of migration due to war conflicts and natural disasters, the authors stated that one of the major challenges that migrants face is the preservation of close ties with family members, even though migrants tend to send remittances to their families in the first years of migration (Olimova & Olimov, 2007). It can be concluded that migrants face such challenges as prejudice, difficulties in finding jobs, and the loss of ties to their relatives in their homelands. It would be interesting to analyze the difficulties that the migrants from Russia face moving to Kazakhstan and compare them to the migrants from different countries.

Continuing the discussion of the social issues that migrants face in the host countries, they also include the inability to find a place to live and a lack of acceptance in the community. The first scholar to cover the social problems that migrants face in the host country was Işık Kuşçu (2014) in the article "Ethnic Return Migration and Public Debate: The Case of Kazakhstan," who analyzed the return of ethnic Kazakhs who migrated a long time ago to their homelands. Even though the topic is not the same as the migration of other ethnicities to

Kazakhstan, it can show the difficulties of adaptation for even the same ethnicity. According to the author, one of the issues with ethnic Kazakhs returning was the lack of available accommodation, even in rural areas, for the newcomers (Kuscu, 2014). It means that the lack of accommodation was a serious concern for the migrants, which contributed to the increased stress level in their lives. Similarly, Svetlana Gurieva, Kristi Kõiv, Olga Tararukhina, Yuying Tong, Eric Fong, and Işık Kuşçu (2014) stated that migrants struggle to find employment opportunities according to their qualifications and level of education. Adding to the lack of enough places to live, migrants struggled to find employment opportunities not because of a lack of knowledge but rather because of the discrimination against them. The author of the article concluded that the lack of employment for migrants was a more pressing obstacle than the lack of accommodation (Kuscu 2014). As was stated by Yessenova (2015), who described the pressure on rural migrants in the cities because of prejudice, we can see the prejudice against migrants from other countries. It means that migrants may face discrimination regardless of their origin or level of education. Overall, scholars agreed on the lack of employment for migrants in the host countries, regardless of their ethnicity, the host countries, and their educational level.

Understanding such issues as the lack of employment opportunities, lack of accommodation, lost family ties, and discrimination against the migrants, the scholars also discussed the possible solutions for the migrants, mostly including governmental policies. Precisely, Lorraine Elliott (2012), in the work "Climate Change and Migration in Southeast Asia: Responding to a New Human Security Challenge," reflected on the impact of climate change on the migration level in Southeast Asia. The author suggested that one of the solutions for the establishment of comfortable conditions for migrants is the human-oriented policies of governments (Elliott, 2012). If we apply the conclusion of Lorraine Elliott to the issue of the lack

of accommodation for migrants, the government needs to ensure the newcomers have available places to live and job opportunities before the initiation of migration programs or at times of high levels of migration to the state. However, the issue of social discrimination and the pressure that migrants face within personal relations and in the community supposedly cannot be solved on the governmental level. The next article included both issues: migrants' identity construction and the migration challenges, which can be considered a summary of the issue as well as raising the main question of the research. In the article "Mobility and Identity in Central Asia: An Introduction," Peter Finke, Rita Sanders, and Russell Zanca (2013) focused on the migration from Central Asia to Russia. The authors described the hostile and discriminatory attitude towards the migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus, including slave-like work conditions with low salary levels (Finke, Sanders, & Zanca 2013). This group of authors also supports the conclusions of other researchers regarding the level of struggles migrants face. Taking into consideration the level of discrimination against migrants from Central Asia in Russia, it would be interesting to see its impact on the perception of Russian migrants in Central Asia.

The gap that exists in the scholarship is whether the discriminatory attitude in Russia towards migrants from Central Asia impacts the reverse situation of discrimination against Russians in Central Asia. Even though the potential discrimination towards the Russian migrants in Kazakhstan does not emanate from the migrants in Russia, people in Kazakhstan are generally aware of the common prejudice towards themselves in Russia. It would be interesting to analyze the return discrimination as a response to the discrimination present in Russia towards Kazakh people. The reason for the lack of scholarship on the topic may be the lack of frequent cases of migration from Russia to Kazakhstan, specifically before the Russian-Ukrainian war.

**Debate in the migration studies field.**

For the analysis of migration and collected data, several theories are the most widespread. Scholars suggest the most common patterns of adaptation, behavior in the host countries, and migrants' self-identification processes. The theories discussed in this section will be applied to the analysis of collected data in the context of migration from Russia to Kazakhstan. One of the most widespread theories is the place-attachment theory. In the work "The Power of Place in Place Attachment," Diener and Hagen focused on the concept of place attachment. The authors tried to identify which groups of people tend to attach to places, who are more likely to move, and what affects place attachment overall. The definition of the term "place attachment" is an emotional connection with the place as well as relationships, objects, and actions that help to connect with these places (Diener & Hagen, 2022). The general conclusion of several scholars presented in the article is that the longevity of living in a particular place influences the extent of a person's attachment (Diener & Hagen, 2022). The place attachment theory may decline nationality and ethnicity characteristics since it states that places can unite people despite national and ethnic identities (Diener & Hagen, 2022). Overall, place attachment is an emotional and practical connection with a certain place that develops over time and events experienced with the local community. According to this theory, migrants can become a part of the host country only after several years of living in the new place and overcoming the crisis with local people. Barcus & Brunn, in their work "Place Elasticity: Exploring a New Conceptualization of Mobility and Place Attachment in Rural America," not only explained the concept of place attachment but also analyzed place elasticity ideas. Place attachment shows people's emotional, economic, and social connections with certain places that prevent them from moving from one place to another (Barcus & Brunn, 2010). The explanation suggested by Barcus & Brunn is

similar to the one suggested by Diener & Hagen (2022). As a related concept to place attachment, the authors suggested the concept of place elasticity. The elasticity of a place suggests the expansion of the borders of a certain place due to the social connections with this place (Barcus & Brunn, 2010). In other words, because of family and friend ties and easier travel between places, people manage to stay in one place while living in other places. Now, place attachment can occur without the physical location of the person; place attachment can develop because of the Internet, phones, and television (Barcus & Brunn, 2010). Overall, the authors suggested the more modified and modern concept of place attachment theory, which is that place elasticity is the preservation of connection with the place at a distance. Place elasticity does not contradict the concept of place attachment; it explains how people can stay connected to a certain place while living in another place. The concepts of place attachment and place elasticity are highly relevant to my research since they raise the question of whether Russian migrants can adapt to Kazakhstan; if not, can their emotional connection to Russia prevent them from doing this?

Similar to place attachment and elasticity concepts, there are “home” and “houses” concepts that divide the emotional and physical presence of people. In the work “Migrant, Home, and Politics: Bihari Labour in the Metropolis,” Tanweer Fazal analyzed the social reality of migrants in large cities, particularly focusing on the issues of alienation, sense of belonging, and political aspects affecting migrants’ lives. Firstly, the author distinguished between the concepts of home and house, where the first one is a comfortable and natural environment for the migrant and the second one is a new place of his or her living, and the sense of belonging does not emerge in the second location (Fazal, 2016). In other words, home is a country or place that the migrant left, and the house is the host location. The main argument of the paper is that home and

house concepts in migrants' lives do not exist at separate times but rather coexist at the same time (Fazal, 2016). It means that the lack of belonging in the host country and the emotional connection to their homeland persist simultaneously. The emotional connection to the homeland may be one of the reasons why migrants cannot fully adapt to the host state. This idea of "home" and "house" is similar to place elasticity because of the emotional and physical connection to different locations. Overall, all of the concepts discussed above affect migrants' ability to adapt to the new environment.

Finnan discussed factors that impact migrants' adaptation to new environments. The author argued that the term adaptation is more suitable in the context of Vietnamese migrants than integration, since the migrants were promoted to adapt to the new culture while preserving their identities. According to the author, occupational identity is an identity that is developed by someone's job to fit the role (Finnan, 1982). The author stated that the community influences individuals' work choices as well as helps them develop an occupational identity to adapt to (Finnan, 1982). Overall, the work showed the importance of the community, which plays a huge role in migrants' adaptation at work.

More closely, the question of acculturation, which is one of the adaptation strategies discussed by Gurieva et al. (2020), was described by Sam & Berry (2010). Sam and Berry's (2010) paper, "Acculturation: When Individuals and Groups of Different Cultural Backgrounds Meet," focuses on the interaction of groups from different cultural backgrounds. The authors stated that even though approximately all people face the acculturation process at some level, they focused on the experiences of immigrants and refugees (Sam & Berry, 2010). In the article, four main types of acculturation were discussed, including assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization (Sam & Berry, 2010). The integration process involved the association of

people with both their original background and a larger society (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Assimilation and separation processes imply an association with only one culture—the original one or the larger one (Sam & Berry, 2010). Marginalization is the lack of an individual's association with any culture (Sam & Berry, 2010). People tend to experience fewer negative consequences during the adaptation process of integration and acculturation. Individuals who experience a high level of discrimination prefer separation, while those who do not face discrimination tend to assimilate or integrate (Sam & Berry, 2010). The main conclusion of the work is that integration leads to better adaptation in the new community than separation or assimilation (Sam & Berry, 2010). Marginalization leads to the lowest level of adaptation in the new culture (Sam & Berry, 2010). The conclusions of Sam and Berry (2010) coincide with the conclusions made by Gurieva et al. (2020), while the second group of authors more closely analyzed the process of adaptation.

In the work “Migration as Hope: Space, Time, and Imagining the Future,” Pine (2014) focused on migration during crisis times. The author focused on the impact of kinships, households, and economic activities on the migration process. The main argument of the author is that migration is both a “future-oriented and backward-oriented process.” In other words, the author stated that one of the purposes of migration is hope in the future as well as hopeless present times (Pine, 2014). After analyzing cases of people’s migration during crisis moments, the author stated that the general pattern is that people were forced to live in new value systems while still hoping to bring something new to their homelands (Pine, 2014). In the article, an example of this pattern was the fact that migrants from Lubelskie moved to England and were forced to work in agriculture (Pine, 2014). While not satisfied with wage levels, migrants worked there, moved their skills back home, and developed in Lubelskie (Pine, 2014). Overall, the

author concluded that migration is usually a future-oriented process that provides people with hope, and hope helps migrants adapt to the new environment. In the case discussed by Pine (2014), it can be seen that migrants did not try to integrate into the host community but rather adapt and understand it with a goal of extracting the best values and bringing them to their homelands. Possibly, this process can be described as separation.

Overall, scholars discussed the migration process from multiple perspectives. From the literature review, it can be seen that in the question of migration between Kazakhstan and Russia, the cultural and historical background needs to be considered. From Narrotum's (2006) and Peyrouse's (2007) perspectives, the Russian population was discriminated against in Kazakhstan after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which may nowadays create obstacles in the adaptation of migrants from Russia. In the context of Russia and Kazakhstan relations, the historical context played an important role because of the shared past but different traditional views in the societies that might hugely influence the migrants' experiences. Scholars explained the migration from the perspective of attachment theories to the challenges that migrants tend to face in different cultures. Scholars like Diener & Hagen (2022) emphasized the role of place attachment in understanding the migration patterns, while Pine (2014) showed that the migration may be the process of a future- and backward-oriented process. Regarding the adaptation process, scholars did not come to the same conclusion when some of them suggested assimilation in the host communities while others argued that migrants tend to create their own separate identities from the host countries.

### **Chapter 3. Methods.**

To answer the main question of this work about the extent of the adaptation and adaptation strategies of migrants from Russia, I chose secondary research and semi-structured

interviews as the main methodological approaches. The secondary research was directed at the identification of the previous cases of migration from Russia to Kazakhstan, which was not widespread before the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Furthermore, secondary research allowed me to see the migration cases from the larger states to the smaller ones in the world. Secondary research was complicated by the fact that most people migrated from smaller and less developed countries to larger ones. Overall, the secondary research allowed me to identify the gap in the previously made research. After analyzing the previously made research, I conducted primary research in the form of semi-structured interviews. I have chosen the interview because of their ability to deeply open the respondents and allow them to understand people's experiences in Kazakhstan. The primary goal of the interviews was to understand the migrants' adaptation methods.

As additional research, I have made a digital ethnography. The primary aim of the digital ethnography was to analyze the broader context of the migration to Kazakhstan. In social media, people share their experiences in the form of comments, stand-up performances, and communication in chats. As part of the digital ethnography, I have entered the Telegram chat of people who came from Russia to Kazakhstan. These migrants shared their experiences of receiving permissions and documents. Also, I analyzed YouTube videos of stand-up comedians who came from Russia or local comedians who talked about the newcomers. YouTube videos helped me to see not only the experience of migrants but also the attitude of locals to the new trends. In stand-up, people tend to express the general trends and opinions of the community. Instagram, one of the most used social media, has created a new direction that is called Threads. These people share their thoughts in written form. In Threads, I have searched tags regarding the migration and Russian migrants' thoughts of Kazakhstan. Overall, digital ethnography provided

me with insights into general trends in the community as well as providing information that was not covered in the interviews and secondary sources.

The secondary research was conducted before the interviews to help identify the main issues that migrants tend to face. Spring 2024 was the period of the main section of the secondary research. The primary research in the form of interviews was conducted in the period between June 2024 and November 2024. After the main part of the conducted interview, I made a digital ethnography. Furthermore, I stayed in contact with some of my respondents to see the life changes. Interviews were conducted in Almaty and Astana. As I have supposed before interviews and have seen during them, migrants sometimes moved from Almaty to Astana or vice versa. Interviews conducted in these two locations will help in the analysis and comparison of the experiences of migrants in Astana and Almaty. The time limit did not allow me to conduct research in other cities, while the inclusion of other cities could enrich the findings. Interviews were in both formats, online and offline. The decision on the format of the interview was decided based on the convenience of the respondents. Questions of the interview were focused on migrants' lives after the migration to Kazakhstan, including their experiences of accommodation, language usage, work search process, finding help in the state from local people, and ability to find connections with Kazakhstan citizens. I have conducted 10 interviews, which is less than I expected to have. Thus, digital ethnography was applied too.

Most of the interviews were conducted offline, while some of them were online through Zoom. The duration of one interview was approximately 60 minutes. One of the focuses of the interview was to collect personal stories of the participants that represented and showed specific cases of people's experiences in Kazakhstan.

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, meaning that one participant recommended other people for interviews. Snowball sampling was chosen because the migrants' community was closed and people tended to know each other. One of the challenges faced during the process was an inability to receive answers from some of the people. The first participant for the interview was found through social media. To save the randomness of the respondents, several directions of snowball sampling were used. Also, the respondents in Almaty and Astana will be found through different snowball sampling directions. The analysis of the interviews started with the transcription and then coding of the interview. Through this process, the main topics raised during the interview were highlighted.

### **Targeted Audience**

The targeted audience for the interviews will be Russian migrants who came to Astana and Almaty for a period longer than one month. I was interested in people who moved to Kazakhstan starting in September 2022 since it was a period of one of the first waves of migration after the announcement of mobilization in Russia. As I suggested before the interview process, the nationality of my interviewees would be Russian, even though I also considered people with Russian citizenship regardless of their nationality. The age group of my interviewees was from 25 to 35 years old since they tend to be more mobile. The reason for that is fewer ties in the state. Also, this age group was one of the primary targets for the mobilization. As I stated in the Introduction section, on the 22nd of September, 2022, the president of the Russian Federation announced the partial mobilization in the state, which led to the high migration from Russia to different countries (*Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated September 21, 2022 No. 647 · Official publication of legal acts*). It means that supposedly most of the people who moved to Kazakhstan tried to escape the mobilization process. The residency of the

respondents was both Almaty and Astana, and some of the respondents moved between these two cities. The region of the respondents' origins was considered since I was interested in the process of adaptation in Kazakhstan. I also tried to balance between the genders, meaning that the number of male and female interviews needed to be equal. At the end of the interviewing process, I had 5 female interviewees and 5 male interviewees. Females tended to talk about their partners during the interview, so the balance was preserved.

Participants were free to leave and not answer the questions at any point during the survey and interview without any consequences. I also informed people that if they change their minds about participating at any time, they may just contact me, and I will remove any examples related to them from my project database without questions. However, during the research process, I did not have such cases.

### **Interview questions**

1. Can you briefly describe yourself? When did you come to Kazakhstan? Did you come alone or not?
2. Can you describe your way of migration from Russia to Kazakhstan?
3. Did you face any difficulties right after you came to the state? What was the first location (city) where you stayed? How long did it take you to resolve the first issues you faced after the migration? Could you discuss any challenges or obstacles you encountered during the migration process?
4. Have you noticed any mentality or cultural differences between societies in Kazakhstan and Russia? Did you experience any cultural or linguistic barriers upon arrival in Kazakhstan? If so, how did you overcome them?

5. Have you encountered any difficulties in accessing work opportunities or medical services? If yes, how did you overcome them?
6. Have you managed to find acquaintances in Kazakhstan? Did you have previous contacts in Kazakhstan before the migration? Have you found new people to communicate with after the migration?
7. Is your life different now compared to the one right after the migration? In what ways?
8. Looking back, what advice would you give to other people considering migration from Russia to Kazakhstan?

Even though the migration experience may not be an easy one, I interviewed people only in good mental and physical condition. Furthermore, only migrants who stay in Kazakhstan longer than one month were interviewed, meaning that some of the issues emerging right after the migration may be resolved. Regarding emotional discomfort, people may experience it only if they have individual issues with the topic. The participants will be free to leave the interview at any point.

During the analysis process, the audio recordings will be transcribed into the text format. After the transcription process, the original audio will be deleted from the private drive, and transcripts will be placed in this private drive. Transcripts will not also use any private information of the participants and will be named with numbers. If the respondent contacts me asking to remove him or her from the study, the data collected will be deleted.

## **Ethics**

The potential risks of participation in the study included discomfort while answering some of the questions. My concern was that some of the respondents would not want to cover

some of the aspects of their experience of migration. However, interviews were voluntary, meaning that participants were free to leave the interview and skip questions if they wanted to. I did not try to convince people to participate in the study or record the interview. I did not work with participants who expressed any hesitation or any reason for participating or recording during the interview. However, during the interview, there were no questions regarding the economic or political conditions of both states: Russia and Kazakhstan. Questions covered only respondents' personal experiences. Also, participants in good mental and physical health were interviewed. The loss of confidentiality may be one of the concerns of the respondents. The original audio recordings were contained on a private drive, protected with passwords. Only I, as the researcher, had access to the original data. Audio recordings were deleted after the transcription. Transcriptions of the interviews did not contain any revealing information about the participants, such as names and living locations. Information about the location of the participant was not revealed. If the participant mentioned information during the interview that could somehow reveal his identity or location, it will not be revealed or used for the analysis process.

## **Chapter 4. Results.**

### **Identity**

An identity section of the results focuses on the impact of migration on the self-perception of the migrants as well as the perception of the host community. Here, the effect of migration on language use, gender roles, and overall adaptation will be discussed. The focus on these three main parts of the migration process to Kazakhstan will provide insights into migrants' overall experience in the state.

## Language

Kazakhstan can be described as a bilingual state where most of the people know Kazakh and Russian languages. My respondents did not face huge issues with communication with the Kazakhstan population. The general phrase that was used during the interviews was that people in Kazakhstan usually spoke Russian, which was beneficial to migrants. Furthermore, many respondents said that they could talk to and understand people who did not speak Russian well. Not all of the respondents, but some of them, started to learn the Kazakh language to use it in their daily lives. One of my respondents, Irina, who is 35 years old, moved to Kazakhstan with her husband and child and knew some of the phrases and words in Kazakh before our interview. She did not learn the language intentionally, but because of her staying in Kazakhstan for two years, she got to know some words that could be used in her daily life, such as “thank you,” “hello,” “good,” “bad,” etc. However, the main language of communication remains Russian because the predominant part of people whom she talks to understand Russian. In the case of Irina, the surroundings affected her understanding and learning of some basic phrases in Kazakh. The case of Irina is not a unique one since all of the respondents pointed to their knowledge of and usage of basic phrases in the Kazakh language.

Elena, who did not have intentions of migrating to Kazakhstan, has started learning the Kazakh language because of her work and surrounding people too. I communicated with her for some time, meaning that I could monitor her adaptation in Kazakhstan for some time. When we first met, she was in Kazakhstan for three months. At that time, she did not know the Kazakh language and did not have intentions of learning it. However, during our next meeting, which happened approximately half a year later, she started to understand more in Kazakh and learned some phrases. One factor that changed her life and affected her decision to learn the Kazakh

language was a co-worker who was mainly Kazakh-speaking. During work time, the coworker of my respondent intentionally taught her the Kazakh language; mostly they studied the most frequently used phrases, the same as the first respondent. Also, the co-worker talked to her family and friends on the phone frequently, which also improved Elena's understanding of the Kazakh language. After this, Elena's coworker changed, and there was a new girl who also knew the Kazakh language. During the working time, the new co-worker taught Elena numbers in Kazakh. As Elena said, "Here is the list of numbers that I need to remember. Each number has an association. My coworker laughs at me because I pronounce some words with a French accent". In other words, the one aspect that helped my respondent to remember numbers was associations. Also from this case, it can be seen that surroundings hugely affect people's intentions and the process of learning a new language. Even though there were no problems speaking Russian at work, the coworkers promoted the learning of the Kazakh language. However, now, when Elena wants to change her workplace and go to a position where more qualifications are needed, she mentions that knowledge of the Kazakh language would be beneficial to her. From the case of Elena, it can be seen that some of the people who came to Kazakhstan for a long period had an intention to learn the language, and the people around them also affected this desire and the process of learning.

Other respondents did not mention any problems with the communication in the Russian language. Most of them stayed in Almaty. They pointed out that because of the high spread of the Russian language, they did not want to and did not have to learn the language. One of the respondents said that the cultural similarities that include language too were one of the reasons for choosing Kazakhstan for migration. Another person said that because of his land of origin, which is populated with Turkish people, he did not face problems with understanding the Kazakh

language, at least on some level. Overall, the respondents of my research did not face any difficulties with the language, and some of them learned it at some level.

Talking about not only the Kazakh language but also Russian too. The accent that prevailed among the Russian migrant community was the reason for jokes among the Kazakhstan local community. People in Kazakhstan joked about the manner of Russian people talking. On the internet, people said that they differently pronounced the sound “a” in the Russian language. Specifically, I have seen one reel that is a short video on Instagram, one of the most widespread social media, where a man joked about the pronunciation of some words specific to Kazakhstan (*Алексей Лодочкиков on Instagram, 2021*). The title of the video is “That very one Russian who first flew to Astana.” These words included Baiterek, the name Olzhas, Bolat, Shyngys, the city Aktobe, online, and the currency tenge. In the comments, people supported his video by highlighting how people who came to Kazakhstan wrongly pronounced these words and expressed misunderstanding of the reasons why people who came to Kazakhstan used this manner. People in the comments wrote, “As if they don't have these letters, what's the problem?” “Kazakhstan, a country where it is impossible to pronounce the letter (e),” and “One word is annoying when it is pronounced like that, and you put it all together.” From the comments, it can be suggested that people also faced the same issue with the pronunciation of Russian people, and it triggered them. However, some of the commentators supported the newcomers and wrote, “First learn to speak your language... then try to speak any foreign language without an accent. At least English... Then you can laugh. I have been saying Aktobe, Kustanai, Alma- Ata all my life... and I continue to do so, and I don't even plan to do otherwise. And no one can forbid it” and “I don't understand at all why people make fun of the pronunciation of different nations. We also speak in other countries, distorting words and

accents. We need to be more relaxed about the shortcomings of others.” It can be seen from this case that local people are divided into two groups—those who laugh and those who do not understand it. Supposedly, the idea for the video came from real life because of the comments and the support that it received from people, meaning that not only the author noticed the difference but commenters too. It is important to note that the video was posted in 2021, but I conducted interviews in 2024. During the interviews, I did not notice any specific accent among my respondents, while during the first huge wave of migration, I also heard about the specific manner of speaking.

Overall, it can be seen that the respondents did not face issues with communication in Russian because of the high spread of the knowledge of this language. However, some people joked and discussed Russian migrants’ speaking manner.

## **Gender**

gender was one of the factors that shaped migrants’ experience in Kazakhstan and made them the factors necessary to adapt. Difficulties faced by males and females differed. Interestingly, most of the female migrants moved with their male friends or husbands, which made males responsible for organization questions and documentation. Females at the same time needed to adapt to gender roles specific to Kazakhstan. Precisely, one of the interviewees, a 27-year-old woman called Katya, stated that she moved to Kazakhstan after her husband. Her husband moved to Kazakhstan first to solve the question of accommodation and documents so that she could move in more comfortable conditions. Katya came to her husband after one month of him being in the state. At the moment when Katya and her husband moved to Kazakhstan, they could stay in the state for three months and then cross the border, come to Kazakhstan

again, and live further. They needed special documentation for permission to stay for a year. Katya's husband needed to solve the first questions of accommodation, documents, and finding a job. Katya and her husband were not the only ones who moved one after the other. Another respondent, Irina, a 35-year-old woman, moved to Almaty with the child and their dog after her husband. Irina's husband moved first because he was transferred to Kazakhstan for work. Before Irina and the child moved to Almaty, her husband found an apartment and prepared all the documents before the coming of Irina. After the migration to Almaty, Irina managed the questions of her work and the finding of a kindergarten for their child. Irina noted that it was comfortable for her to move to Almaty because everything was prepared before she came. However, all the way from Russia to Kazakhstan, the dog and child were her responsibility. The third female respondent, the 25-year-old Elena, moved to Astana with her male friend. Elena and her male friend were not love partners, but he took responsibility for documentation and paying taxes. They came to Astana simultaneously, and finding an apartment was their shared goal. However, all questions of permissions were the responsibility of her male friend. Overall, it can be seen that most of the females who migrated to Kazakhstan moved with their male partners or male friends who took responsibility for the first questions to solve, such as living places and permissions to stay.

Artem who is a 30 years old male moved to Astana first and then his girlfriend joined him after he resolved all the first questions. He had to wait for his girlfriend for approximately a month because the main challenge was finding an apartment. Even though the process of documentations was chaotic at first, he could receive help from Telegram chats and local people. Overall, Artem's case again showed the gender role division in the process of migration.

Other respondents, Masha (26 years old female) and Dasha (27 years old female), moved together with their husbands from Moscow. In their company they divided the responsibilities to ease the uncertainty that they experienced right after the migration. Dasha and Masha resolved questions regarding the accommodation while their husbands searched for information about the residence permits and bank accounts opening. From this case it can be seen that within a company that moved together, sharing responsibilities was easier than in the cases when husbands resolved all the questions prior to the migration of their partners.

There were cases of husband and wife migrating together, but it did not change the responsibility of the husband to resolve issues with accommodation and documentation. Andrey, a 32-year-old male, went to Almaty by car with his wife. During the interview, for the question of the issues they faced after the migration to Almaty, he responded that he did not perceive something as an issue but rather as a task that needed to be resolved. Andrey is an entrepreneur; thus, one of the first questions that he needed to solve included opening a company and finding people for work. Andrey did not mention the tasks that his wife was responsible for, but it was clear that Andrey was responsible for organization questions. Overall, from my respondents, it can be concluded that the special experience distinctive for males was the solution to questions of documentation.

The unique features of female migrants' experience can be described as the necessity to adapt to gender norms that prevail in Kazakhstan. During the interview with Katya, who moved to Almaty with her husband, she stated that she needed to choose more modest clothes than she used to wear in Saint Petersburg. She said, "More females are covered in Kazakhstan. And people overall wear more modest clothes, so I started to do so either because I feel uncomfortable. No tight and revealing clothes that I used to wear in Saint Petersburg." It can be

seen that this respondent had to adapt to clothing norms in Almaty, and the styling is different than in Russia. Elena, who moved to Astana with her friend, also pointed out that she felt uncomfortable wearing her usual clothes. She changed her style from feminine and revealing to a more modest and baggy style. She said that she did not feel comfortable and safe. However, the third female respondent, who is a bit older, did not mention any issues with adaptation in terms of clothes or gender norms. She only joked that after Almaty they moved to Astana, and she needed to adapt her clothing to the weather. Masha and Dasha also did not experience any necessity of adaptation in terms of styling. However, Dasha during the interview mentioned that “respect for traditions and elders are more emphasized here” but it did not cause stress for her. Overall, it can be seen that two out of five female respondents needed to change their clothing decisions because of the discomfort that they felt in their usual clothing.

During the interview with Katya, she mentioned one case as an example of a more developed patriarchy in the state. The story that she told me happened in one of the restaurants in Almaty that she visited with her husband. There she was thinking about choosing one dish and could not decide for some time while the waiter was standing nearby. The waiter told my respondent, “Here is your husband; he will decide about your dish.” To my respondent, it seemed that the waiter did not want to hear her opinion about the dish she would eat because the men’s word waited longer. The waiter gave priority to the male in the couple, according to my respondent. Overall, the intentions of the waiter cannot be analyzed, but my respondent’s interpretation is about a more developed patriarchy in Kazakhstan that she also needed to accept. Another female respondent who moved to Astana and lives on the right bank was shocked about some of the traditions in Kazakhstan. She specifically told me about the shock of the inability of young people to live with their partners. According to her, it was one of the cases in which she

felt cultural shock. Overall, some of the traditional views that prevail in Kazakhstan are shocking to the migrants from Russia. Most of the respondents do not accept them for themselves but notice them in the Kazakhstan community.

### **Adaptation**

In the section on adaptation, I looked generally at people's perception of Kazakhstan, their positioning within the community, and their plans of staying or leaving the state. Here, migrants' experience was diverse. Some of the migrants randomly chose Kazakhstan, and some of them consciously chose Kazakhstan. Some of the migrants had a positive experience of communication with the local people, and some pointed out the negative aspects of the Kazakhstan community. It was interesting that some of the respondents moved back to Russia or are planning to return. Specifically, one of the interviewees returned to Russia after our interview within half of the year. My respondent is a 27-year-old man, Nikita, who moved to Almaty from Moscow because of the mobilization and chose Almaty because of the job offer. Nikita found friends in Almaty; most of them were his colleagues. He did not have problems in making documents; however, he pointed out that in Kazakhstan the bureaucracy is not working well. As an example, he talked about the new process of receiving temporary residence permits (one of the main documents that all migrants needed to receive to stay in Kazakhstan for a year) when all the institutions where he tried to give fingerprints told him to go to another institution. He spent a day moving within the city between different Public Service Centers (ЦОИ), and in the end, he could pass the fingerprints in the first place that he visited. Nikita was not the only respondent who complained about the bureaucratic processes in Kazakhstan; Andrey also described a pretty similar process of passing fingerprints and moving from one place to another. Elena and her male friend also had some issues with documentation because her male friend confused something

while filling out some forms. However, she did not mention any issue of receiving or prolonging the permission to stay. It can be seen that bureaucracy was one of the obstacles that migrants from Russia faced after moving to Kazakhstan. It can be seen again in this section that mostly men discussed the issues with bureaucracy because most of them resolved the documentation questions for themselves and their partners. In the Telegram chat that I have monitored for some time, most of the questions were regarding the documents. People asked for and advised about an effective way to receive permissions. Overall, it can be said that bureaucracy and the documentation process were one of the obstacles in the process of adaptation.

One of the interesting cases was with my respondent, who moved to Kazakhstan with her husband and child. I discussed this respondent earlier; she is 35 years old and moved first to Almaty and then to Astana. Her child is five years old, meaning that she was 3 years old when they first moved to Kazakhstan. Before our interview, Irina and her child went to Russia to visit their relatives. According to Irina, her child is sometimes confused about where they live now. After they returned from their holiday in Russia and went back to Astana, she asked where her origin was and where they live now. Her mother noticed that she sometimes needs to remind her child where they live to navigate the confusion of her child. However, Irina herself pointed out the good adaptation of her and her husband in Kazakhstan. She managed to find a job in Almaty, and then in Astana, she found good friends and collected the places to visit in terms of medical institutions, shops, beauty salons, and other places needed for a comfortable daily life. She knows the local celebrations and holidays. Also, we have discussed the education system in Kazakhstan. Even though the education system in Kazakhstan and Russia is pretty similar, she had parallels between these two countries to remember. Irina and her husband do not plan to move from Kazakhstan since both of them have jobs here and the child goes to kindergarten. It is

also interesting that they moved to Kazakhstan with their dog and moved with it from Russia to Almaty and then from Almaty to Astana with it too. In the case of Irina, adults had a better adaptation than their children. Possibly, it can be explained through psychology, which is not the scope of this work.

Sasha, who moved from Russia to Kazakhstan alone, also had an interesting case of adaptation in Astana. Because of his online job, he could not establish networks with his colleagues in Kazakhstan, as in the case of Nikita. Sasha tried to find friends in Astana by visiting people in different clubs; however, he could not establish a close relationship there. Social clubs at least helped him to diversify his leisure time. One of the solutions that Sasha found for himself was pretty frequent visits to Russia when the situation with mobilization became not so actual. In the case of Sasha, it can be seen that networks and friends play a huge role in the process of adaptation in the state.

Another respondent was Katya, who moved from Saint Petersburg to Almaty with her husband. Their migration was rather spontaneous, and as she said during our interview, they chose Kazakhstan because of the close geographical proximity. Furthermore, they had friends and relatives in the state, so they moved to Kazakhstan. In terms of culture, language, accommodation, and work, Katya and her husband adapted well and did not face huge issues. Discussing the question of whether they plan to stay in Kazakhstan further or move to another country, she said that they had not decided yet. She explained that because of the fast decision to move to Almaty and the comfort of them to move fast to Almaty, they did this. However, because of the fear of mobilization, they did not have enough time to decide where to move and deeply analyze their migration. Because of this, they are not sure if Almaty is the last point in their migration and they will move further or return to Russia.

Masha who is a 26 years old respondent who moved from Moscow with her husband and close family friends stated that right after the migration they experienced an uncertainty and it took time for them to adapt. Right after the migration it seemed to her that people in Almaty are more relaxed and open, generally they did not experience any sort of discrimination. After some time they managed to find their circle from the expat community and within the local community too. However, they still remain close to each other and she did not state that they managed to find new close friends. Also, as time passed they rebuilt their routine in Almaty, found favorite shops and cafes. In the case of Masha it can be said that despite the confusion at the first time after the migration, Masha and her company managed to rebuild their routine and felt comfortable in the new environment.

From the interview with Andrey, a 32-year-old male who moved from Russia to Kazakhstan and went by car, it seemed to me that the adaptation process was rather difficult for him and his wife. Andrey is an entrepreneur, and one of the first tasks that he had after the migration was registration of his business. In terms of documentation, he managed well and only pointed to the difficult bureaucratic process. However, in the social sphere, he pointed out the huge differences between Kazakhstan and Russia. He stated that people in Almaty are less culturally and socially educated. He stated, "There is no queue culture in Kazakhstan. People come very close to you and almost breathe in your ear." He complained about the lack of personal borders among the Kazakh population. He mentioned that he had a business assistant who usually agreed with him, accepted his tasks, and stated that he understood what he needed to do. However, as it turned out, the business assistant did not understand everything properly, and Andrey needed to explain again or remake something by himself. He stated, "People in Kazakhstan are unreliable. Why did he agree with me and say, "Yes, yes, bro," if he didn't

understand the task? Some kind of desire to please or something.” It seemed to me that Andrey had more negative experiences in communication with local people than other respondents. He managed to find some people whom he communicated with. He entered several clubs of businesspeople in Almaty and found a class for volleyball where he found people with the same interest. However, his closest friend was also a migrant from Russia, and they met in Almaty in one of these classes. He also had a negative attitude towards the medical service and beauty sphere in Almaty. His wife chose one beauty salon in Almaty to get a manicure, but according to him, there were no sterile instruments. He stated, “People in Kazakhstan do not know the word ‘sterility.’” In terms of medical services, he tried to find Russian doctors because he had more trust in them. He once visited a dental clinic in Almaty and said, “It seems like the doctors are there just for show.” It was interesting that Andrey himself identified his adaptation as normal and positive. However, from the interview, it seemed that he had more negative experiences than positive ones.

I also found several posts in Threads, a new social media site from Instagram, where people discussed the difference between Kazakhstan and Russia. One of the commentators there stated, “What stands out is driving. Fast, brazen, daring. In the year and a half of my life, I have almost been hit on the sidewalk several times. If you go intercity, you want to pay the taxi driver extra to drive slower.” Andrey, during the interview, also mentioned the style of driving. Since he moved by car and drove in the city on his own, he talked about bad traffic and people’s reckless manner of driving. Another topic discussed in social media was the way of differentiating the newcomers and local people. In the comments, people wrote, “The newcomers are mostly uncultured, speak loudly, and dress like clowns (brightly and strangely),” “Visually, it is enough to look and understand that he is not local,” and “I live in Kazakhstan. Here everyone is formal.

Russians are usually informal” (“Живу в Казахстане. Тут все на Вы. Россияне все на ты.”) It can be seen that the difference between locals and foreigners is still a hot topic. People discuss and notice the difference between people from Kazakhstan and Russia. However, there was one positive post. In this thread, the person wrote that he came from Moscow to Astana in September 2022 but did not find any friends from that time. He did not want to pine, so he asked people if they wanted to spend time together and visit some places. In the comments, people started to ask him out and suggested going to the opera and ballet with them, going for a walk, going jogging, and playing some quizzes together. This post made me think about the welcoming nature of people because they were open to supporting this guy and integrating him into their activities. Overall, it can be seen that migrants faced a wide range of issues in Kazakhstan. However, it can be said that there were more positive experiences among migrants than negative ones.

### **Stereotypes**

In the section on stereotypes, there will be a discussion between the opinion that was present during the first waves of migrants to Kazakhstan and that might be present until the present day and the experience that migrants had in the state. The two most widespread opinions of people in Kazakhstan had respect to workplaces and accommodation. In the first place, local people widely discussed that because of the high migration to Kazakhstan, migrants might take away working opportunities from locals. In the second case, people in Kazakhstan were concerned that because of the migration, prices for rent and apartments drastically increased. In this section, there will be a comparison between the stereotypes about migrants and their real experiences.

## **Working places**

Most of the respondents moved to Kazakhstan knowing that they had employment in the state. As I said before, female migrants tend to move after their male friends or partners. In these cases, males had an option of employment, and women found it after the migration. Specifically, Irina, who moved with her child and husband, did not have employment when she moved to Almaty. However, her husband had a job offer in Almaty before the migration. The same situation happened with Katya, who also moved to Almaty. Katya's husband had a job offer in Almaty, while Katya found a job after the migration. Katya did not face issues with finding a job because it seemed to her that employers prioritized her before the local specialists. Katya, during our interview, said, "Russians are valued as professionals. On the contrary, it seems to be easier for them to find work than for locals." The respondent was not happy about this discrimination against the local experts but noticed it. However, one female respondent, Elena, faced issues with finding a job. When she moved to Astana, she was still studying at the university and did not have a diploma. She tried to find a job for the first two months that she spent in Astana, but her attempts were not effective. She thought that employers did not want to hire her because she migrated from Russia. Then, she found a job, but there she also faced some level of discrimination. One of her coworkers said that she "counted as a Russian" and always double-checked after her. My respondent did not know what it meant that she counted as a Russian. Elena was considering changing her job, but remembering the last time she tried to find a job in Kazakhstan, she questioned her desire to quit. I suppose that the level of expertise affected migrants' experiences in finding a job.

As I stated before, males tended to move to Kazakhstan after they had a job offer. In this way, Nikita, who moved to Almaty from Moscow, had a job offer in Almaty before moving to

the city. He was working in an organization that had a branch in Moscow. However, because of the sanctions, they closed it in Moscow. However, the valuable workers were transferred to Almaty, and my respondent was one of them. From my male respondents, it can be seen that they moved to Kazakhstan, having an option of employment in the state before moving. Some of the respondents did not mention any issues or privileges in the process of searching for a job.

Andrey, who is a 32-year-old entrepreneur, said that he did not go through the process of finding a job but described his experience of hiring people. He said that there is a huge issue with finding people for work. According to Andrey, people did not want to work but wanted to receive salaries. Again, Andrey mentioned that people seemed not to be interested in working. Nikita also mentioned that sometimes he had a feeling that people were not being responsible in terms of doing a job. In particular, Nikita had some issues with plumbing in his apartment and called the master to fix the problem. He waited for the master the whole day, and he did not come, explaining it with many reasons and issues that he had. Overall, Nikita said that it is pretty common that people do not hurry anywhere and may be lazy at work from time to time.

One of the widespread stereotypes that were present in Kazakhstan after the start of migration was that Russian citizens took workplaces from Kazakhstan people. Several news channels posted articles regarding the influence of high migration on the working conditions and availability of workplaces. For instance, Orda.KZ (Аханова, 2022) wrote an article where the author raised the question of the necessity of Russian workers in Kazakhstan's working market. Here the author stated that the main reason for the article was the myth in Kazakhstan society regarding the shortage of workplaces because of the migration. The main conclusion of the author was that migration may create even more workplaces because of the opening of new companies. It can be seen that the fears in the Kazakhstan community can be considered as

imagined rather than real. Furthermore, the Minister of Labor in an interview for TengriNews in 2022 stated that one of the solutions to the Kazakhstan people's fears would be the employment of people from the list of unemployed. However, in the same interview, the minister stated that the government could not force private companies and small businesses to employ local people or migrants. It can be seen that the government tried to support the local people and minimize the impact of the high migration to the state. Based on the interviews that I had and the articles discussed above, it can be seen that certain positions may be occupied by migrants. At the same time, based on the experience of Andrey, he opened a company in Almaty and created workplaces for both local people and foreigners. Sasha, who moved to Astana, had an online job and also did not occupy any job position in Kazakhstan. Masha and Dasha also worked online in graphic design so they continued their freelance work after the migration.

Regarding the common opinion of migrants stealing workplaces from local experts, I talked to one business owner in Almaty and Astana. This businessman had small shops in Almaty and Astana and sometimes hired people for the open positions. I discussed with him the employment of people who came from Russia. He stated that he was skeptical about employing people from Russia. The reason for his refusal to employ newcomers was his fear that they would leave the country, while he was always motivated to employ people permanently. However, after some time he employed a girl from Russia because of the lack of good alternatives to her. Now she is working longer than some local people. This case shows that people in business may have some stereotypes about the employment of migrants, and the origin plays a role in the process of employment.

## **Accommodation**

The process of finding accommodation was not the one that raised discomfort among my respondents. People generally said that they could pretty easily rent an apartment in both cities, Almaty and Astana. However, interviewees from Almaty complained about the prices. For example, Nikita, who moved from Moscow to Almaty, mentioned that prices on apartments were too high in Almaty. In Moscow, he had his own apartment; thus, his salary was enough for a comfortable level of living. When he moved to Almaty, a large part of his salary was spent on renting an apartment in the city near his workplace. He decided to move back to Moscow after 1.5 years of living in Almaty. The reasons for his return included the lack of fear of mobilization; he stated that “it seemed not too scary to go back.” Secondly, it was financially easier to go back to Moscow and save money rather than paying for the rent in Almaty. From the case of Nikita, it can be seen that he had a pretty good adaptation in terms of networking and language. However, the main issue that he faced was the price of accommodation. Nikita was not the only one who complained about the rent prices; Irina also mentioned that they spent a lot more money on rent in Almaty than in Astana. According to Irina, in Almaty, they lived not in the best area of the city, and the apartment itself was not good in terms of newness and condition overall. When they moved to Astana, they could afford a larger apartment in a good district. Another obstacle in the process of finding an apartment was the fact they had a dog. People sometimes refused Irina’s family because they wanted to live with a pretty large dog. Overall, people in Almaty discussed the high prices for rent, while people who moved to Astana did not mention this.

Artem who is a 30 year old male who moved to Astana stated that he moved to Astana within a week of the announcement of mobilization in Russia. He said that he could somehow settle only after one month after the migration. He also stated that the prices were really high for

rent in Astana. Also, Andrey stated “landlords were hesitant to rent the apartments for newcomers who did not resolve all the questions with documents”. However, after he managed all the documentation questions he managed to find a pretty good apartment.

On the social media platform Threads, people discussed the reasons why people from Russia left Kazakhstan. One of the comments included the high price of rent. Man wrote, “Because Southeast Asia is more interesting in terms of price/quality. Especially in terms of housing and food. \$300 in Astana—a boring studio. In Almaty—a room in a hostel. \$300 in Vietnam—a two-room apartment with free internet, weekly cleaning, and 5 minutes from the sea.” From this comment, it can be seen again that prices in Astana were still more affordable than in Almaty. People may leave the state because of the prices for rent.

People who migrated from Russia were not the only ones who discussed the high rent prices. Local people in both Almaty and Astana also complained and discussed the rise in the rent prices. The reasons for the rise in the prices that were discussed in the community included the high demand for apartments because of the wave of migration to Kazakhstan and people’s desire to make money during the period of high demand. Several articles discussed the reasons and patterns of price raises for rent in Almaty and Astana. On the website GOV.kz, an article published on the 4th of October 2022 called “Prices on the Housing Rental Market in the Republic of Kazakhstan” analyzed the differences between prices before the first wave of migration and after. According to the article (Gov.kz, 2022), prices of apartments rose by 47.2%, and the highest prices were in Almaty, Astana, and Aktau. From these statistics, it can be seen that there was a rise in prices, and the fears of local people and migrants were not random. The main issue was not only the high prices for rent for migrants but also for the local people. Unfortunately, local people started to blame migrants for the increase in prices. I have found

several posts on Threads, social media from Instagram, that discussed the correlation between migrants and prices for rent. Precisely, people wrote, “Rental prices in Almaty have increased due to relocators. As soon as they go back to Russia, prices will fall. Our people won't be able to pay that much.” Overall, it can be seen that the prices rose in Almaty for both locals and migrants. Local people sometimes blamed migrants for this rise.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion**

In this section, the results of the conducted interviews and adaptation experience of Russian migrants in Kazakhstan are viewed through the lens of N. Hutnik’s theory of adaptation. As I have described earlier, N. Hutnik identified four main acculturation strategies that include assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. Through the lens of N. Hutnik’s theory, Russian migrants' experience will be analyzed in terms of language, gender, and general adaptation. Also, the issues with workplaces and accommodation will be discussed in this section. The findings indicate that the dominant adaptation strategy among migrants is integration, particularly due to the shared linguistic and cultural similarities between Russia and Kazakhstan. However, elements of assimilation (language learning), separation (gender and workplace dynamics), and marginalization (identity struggles among younger migrants) are also present. While the adaptation process is facilitated by Russian-speaking environments, challenges such as bureaucracy, housing costs, and gender norms continue to shape migrants' experiences. Finding networks was also one of the factors that was an obstacle in the way of some migrants’ adaptation.

Since the focus of this work is one the migration from Russia to Kazakhstan, the historical and cultural background of Kazakhstan needs to be considered. Firstly, I expected that

Russian migrants in Kazakhstan may face a certain level of discrimination because of the lack of acceptance of Kazakh migrants in Russia. I supposed that people in Kazakhstan would not accept migrants in the same way that migrants are not accepted in Russia. However, from the respondents and in the social media, people did not discuss that they were discriminated against or felt an exclusion from the host society. As Sam & Berry (2010) stated, people who face discrimination in the host society prefer to separate from the locals while those who avoided the discrimination tend to integrate and adapt to the local communities. Possibly, because of the lack of cases of discrimination against the Russian migrants, they managed to adapt well in Kazakhstan. Overall, the literature review covered topics of migration from multiple perspectives but the main theory that will be used for the analysis of the results is N. Hutnik's theory.

#### **Language and adaptation strategies.**

In terms of linguistic adaptation, it can be seen that there were no migrants who faced challenges. It means that the language was not one of the obstacles in the way of integration and assimilation. Because of the widespread use of the Russian language in Kazakhstan, migrants managed to retain their linguistic identity and at the same time effectively communicate in the host society. It was interesting to see that in Soviet times and in the present language was not considered as an obstacle among migrants. As I stated above, language was one of the pull factors of high migration during the Soviet Union (Ramet, 1978). During this research migrants also did not face language barriers after the migration. Linguistic adaptation was a smooth process for the migrants because of the lack of harsh change in the language that people used before migration. As it was discussed by Gurieva et al. (2020), the adaptation process of migrants hugely depended on the proficiency of migrants in the language of the host country since the proficiency allowed people to establish connections with locals. Since in Kazakhstan,

one of the main languages in the community is Russian, the newcomers felt comfortable in communicating with locals in Russian. This shows a strong integration strategy.

However, some migrants, such as Irina, unintentionally acquired Kazakh through daily communication, which can be described as a passive assimilation. At the same time, another respondent showed a mix of passive and active assimilation when she started learning language unintentionally too but then consciously started the learning process. These findings suggest that while the Russian language remains a dominant language of communication in Kazakhstan, some migrants gradually incorporated the Kazakh language into their lives, intentionally or not. It was even mentioned that the linguistic similarities between Kazakhstan and Russia were one of the reasons to move to Kazakhstan.

### **Gender and Cultural Adaptation**

Different from language, gender plays a crucial role in shaping migrants' experiences and adaptation. Female migrants moved to Kazakhstan with their male partners, who took responsibility for accommodation, documentation, and sometimes working for the first time after the migration. This description can be identified as following the traditional gender roles. Additionally, women faced cultural adjustments in terms of clothing, as was described in Katya's case when she needed to change her style to a more modest one because of the dress norms that were present in Almaty. This adjustment represents an adaptive integration strategy because migrants needed to accept the local social expectations while saving their cultural identity too. This integration also can be identified as a respect for the social norms present in the host society.

At the same time, more developed patriarchal norms in the Kazakhstan community were noticed and not accepted by some of the female respondents. As I described in the results

section, the experience of Katya, who faced disregard from the waiter who wanted Katya's husband to decide regarding the food preferences of his wife, highlighted the stronger patriarchal norms in Kazakhstan. Female migrants noticed these cultural differences but did not necessarily accept them for themselves, which shows selective adaptation rather than full assimilation. Similarly, Elena also experienced culture shock because of some traditions present in the Kazakhstan community. However, the Russian migrants were not expected to accept some of the traditions specific to Kazakhstan. In the gender norms section, the lack of acceptance in some aspects can be seen. Females were ready to selectively adapt in terms of clothing and were not ready to assimilate into the questions of patriarchy and traditions specific to the Kazakh community.

### **Social and Economic Adaptation**

The ability of migrants to integrate socially and economically varied between the respondents and depended on individual circumstances. Nikita, who moved from Moscow to Almaty for work, successfully adapted in terms of networking and employment but faced challenges with bureaucracy and high rent. His experience illustrates a partial integration where professional adaptation was successful. The main obstacles that he faced during his adaptation process were economic challenges that were the barrier for full integration. As a result, Nikita moved back to Moscow after our interview. At the same time, Andrey had more obstacles in the social sphere. Andrey pointed out the huge difference between the Russian and Kazakhstan communities in terms of communication style, working habits, and driving manners. He successfully opened the company in Almaty but faced an issue during the hiring process. Again, all respondents faced difficulties in their way of adaptation; the most frequently mentioned of them were bureaucracy and prices for rent. It can be concluded that in social and economic

terms, migrants from Russia did not fully integrate into the Kazakhstan community but rather followed the road of partial adaptation.

An interesting case of adaptation emerged in Irina's family. While she and her husband adapted well to life in Kazakhstan, their child expressed confusion about their place of residence, reflecting an instance of marginalization. It is possible that the traveling between Russia and Kazakhstan to visit relatives contributed to the confusion too. This suggests that while adults may navigate cultural transitions more effectively due to their better preparation for migration and well-established social and professional lives, younger migrants may struggle with identity formation in the context of migration.

### **Employment and stereotypes.**

Employment emerged as a significant factor in the adaptation process, while most migrants managed to find employment before or soon after moving to Kazakhstan. As observed in Katya's case, Russian professionals were highly valued in the Kazakhstan labor market. However, this led to a stereotype that Russian migrants were taking job opportunities from local Kazakhstan workers. Governmental and media narratives tried to address the concerns of the local population, emphasizing that migration could contribute to economic growth by opening new businesses. Even though people were scared of migrants changing the working market in Kazakhstan, only Katya during the interview mentioned that she felt a priority during the process of job search while Sasha, Dasha and Masha continued working in the online sphere after the migration.

Despite these perceptions, some employers hesitated to hire Russian migrants due to their long-term commitment to staying in Kazakhstan. This hesitation represents a structural barrier to full integration, as economic stability plays a crucial role in successful adaptation. At the same

time, during the process of interviews, all of the interviewees were employed. Possibly, the hesitation that employers felt at the start was resolved because Russian migrants showed an ability for a long-term commitment.

Another part of stereotypes included the accommodation question. As the interviewees mentioned and people discussed on social media, the prices for rent increased significantly after the first wave of migration, September–October 2022. The increase in prices for apartments was challenging not only for migrants but also for local people. Because of the correlation between the increase in prices and the coming of relocators, people in Kazakhstan blamed newcomers for the change in prices. This again created an obstacle in the process of migrants' integration in Kazakhstan because locals blamed migrants for the increase in prices.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

This work aimed to analyze the experience of migrants who came to Kazakhstan under the stressful circumstances of the mobilization announcement in September 2022. On the official government website GOV.kz, there was an article about the migration situation at the end of 2022 (GOV.kz, 2022). According to the article, the number of migrants in Kazakhstan compiled 5,610,000 foreigners, 2,900,000 of whom were from the Russian Federation (GOV.kz, 2022). From these statistics, it can be seen that the number of migrants who came to Kazakhstan was pretty big. However, it can be suggested that some of the migrants left the state after the migration since, even within my scope of research, some of the respondents returned to Russia or are planning to move further. Overall, the trend of coming to Kazakhstan was huge in 2022. Because of the large number of newcomers in the state, I was interested in the analysis of their experiences in Kazakhstan. The outsiders' perspective on the Kazakhstan community could

increase awareness of local people and see themselves from the outside perspective. The main reason for the high migration rate to Kazakhstan was an announcement of the mobilization process in the Russian Federation, which forced the young generation to leave the state and migrate. Thus, it can be stated that migration to Kazakhstan and other states can be considered forced. The main goal was to analyze the migration experience of Russian citizens in Kazakhstan closely. The research question was formulated as, If the Russian migrants tried to adapt in Kazakhstan, what were their main strategies for adaptation, and what were the main obstacles in their way?

I was particularly interested in the topic because of the novelty of the trend of people coming to Kazakhstan from the Russian Federation. As was discussed in the previously made research by other scholars, people migrated from Russia to Kazakhstan in large waves during the Soviet period, but their motivation differed from recent-time migrants. Precisely, Ramet (1978) and Finke et al. (2013), who closely analyzed the migration patterns between Kazakhstan and Russia, stated that during the Soviet period, Kazakhstan was considered the place of working opportunities with comfortable conditions of language and accommodation, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan experienced an economic decline, and people started to migrate in diverse directions (from Kazakhstan to Russia) in search of better opportunities. From this case, it can be concluded that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, people migrated to Russia from Kazakhstan in more cases than in another direction. It means that the trend of people's migration in large quantities from the Russian Federation to Kazakhstan repeated in 2022 after the Soviet period. The recency of the trend also shows the gap in the previously made research, because scholars did not have an opportunity to analyze the experience of large numbers of migrants in Kazakhstan in modern times.

After conducting in-depth interviews and making digital ethnography, I have noticed that among the most frequently mentioned obstacles in the way of adaptation in Kazakhstan, female interviewees mentioned gender and clothing norms that are specific to Kazakhstan, and male migrants stated the bureaucratic processes and prices for rent. This finding shows that the migration experience depended on the gender of the migrant. Also, I did not have female interviewees who moved to Kazakhstan alone, which may affect the result of gender-specific experience. The language was the easiest aspect of adaptation for all respondents of the interview because of the widespread usage of the Russian language in the state. It was interesting to see that in both Soviet times and the present, language was one of the pull factors for the migration to Kazakhstan. In terms of general acceptance of the social norms in Kazakhstan and finding networks, people's experiences are highly differentiated. Some of the interviewees and people on social media mentioned the inability to acquire meaningful relationships after the migration. However, in social media, migrants from Russia who complained about loneliness received support from other users and were invited to several events. At the same time, some of the interviewees managed to find friends among colleagues or had friends in Kazakhstan before the migration. Driving manners and people's lack of hard work were mentioned as aspects needed for adaptation. Overall, the findings of the research show that migrants' experiences in Kazakhstan hugely varied, but the biggest part of the respondents followed the road of partial integration, meaning that they adapted in some aspects but preserved their identities and habits in others. However, the patterns of separation and marginalization could also be traced among migrants.

One of the implications of these findings may be an improvement in the integration programs for Kazakhstan that acknowledge the varied and complex ways of migration to the

state. Considering the fact that Kazakhstan was not ready to accept and integrate such a large number of migrants, the ideas of the policy change may be beneficial for the future. Firstly, I suggest that policy frameworks should not assume an automatic integration because of the shared linguistic practices and common history. It can be seen that migrants searched for information regarding the documentation in the Telegram chats among the people who had already experienced the migration rather than on the official websites or special institutions. It means that there should be more support for people who moved to the state for the first time, possibly in the form of Q&A sessions about the documentation processes. Marginalization of vulnerable groups such as females and children may also be resolved by some integrating programs. The targeted support of the vulnerable groups could help females navigate the gender norms in Kazakhstan, and younger generations may be helped with the struggles of identity construction. Last but not least was the question of accommodation. Both local and migrant populations struggled with the increase in prices in the real estate market. Urban planning and housing policies in the form of better control over accommodation prices could decrease the tension for the newcomers and locals and decrease the tension between these two groups. Overall, the main implication of this work is an improvement of the policies present in the state.

While this study focused on the migrants who came to Almaty and Astana, further research is needed to approach people who moved not only in these areas but also in other cities. The broader research may be useful for a more profound understanding of the migrants' experiences across Kazakhstan. Also, the number of respondents is limited in this research work, which makes the findings not applicable to the whole migrant population in the state. However, the main goal of this study was the close analysis of several cases, meaning that a large number of respondents were planned in this work.

Further research may include more respondents to increase the generalizability of the studies. Furthermore, it would be interesting to analyze the situation of migrants from Russia who came in 2022 and stayed for longer than five years to see their adaptation in the long-term perspective. As stated in the literature review, the longevity of living in a particular country may influence people's attachment to this place (Diener & Hagen, 2022). It means that the study after some time of people living in Kazakhstan may change the results. Possibly, the struggles that people experience right after the migration would change over a longer period.

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