

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN RESOLVING SOCIAL AND LABOUR CONFLICTS IN QAZAQSTAN: ECONOMIC FACTORS AND LABOUR RIGHTS PROTECTION POLICY

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the economic factors contributing to social-labour conflicts in Qazaqstan and the role of state policy in safeguarding labour rights. It emphasises the role of civil servants in preventing and resolving these conflicts, which pose significant risks to social stability. Despite limited coverage of civil servants' roles in the literature, their involvement is crucial in managing labour conflicts. Drawing on Qazaqstan's historical legacy of mediation, such as the *biys'* courts and contemporary governance frameworks, this study emphasises the critical role of civil servants as mediators, policymakers, and enforcers of labour laws. Civil servants play a significant role in improving the workplace environment, collaborating with trade unions, and developing social partnership strategies. This study also examines judicial practices in labour rights protection, offering valuable insights for policymakers and researchers. By analysing legislative documents, court statistics, and prior studies, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of these challenges and propose recommendations to improve labour relations in Qazaqstan. By integrating international best practices with Qazaqstan's unique cultural context, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers and researchers focused on transitional economies and labour relations.

Keywords: *public policy, civil servants, social conflict, competencies, mediation, economic factors, judicial practices, labour disputes, labour monitoring.*

INTRODUCTION

Qazaqstan has a long history of conflict resolution practices that emphasise the importance of reconciliation and social harmony. Qazaqstan's tradition of *biys'* courts, focusing on reconciliation and social stability, serves as a cultural foundation for modern mediation practices in labour disputes. These historical courts focused on mediation, and their primary goal was to restore peace and stability in the community, based on principles of fairness and equity. The sayings of the *biys*, such as «A judge is not the one who simply administers justice, but the one who brings the parties to reconciliation,' underscore the emphasis placed on amicable solutions. Modern Qazaqstan continues to draw inspiration from this rich historical heritage, incorporating mediation practices inspired by the legacy of the *biys'* courts. The historical role of *biys'* courts in Qazaqstan, where judges known as '*biys*' settled disputes with a focus on reconciliation and social balance, has had a lasting influence on modern labour relations. These traditional courts emphasised mediation, where the goal was not only to administer justice but to achieve mutual understanding and restore harmony. The wisdom of *biys* is captured in the saying, «A judge is not the one who simply administers justice, but the one who brings the parties to reconciliation». In contemporary Qazaqstan, these values

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resonate in state efforts to mediate and resolve labour conflicts, providing a cultural foundation for the modern mediation practices adopted in labour dispute settlements.

Recent shifts in Qazaqstan's economic development and social policy have significantly impacted labour relations. The transition from a planned economy to a market-oriented model marked the beginning of substantial changes in labour dynamics (Labour Code of the Republic of Qazaqstan, 2015). Economic factors, particularly income inequality, low wages, and structural changes in the labour market, are primary drivers of social-labour conflicts (Bekturganov, 2019). Violations of labour rights and perceived social injustices create tensions in labour relations, fuelling worker discontent and potentially leading to broader social unrest. The increase in labour disputes and protest activities in Qazaqstan is rooted in various social, economic and institutional factors (Ismailov, 2024). Employers' attempts to use financial resources for their own interests and instances of social injustice intensify social dissatisfaction among the population. In such circumstances, labour disputes not only have an economic character but also become a primary cause of social unrest and conflicts.

Economic inequalities affect the emergence of political violence, and employers' attempts to concentrate financial resources and institutional power often exacerbate social grievances leading to unrest (Justino, 2025). Labour disputes often arise from disagreements over wages and issues within the framework of the Labour Code of Qazaqstan (2015).²

State oversight bodies, such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Qazaqstan and the Prosecutor-General's office, are responsible for monitoring compliance with labour legislation in enterprises. In 2024, the number of inspections conducted by state bodies increased by 8%. As a result, it was revealed that employers owed 3.3 billion tenge to 15,000 employees, 79% of which was repaid.³ The deterioration of working conditions, lack of social guarantees, and insufficient protection of workers' rights provoke social tensions (Kelly, 1998). The accumulation of unresolved issues, especially those of a collective nature, can lead to protest actions, strikes, or other social conflicts (Dunlop, 1958). Failure to conduct timely negotiations and reach agreements may result in social instability, economic losses, escalation of potential events, and decreased public trust in the authorities (Metcalf, 1982; Hyman, 1975).

Civil servants play a key coordinating role in developing and implementing labour policies aimed at improving working conditions and reducing violations (Parry, 2004). Strengthening accountability for employers, enhancing measures to protect employees, and increasing social responsibility are indicators of the civil servant's image as a professional manager (Katz et al., 2015). In cases of labour disputes, civil servants often act as mediators, assisting in resolving conflicts between workers and employers (Saundry et al., 2014). This is particularly evident in situations such as wage delays and non-compliance with labour conditions.

Effective management of social-labour disputes at the state level requires political stability and coordinated work of state bodies (Bamber et al., 2016). Workers and employers face difficulties

² These include low wages, delayed or unpaid salaries, violations of workers' rights during termination of employment contracts, improper documentation of labour contracts, unauthorised use of employees' overtime, and inadequate working conditions. *Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Chairman of the SPECA: A new impetus in the protection of workers' rights in Central Asia*. News. kasipodaq.kz.

³ Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Monitoring Report (2024): Response to the letter of Vice-Rector N. Ä. Bekish of the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (for official use only).

in effectively utilising the dispute resolution system (Smagulov, 2021). The role of civil servants in regulating social-labour relations is quite significant. Scholars researching this area support this view (Lewin, 2005). In current conditions, the communicative and legal literacy of civil servants plays a special role in re-solving disputes (Katz et al., 2015). The professional competence of civil servants comes to the forefront. Civil service acts as a mediator in intergovernmental relations, facilitating communication and cooperation among various governmental bodies (Parry, 2004). As noted by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the need for tools such as emotional intelligence becomes apparent (Tokayev, 2021). Additionally, challenges and complexities require civil servants to effectively navigate multifaceted issues (Lan, 1997). Even though the state's priority policy is to develop production facilities and small and medium-sized businesses, labour disputes in private employment are increasing (Bekturganov, 2019). This necessitates innovative conflict management strategies to alleviate the burden on both employees and employers (Saundry et al., 2014). Furthermore, the influence of trade unions in Qazaqstan, compared to developed European countries, remains relatively weak. In large enterprises, trade unions play a significant role in developing collective agreements, which helps resolve conflicts at an early stage. However, in small businesses, the situation remains complicated, as approximately 48% of enterprises do not conclude collective agreements (Bekturganov, 2019). Civil servants play a crucial role in preventing and resolving labour conflicts, acting as coordinators, mediators, and policymakers. Their responsibilities include protecting workers' rights and maintaining social stability, which is especially important in the context of rising social and labour conflicts. To effectively fulfil this role, civil servants must possess a wide range of competencies and actively participate in regulating labour relations. Strengthening these competencies requires continuous education and training, focusing on skills such as mediation, negotiation, emotional intelligence, and legal literacy. By enhancing their abilities, civil servants can more effectively address the challenges of labour conflicts and contribute to a stable labour environment.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the primary economic, psychological, and institutional factors contributing to social-labour conflicts in Qazaqstan?
- How effective are the current judicial practices and state policies in resolving labour disputes and protecting labour rights?
- What lessons can be drawn from international experiences to improve conflict resolution mechanisms in Qazaqstan?

By addressing these questions, the study aims to enhance the understanding of labour disputes in Qazaqstan and offer practical recommendation for policymakers, judicial bodies, and stakeholders involved in labour relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic factors and labour disputes.

Economic foundations of social-labour conflicts have long intrigued scholars due to their critical role in labour relations. Disparities in wages, especially between foreign and domestic workers, as well as a lack of wage indexation, emerge as primary economic causes of labour disputes (Metcalf, 1982; Avgar et al., 2023). Income inequality not only exacerbates social injustices but also leads to heightened tensions and potential conflicts. Avgar et al. (2023) argue that labour disputes have far-reaching implications, disrupting production processes and

affecting employees' social well-being. The economic instability faced by workers' families further compounds these effects, diminishing overall societal welfare. In Qazaqstan, economic factors such as low wages, delayed payments, income inequality, and insufficient protection of labour rights are central to the emergence of social-labour conflicts. These factors highlight the urgent need for substantial reforms in labour relations regulation to improve workers' conditions and prevent conflicts.

Social-psychological factors.

A significant factor contributing to labour disputes is workers' inability to influence managerial decisions or effectively defend their rights (Jehn and Mannix, 2001). This underscores the importance of fostering an inclusive work environment and promoting psycho-logical stability among employees (Katz et al., 2015). A supportive psychological climate within labour collectives plays a crucial role in preventing conflicts and promoting collaboration (Lewin, 2005). Moreover, institutional shortcomings, such as the inactivity of employers' associations and inadequate legal frameworks for resolving labour disputes, further complicate the resolution process (Godard, 2002). Weak trade unions, unable to effectively represent workers, also contribute to the escalation of disputes, prompting workers to resort to protests to make their voices heard, thereby intensifying social tensions (Katz et al., 2015).

Role of civil servants in conflict resolution.

Civil servants are pivotal in managing and mitigating labour conflicts (Parry, 2004). The historical influence of biys' courts in Qazaqstan provides a cultural foundation for modern mediation practices. These traditional courts emphasised dialogue and reconciliation, setting a precedent for contemporary conflict resolution mechanisms. Today, civil servants embody this legacy by acting as mediators in labour disputes, aiming to restore social harmony through communication. Their competencies, including negotiation skills and legal literacy, are critical to successful conflict resolution (Katz et al., 2015). As mediators, civil servants help negotiate between employers and workers to reach mutually agreeable solutions (Saundry et al., 2014), which is essential for improving workplace environments and fostering effective social partnerships (Lan, 1997). The role of civil servants in Qazaqstan is characterised by a unique blend of historical and cultural influences, adding a distinct Qazaq colour to their approach in mediating disputes.

Evolution of public agencies in conflict resolution.

Avgar et al. (2023) provide a detailed analysis of the evolving role of public dispute resolution agencies across six English-speaking countries. Historically focused on collective labour disputes, these agencies have shifted their emphasis in response to declining union membership and the rise of individual employment conflicts. In countries like the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, public agencies have increasingly turned their attention to individual grievances, underlining the growing relevance of mediation and arbitration. This shift emphasises the need for public agencies to adapt to changing labour dynamics, particularly with the increase in non-union workplaces.

Role of public agencies in non-union sectors.

Public agencies in many countries face challenges in addressing labour disputes within non-union sectors. Avgar et al. (2023) point out that the increasing prevalence of non-union firms has led to a rise in private mediation and arbitration services. In the United States, the Federal

Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) has been reluctant to expand into non-union sectors due to statutory and practical limitations. In contrast, agencies in countries like New Zealand and Canada have allowed private mediators to fill this gap. This trend highlights the limitations of public agencies and the need for proactive measures to address conflicts in non-union environments.

Supporting trade unions and collective bargaining.

The literature underscores the importance of supporting trade unions and collective bargaining as vital elements in reducing labour conflicts. Strong trade unions and effective collective bargaining contribute to workplace stability by fostering social partnerships at the enterprise level (Wang and Fang, 2020). Ethical considerations also play a crucial role in conflict resolution. Civil servants are expected to uphold neutrality and confidentiality, building trust between the parties and ensuring fair conditions for resolving disputes. Continuous professional development for civil servants in labour law and conflict management is necessary to adapt to legislative changes and implement effective conflict management strategies (Budd and Colvin, 2021). Overall, a comprehensive approach involving analytical tools, interagency collaboration, and skill development is essential for preventing and resolving labour conflicts, while safeguarding social stability and workers' rights.

State policy and legislative framework.

State policy aimed at protecting workers' rights through legislative measures has had mixed results. Although the Labour Code of Qazaqstan (2015) and subsequent amendments seek to regulate labour relations effectively, enforcement challenges and weak control mechanisms often undermine these efforts (Smagulov, 2021). Addressing these enforcement gaps is crucial for ensuring that labour rights are protected in practice, not just in law. If we compare economically strong countries like the United States and China with a developing country like Qazaqstan, we observe diverse socio-political contexts and institutional frameworks in labour dispute management. In the United States, labour relations are characterised by a balance between workers' rights and employers' interests, supported by public agencies like the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). Collective bargaining plays a pivotal role in conflict resolution, yet the rise of non-union sectors has challenged traditional approaches, necessitating adaptation by public agencies (Avogar et al., 2023). In contrast, Chinese labour unions operate under significant state control, with union representatives often appointed by management, limiting their ability to advocate effectively for workers (Fan et al., 2018). The absence of independent unions and the monopolistic voice mechanism contributes to frequent labour conflicts, underscoring the need for institutional reforms to increase union autonomy.

Qazaqstan, drawing from its cultural legacy of *biys'* courts, integrates traditional mediation practices with modern legal frameworks to manage labour disputes. Civil servants play a key role in this process, emphasising a culturally nuanced approach that combines historical traditions with contemporary practices. However, economic challenges, weak trade unions, and enforcement issues in labour legislation continue to hinder effective conflict resolution (Smagulov, 2021). Fan et al. (2018) observed that Chinese unions are frequently appointed by management, limiting their ability to effectively represent workers' interests. Unlike their Western counterparts, Chinese unions lack monopolistic power, which hinders the implementation of the "voice mechanism" and often results in increased labour conflicts. The findings suggest that state control over unions significantly limits their effectiveness, thereby contributing to rising conflicts (Fan et al., 2018). Effective resolution of labour disputes requires

consideration of these institutional contexts and efforts to increase union autonomy, which could help mitigate conflicts and improve socio-labour relations.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative analysis of court case data from the Supreme Court of Qazaqstan (2021-2023) and qualitative content analysis of media publications, trade union reports, and academic literature. The legislative analysis includes examining the Labour Code of the Republic of Qazaqstan and its amendments to identify changes affecting labour relations and the resolution of labour disputes. Statistical analysis involves reviewing court practice data to assess trends in labour disputes and the effectiveness of pre-trial settlement procedures. A content analysis of media publications, trade union reports, and academic literature is conducted to identify common problems, challenges, and prospects in the field of labour disputes. Comparative analysis aims to juxtapose labour relations and dispute resolution mechanisms in Qazaqstan with those of other countries, especially those with transitional economies, to identify best practices.

Data sources include legislative documents such as the Labour Code of the Republic of Qazaqstan (2015) and normative resolutions of the Supreme Court; judicial statistics from the Supreme Court of the Republic of Qazaqstan for the years 2021–2023; data on labour disputes across various economic sectors; international reports from the International Labour Organisation and other relevant organisations; and academic literature on labour relations, industrial conflicts, and judicial practice. The analytical framework of the study provides for statistical analysis of labour dispute trends, sectoral distribution, and regional variations; comparative analysis with international practices and experiences; theoretical integration by applying relevant theories in labour economics, industrial relations, and conflict resolution; and case studies for an in-depth analysis of specific labour disputes to illustrate key issues and outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study presents an economic analysis of labour disputes in Qazaqstan, emphasising trends and sectoral distribution, statistical patterns, psychological and social factors, as well as institutional challenges that hinder effective conflict resolution. Trend analysis reveals a notable 20% reduction in registered labour disputes, decreasing from 6,770 cases in 2021 to 5,394 in 2023. Nonetheless, the highest incidence of conflicts is concentrated in the oil and gas sector, construction, and manufacturing industries. These sectors are characterised by substantial foreign investments and significant wage disparities, which contribute to the prevalence of labour disputes. Regional variations further highlight a concentration of conflicts in industrially intensive areas, particularly within the Atyrau and Mangystau provinces, where vigorous industrial activities foster an environment conducive to labour disputes. Statistical analysis indicates that approximately 74.1% of labour disputes are associated with wage delays or non-payment.³ Additionally, significant wage disparities between employees in foreign-owned enterprises and their expatriate counterparts exacerbate worker dissatisfaction. These findings underscore systemic issues in wage regulation and the provision of equitable working conditions. Psychological and social factors play a critical role in the dynamics of labour disputes. The low level of employee participation in decision-making processes, as evidenced by some studies, can lead to feelings of alienation and lack of involvement. Furthermore, adverse working conditions and inadequate organisational support negatively impact employee morale, thereby increasing the potential for conflicts.

Institutional challenges impeding effective labour dispute resolution include the inefficacy of trade unions and complexities within the judicial system. Only approximately 52% of enterprises maintain active collective agreements, and overall union membership remains low. Legislative changes, such as the 2015 Trade Unions Law, have imposed stringent registration requirements, thereby limiting the capacity of trade unions to protect workers' rights (Smagulov, 2021). The judicial system faces procedural complexities, including jurisdictional ambiguities, particularly when employers are undergoing rehabilitation or bankruptcy procedures. Mandatory conciliation processes create additional barriers, often resulting in the improper application of legal norms and the unjust dismissal of claims.

The effectiveness of labour dispute resolution remains constrained. Between 2021 and 2023, approximately 52% of cases were resolved in favour of workers. However, a significant proportion of decisions are subject to appeals, frequently due to procedural errors or misinterpretation of legal statutes. Economic factors, such as income inequality and wage disparities, are substantial drivers of socio-labour conflicts in Qazaqstan (Ismailov, 2024). Low wage levels, exacerbated by rising inflation and increased living costs, generate widespread worker discontent (Bekturganov, 2019). The absence of wage indexation mechanisms further erodes real incomes amid inflationary pressures (Statistics committee, 2023). Wage disparities between foreign and domestic workers foster perceptions of social injustice (Bekturganov, 2019). In foreign enterprises operating in Qazaqstan, local workers often receive significantly lower salaries compared to their foreign counterparts, leading to resentment and frustration.²

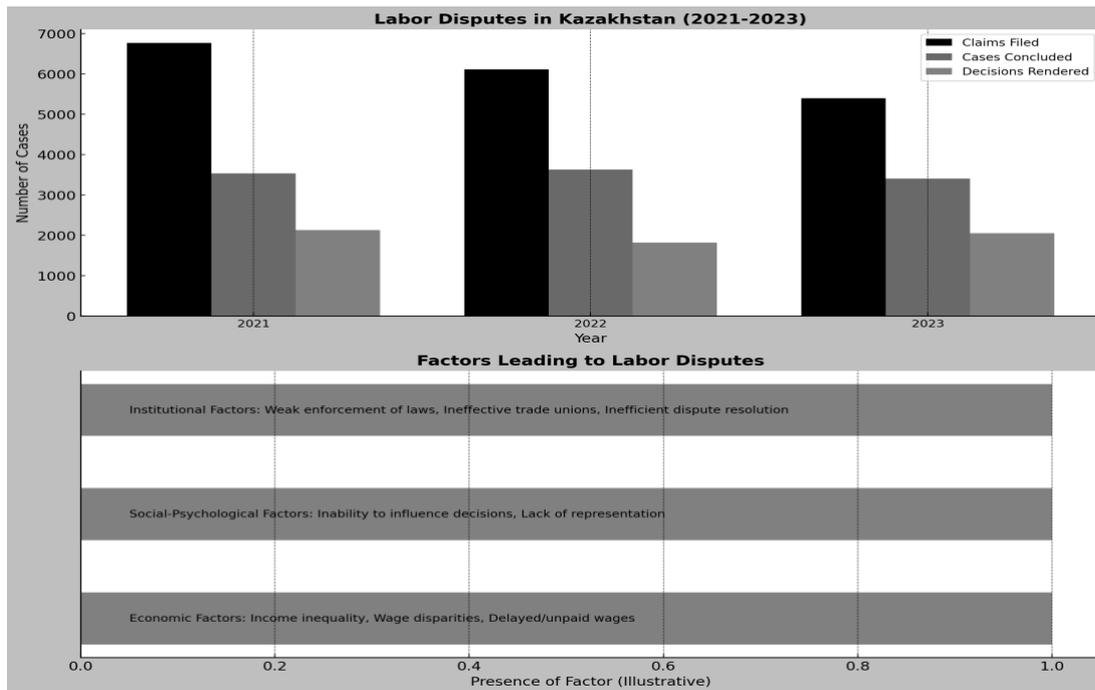
Delays in wage payments and non-payment are pervasive issues precipitating labour disputes. In 2024, violations related to wage delays accounted for 74.1% of labour rights infringements.³ Such practices undermine workers' trust in employers and can incite strikes and protests.

Institutional challenges in labour dispute resolution also encompass the weak enforcement of labour legislation and the ineffectiveness of trade unions. Despite the existence of legal frameworks designed to protect workers' rights, enforcement remains inadequate (Smagulov, 2021). State inspections identify numerous violations, yet penalties are often insufficient to deter recurrent offenses. In 2024, administrative fines for labour law violations increased by 58%, yet employer non-compliance persists.³

Trade unions in Qazaqstan exert limited influence in advocating for workers' rights.² Legislative amendments, such as the 2015 Trade unions law, have imposed stricter registration requirements and diminished their capacity to mediate labour relations (Smagulov, 2021). Consequently, workers frequently lack effective representation in negotiations with employers. Additionally, conciliation commissions established to facilitate the pre-trial settlement of labour disputes (Labour Code, 2015) face significant efficacy issues. Many commissions lack adequate legal authority and independence, rendering their decisions non-binding. Both workers and employers often perceive the conciliation process as bureaucratic and ineffective, leading to widespread dissatisfaction (Smagulov, 2021).

A complex interplay of economics, social, and institutional factors significantly influences the dynamics of labour disputes in Qazaqstan. Addressing these challenges necessitates the strengthening of law enforcement mechanisms, enhancing the role of trade unions, and reforming the judicial system to ensure fair and effective resolution of labour conflicts.

Figure 1. Labour disputes in Qazaqstan (2021-2023)



Civil servants’ role in managing labour disputes

Civil servants are instrumental in preventing and resolving labour disputes (Parry, 2004). They act as mediators, facilitating dialogue between workers and employers (Saundry et al., 2014). Their competencies, including communication skills, legal knowledge, and emotional intelligence, are crucial in addressing complex issues (Lan, 1997; Tokayev, 2021). In response to rising labour disputes, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection established a situational center in February 2021 to prevent and monitor labour conflicts.³ Regional monitoring groups, including trade union representatives, were also formed to address issues proactively. During the research for this article, materials were collected that reflect the overall picture of labour relations in Qazaqstan. By analysing and utilising data from various sources, a detailed study of the current labour market situation and the factors contributing to the emergence of labour conflicts was conducted.

The Government of the Republic of Qazaqstan undertook a systematic monitoring of labour conditions in enterprises to prevent the occurrence of labour conflicts. By the deadline of November 29, 2023, a total of 5,834 inspections were conducted by state labour inspectors, resulting in the identification of 8,936 violations. Of these, 6,600 were related to workers' labour rights, 2,094 concerned occupational health and safety standards, and 242 pertained to labour legislation. In response to the identified violations, 3,741 notices were issued to employers, and administrative fines amounting to 339.5 million tenge were imposed in 2,046 cases.

The establishment of the Situational Center under the Ministry of Labour in February 2021 became a key element of the system for preventing labour conflicts, aimed at the early detection and prevention of disputes. In 2023, an additional 152 enterprises were included in the conflict monitoring system, significantly expanding the scope of control, especially in regions such as Mangystau, Atyrau, and Akmola.

Analysis of strikes by region and sector revealed that the most affected industries are the oil and gas sector, mining and metallurgy, as well as public services and contracting. The Mangystau region became the epicentre of labour conflicts with seven strikes, followed by the Atyrau region with three strikes, the West Qazaqstan and Aktobe regions with two strikes each, and single strikes reported in other regions. The main demands of workers include wage increases, transfer to permanent contracts within subsidiaries of *KazMunayGas*, improved working conditions, payment of bonuses, wage indexation, and guarantees against layoffs. Legal analysis showed that many strikes were declared illegal due to non-compliance with established procedures for submitting demands, highlighting the need to increase workers' awareness of legitimate channels for expressing their grievances. Specifically, five strikes were officially ruled illegal, indicating the necessity of enhancing educational programmes on the legal aspects of labour relations.

The issue of wage arrears remains acute: inspections revealed 6.3 billion tenge in unpaid wages across 940 enterprises. Of this amount, 915.3 million tenge remains unpaid to 1,900 workers across 34 enterprises, and an additional 773.3 million tenge in wage arrears was identified in 45 bankrupt enterprises. These data indicate the need for prompt resolution of employers' financial obligations to workers to prevent further labour conflicts.

Government measures include the creation of inter-agency task forces to prevent labour conflicts, collaboration between *KazMunayGas* and contractors to improve working conditions, conducting social surveys to monitor the well-being and morale of workers, and overseeing the establishment of long-term contracts to stabilise employment, especially in industries dependent on short-term projects. Our study confirms the critical role of civil servants in managing labour conflicts, highlighting three key areas of their responsibilities: legal mediation, the development of social partnership policies, and monitoring compliance with labour legislation.

First, legal mediation and advisory support provided by civil servants contribute to reducing workplace tensions and strengthening public trust in state institutions. As noted by Gahan et al. (2023), civil servants' involvement in resolving labour disputes through legal consultations helps both parties understand their rights and obligations, which in turn reduces the likelihood of conflicts. Our findings indicate that mediation and advisory support play a significant role in preventing the escalation of labour disputes.

Second, the development and implementation of social partnership policies enable early identification and prevention of potential conflicts. In the context of rising labour disputes, the involvement of civil servants in facilitating collective agreements between employers and employees formalises cooperation and fosters dialogue. Our results are consistent with the findings of Wilkinson et al. (2020), who emphasise that such initiatives reduce workplace tensions and contribute to more stable labour relations.

Finally, monitoring and enforcing labour legislation help minimise the risks of labour conflicts. Regular inspections and strict oversight of compliance with occupational health and safety standards create a preventive effect, reducing the likelihood of violations and disputes. As OECD (2022) data indicate, effective monitoring significantly decreases the number of labour violations, and our findings confirm that regular inspections indeed help prevent conflicts at an early stage.

Thus, our study underscores the importance of a comprehensive approach in the work of civil servants, encompassing legal mediation, the development of social partnership, and consistent

monitoring of compliance. These functions not only contribute to conflict reduction but also strengthen social stability, highlighting the need for further efforts to develop the competencies and resources of civil servants involved in labour relations management

International context and comparative analysis

Labour monitoring and conflict prevention practices in Qazaqstan can be compared with international standards and approaches adopted in other countries. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), effective monitoring of labour conditions and proactive measures to prevent conflicts are key elements in ensuring fair and safe working environments (ILO, 2020). In this context, Qazaqstan is taking steps that align with international recommendations; however, there are areas for improvement. For instance, the European Union implements comprehensive labour monitoring systems that combine regular inspections with active involvement of workers and employers in the conflict prevention process (European Commission, 2022). In comparison, Qazaqstan's system, represented by the Situational Center, demonstrates similar objectives but could benefit from integrating broader stakeholder participation and employing advanced risk early warning methods.

In the United States, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) utilises incident analysis data and technological tools to predict and prevent labour conflicts (OSHA, 2021). Qazaqstan could consider adopting similar technological solutions to enhance the effectiveness of its monitoring and conflict prevention efforts.

Moreover, Nordic countries such as Sweden and Norway are known for their high levels of social dialogue and cooperation between employers, employees, and the government, which contribute to reducing the number of labour conflicts (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2023). In Qazaqstan, strengthening social dialogue and involving trade unions in the decision-making process could help improve labour relations and reduce workplace tensions.

Comparison with international examples shows that Qazaqstan has made significant progress in the field of labour monitoring and conflict prevention. However, the implementation of additional practices, such as the use of advanced technologies and the enhancement of social dialogue, could further improve the system.

Table 1. Distribution of labour conflicts by company, region, and industry

Company	Region	Industry	Employees
KKS-SICIM	West Qazaqstan	Oil pipeline construction	3,081
Senimdi Qurylys	Atyrau	Construction	8,650
Kaz Cargo Express	West Qazaqstan	Other construction	480
Caspian Drilling	Mangystau	Well repair	80
Caspian Drilling LLP	Atyrau	Well repair	630

Regional distribution

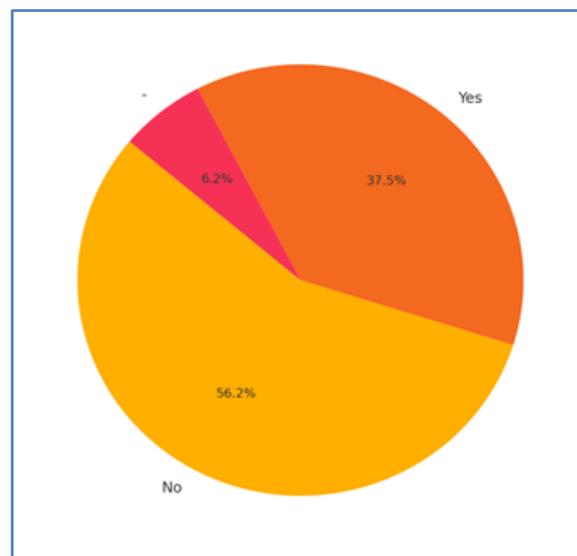
Conflicts are concentrated in West Qazaqstan, Atyrau, and Mangystau regions. These areas have strong ties to the construction and oil and gas industries, indicating that sectors involved in energy infrastructure tend to experience more labour tensions. The majority of labour conflicts occur in construction and well repair sectors. Oil pipeline construction is particularly prone to disputes, likely due to the challenging nature of the work and the reliance on project-based contracts.

Impact of company size. Larger companies, such as *Senimdi Kurylis* with 8650 employees, face more complex labour relations, which can increase the risk of conflicts. Smaller companies, like Caspian Drilling (80 employees), also encounter disputes, suggesting that labour unrest is not only tied to company size but also to working conditions and management practices.

Addressing regional conflicts

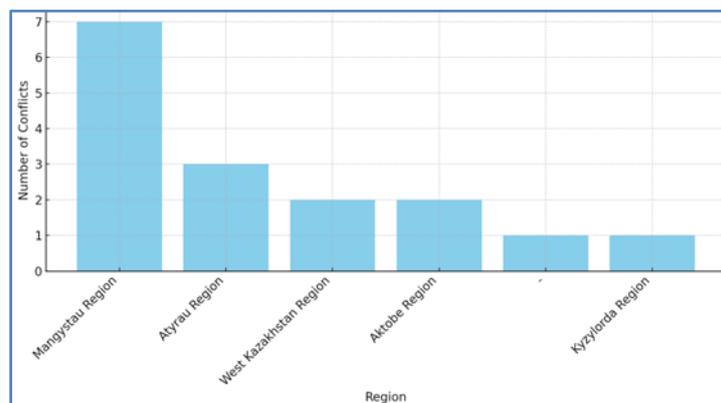
Focused efforts are needed in Mangystau and Atyrau regions, where energy-related operations are central to the economy but prone to disputes. Strengthening labour relations in construction and oil sectors. Management in these industries should focus on improving working conditions, ensuring fair wages, and promoting better communication with employees to reduce labour unrest. Balancing company size and labour stability. Both large and small companies face challenges, suggesting that conflict prevention strategies need to be adapted to different organisational structures.

Figure 2. Distribution of conflicts by trade union presence



Role of trade unions. companies with active union participation, like Caspian Drilling, show that while unions provide a platform for worker dialogue, they may not always prevent conflicts. A deeper focus on mediation and conflict resolution mechanisms is recommended.

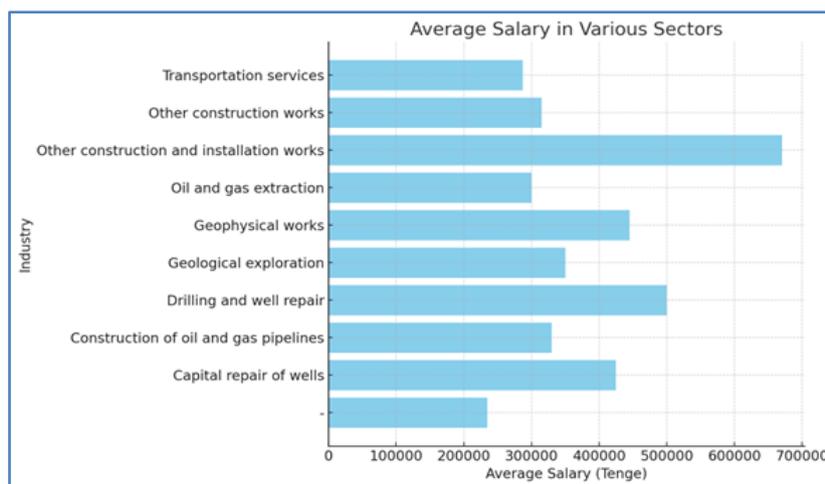
Figure 3. Number of labour conflicts by region



Regional distribution of conflicts

Mangystau region has the highest number of labour conflicts, with 7 recorded cases. This suggests that the region, heavily involved in oil and gas extraction, faces significant labour issues. Atyrau region follows with four conflicts, reinforcing that areas with a focus on the oil and gas industry experience more frequent labour unrest. West Qazaqstan region and Aktobe region show moderate levels of conflict. Kyzylorda region has one conflict, indicating relatively fewer issues or better labour relations. The concentration of conflicts in industrial regions highlights the correlation between economic activity (especially in resource-heavy industries) and labour unrest.

Figure 4. Average salary in various sectors



Note: (X-axis — industries (oil and gas, construction, transportation, etc.). Y-axis — average salary in tenge. A bar chart showing differences in salaries across industries.)

Salary distribution

Highest average salaries were reported in sectors like drilling and well repair (500,000 tenge) and other construction and installation works (670,000 tenge). This suggests higher wages in sectors demanding specialised skills or involving hazardous work. Lower average salaries were seen in sectors such as geological exploration (350,000 tenge) and transportation services (275,000 tenge), which might contribute to dissatisfaction and conflict. The data shows that salary disparities across sectors can lead to grievances, especially when employees perceive wages to be insufficient for the risks or effort involved.

Judicial practice and procedural issues

The analysis of court data on labour disputes in Qazaqstan reveals a steady trend of decreasing claims filed in courts, with numbers dropping from 6,770 cases in 2021 to 6,117 in 2022, and further to 5,394 in 2023 (Figure 5). This decrease may suggest a potential improvement in labour relations between employers and employees, leading to fewer workplace conflicts. However, it could also reflect reduced access to justice, possibly due to increased procedural complexity or insufficient awareness among employees regarding their rights. To accurately assess the reasons for this decline, additional analysis of socio-economic factors and recent legislative changes is necessary.

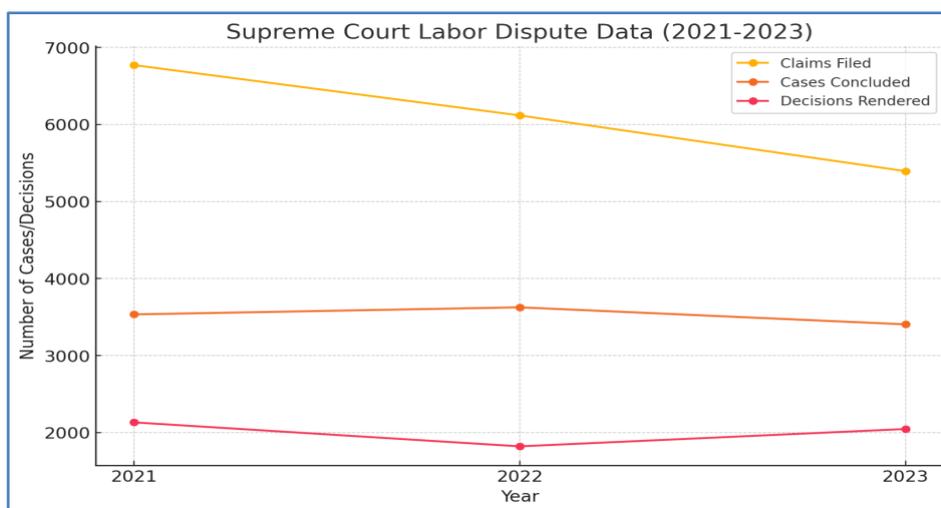
Table 2. Supreme Court's labour dispute data (2021–2023)

№	Year	Claims filed	Cases concluded	Decisions rendered
1	2021	6,770	3,534	2,132
2	2022	6,117	3,626	1,821
3	2023	5,394	3,405	2,046

Source: Supreme Court of Qazaqstan, 2024.

The number of claims filed decreased each year, from 6,770 in 2021 to 5,394 in 2023. Steady case conclusion: Despite fewer claims, the number of cases concluded remained relatively stable (3,534 in 2021 to 3,405 in 2023). There was a decline in decisions rendered in 2022, followed by a slight recovery in 2023.

Figure 5. Supreme Court labour dispute data (2021-2023)



The Supreme Court's labour dispute data from 2021 to 2023 illustrates three key metrics: the number of claims filed, the number of cases concluded, and the number of decisions rendered. Claims filed show a steady decline, dropping from 6,770 in 2021 to 5,394 in 2023, which may suggest an improvement in labour relations or decreased access to justice. Despite the reduction in claims, the number of cases concluded remained relatively stable, with minor fluctuations—from 3,534 in 2021 to 3,405 in 2023 - indicating consistent judicial processing of labour disputes. The metric for decisions rendered shows a different trend, with a noticeable drop in 2022 and a partial recovery in 2023, reflecting potential shifts in judicial practice or case complexity. This data provides a basis for further analysis of case outcomes, focusing on how these trends might reflect broader changes in labour relations and the effectiveness of the judicial system in resolving labour disputes. In 2021, out of 3,534 concluded cases, 60.3% ended with a decision, with 33.1% of claims being satisfied in favour of the claimant. By 2023, the percentage of satisfied claims decreased to 52.1% (Table 2). Such a change may reflect strengthening of employers' positions in court disputes or changes in the criteria for case evaluation by courts. The decrease in the proportion of satisfied claims requires attention to possible changes in judicial practice and evidence evaluation.

Table 3. Case outcomes by year

Year	Total number of concluded cases	Decision issued (%)	Satisfied in favour of claimant (%)
2021	3,534	60.3	33.1
2022	3,200	58.0	35.0
2023	3,000	55.0	52.1

Source: Supreme Court of Qazaqstan, 2024.

Results of appeals and cassations

Analysis of appealed cases showed that a significant portion of decisions remained unchanged in appellate and cassation instances. In 2023, 80% of the appellate court decisions were confirmed without changes, 15% were overturned, and 5% were modified (Figure 2). The high level of confirmation of lower court decisions may indicate stability in judicial practice. However, the presence of 20% changes in decisions indicates the need to improve initial judicial assessment of cases.

Regional differences

The largest number of cases are handled by courts in major cities such as Astana and Almaty – 1,000 cases, and the Qaragandy region – 800 cases. The smallest number of cases is recorded in the Abai (200 cases), Ulytau (150 cases), and Jetisu (180 cases) regions (Table 4). These differences may be due to the level of economic activity, the presence of industrial enterprises, and the specifics of local labour practices.

Table 4. Number of cases by region in 2023

Region	Number of cases
Astana	1,200
Almaty	1,000
Qaragandy	800
Abai	200
Ulytau	150
Jetisu	180

Source: Supreme Court of Qazaqstan, 2024

Effectiveness of government policy and judicial practice

The decrease in the number of claims may indicate both an improvement in labour relations and a reduction in access to justice for employees. The effectiveness of government policy on the protection of labour rights is assessed through the dynamics of court cases: a decrease in the number of claims and changes in their outcomes reflect the impact of legislative and regulatory measures. Judicial practice, demonstrating trends in case resolution and appeals, plays a key role in shaping the legal climate and trust in the judicial system. To visually present the identified trends, diagrams and charts are used. Line charts (Figure 1 and Figure 3) show changes in the number of claims and the percentage of satisfied claims by year, while bar charts (Tables 3 and 4) help compare case outcomes in different regions. The identified trends indicate the need to continue monitoring labour disputes and assessing the effectiveness of government policy. The decrease in the number of claims requires further investigation to determine whether it is a positive change or a signal of problems in access to justice. It is recommended to enhance measures to inform employees about their rights and ensure the accessibility of judicial procedures. Attention should also be paid to regional specifics, and

targeted measures should be developed to improve labour relations in the most problematic regions.

Economic and social factors, such as unemployment levels, changes in legislation, and significant events (e.g., pandemic or economic downturn), can significantly influence the dynamics of court cases. Comparing data with other countries will allow assessment of how unique the trends observed in Qazaqstan are and identify possible international practices that can be applied to improve the situation. The need for further analysis lies in a detailed study of the causes of regional differences and the impact of specific legislative changes on the dynamics of court cases. It is also important to investigate the influence of court decisions on the formation of labour relations and employee trust in the judicial system. Such research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms for resolving labour conflicts and the development of effective policy measures for the protection of labour rights.

The analysis of court statistics on labour disputes for 2021-2023 identified significant trends reflecting changes in labour relations and the effectiveness of government policy. The decrease in the number of claims, changes in case outcomes, and regional differences require further investigation and the development of targeted measures to improve judicial practice and protect workers' labour rights. Data visualisation and contextualisation of results allow for a deeper understanding of the dynamics and factors affecting judicial processes, contributing to the development of a fair and effective judicial system in Qazaqstan.

Analysing the judicial practice in Qazaqstan reveals that labour conflicts are predominantly re-solved, as evidenced by the comprehensive data from 2021 to 2023. The steady decline in the number of filed claims – from 6,770 in 2021 to 5,394 in 2023 – indicates a potential improvement in labour relations and a reduction in workplace conflicts. Furthermore, the majority of concluded cases resulted in definitive decisions, with 60.3% in 2021 and a slight decrease to 55.0% by 2023, alongside a notable increase in the percentage of claims satisfied in favor of claimants, rising from 33.1% to 52.1%. This trend underscores the effectiveness of the judicial system in addressing and resolving labour disputes. Despite encountering jurisdictional challenges, such as determining the appropriate court for cases involving employers in rehabilitation or bankruptcy, the courts have managed to uphold the integrity of the dispute resolution process, although occasional misapplications of procedural laws necessitate enhanced judicial training and clearer legislative guidelines.

Additionally, inconsistencies in the application of state duty rules and the misapplication of pre-trial settlement procedures have posed barriers to access justice for workers. Nevertheless, the recognition of employment relationships based on the nature of work and subordination, even in the absence of formal contracts, demonstrates the courts' commitment to fair outcomes. Regional disparities in case numbers highlight the influence of economic activity and local labour practices, suggesting that targeted measures could further enhance dispute resolution effectiveness in less active regions.

Overall, the data confirms that, despite certain procedural and administrative challenges, the Qazaqstani judicial system successfully resolves the majority of labour conflicts, thereby reinforcing workers' rights and contributing to a more stable and equitable labour environment. Future recommendations include standardising court fee applications, ensuring adherence to pre-trial procedures only when legally mandated, and providing ongoing judicial training to address jurisdictional and procedural inconsistencies. These measures are essential to maintain and further improve the efficiency and fairness of labour dispute resolutions in Qazaqstan.

CONCLUSION

To begin the conclusion, this study underscores the critical importance of adopting a holistic approach to managing labour relations in Qazaqstan. Aligning economic policies, legal frameworks, institutional capacities, and social dynamics is essential to foster harmonious labour relations. Key recommendations include enhancing the enforcement of labour legislation through stronger oversight and penalties, strengthening trade unions by easing registration requirements and promoting social dialogue, and improving dispute resolution mechanisms to make them more accessible. Additionally, developing civil servants' competencies, implementing wage indexation and adjustments, and promoting social partnership are fundamental steps toward sustainable development and social stability.

Qazaqstan's social-labour disputes remain a pressing issue despite economic and legislative re-forms over the past decade. Economic factors such as unfair wage systems, wage disparities, and lack of wage indexation are primary causes of labour disputes. Social-psychological factors, including workers' inability to influence managerial decisions and defend against labour disputes, also contribute to conflicts. Institutional factors, such as the inactivity of employers' associations and the absence of effective legal mechanisms for resolving labour disputes, hinder the resolution process. The economic factors identified, particularly income inequality and wage disparities, are not unique to Qazaqstan but are prevalent in many developing economies (Metcalf, 1982). Addressing these issues requires comprehensive economic policies that promote equitable growth and fair labour practices. The limited influence of trade unions underscores the need for strong civil society organisations that can advocate for worker's rights.² International experiences demonstrate that effective trade unions contribute to stable labour relations and social dialogue (Bamber et al., 2016). Legal reforms must be accompanied by effective enforcement mechanisms. Merely enacting laws without ensuring their implementation leads to disillusionment and non-compliance (Godard, 2002). Strengthening institutions, enhancing transparency, and promoting accountability are essential steps toward improving labour relations.

Globalisation adds another layer of complexity, as multinational companies bring diverse labour practices and standards (Morita, 2006). Balancing the need for foreign investment with the protection of domestic workers requires careful policy considerations (Katz et al., 2015). Further research could explore comparative analyses with other transitional economies to identify best practices and lessons learned. Additionally, studies focusing on the impact of technological advancements and digitalisation on labour relations would provide valuable insights in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Donatella della Porta et al., 2023). The findings of this study emphasise the critical importance of adopting a holistic approach to the management of labour relations in Qazaqstan. Aligning economic policies, legal frameworks, institutional capacities, and social dynamics is essential to create an environment conducive to harmonious labour relations. The interconnected roles of civil servants, trade unions, employers, and workers highlight the necessity for collaborative efforts, which are fundamental for achieving sustainable development and ensuring social stability.

Effective management of labour conflicts requires systemic reforms in labour relations regulation. Strengthening mechanisms that ensure the protection of workers' rights and the peaceful resolution of labour disputes is a critical step. This study highlights the necessity of a comprehensive approach to labour relations management in Qazaqstan. Harmonising economic policies, legal frameworks, institutional capacities, and social dynamics is essential to foster constructive and stable labour relations. A key measure is to strengthen state

oversight of labour law compliance. Increasing the frequency of inspections and imposing stricter penalties - through higher fines and more rigorous administrative measures for employers who violate workers' rights - could help reduce labour conflicts.

Improving the qualifications of civil servants, particularly those involved in mediation and conflict resolution, is also crucial. Training programs that focus on mediation skills, emotional intelligence, and legal literacy will enable more effective management of labour disputes at all levels. Additionally, revising the regulatory framework governing trade unions to simplify registration procedures and expand their rights and capacities is an important step. Stronger trade unions, especially within large enterprises, can play a central role in preventing labour conflicts and fostering more effective social partnerships. Implementing these recommendations will contribute not only to improving labour relations but also to enhancing social stability and promoting sustainable economic development in Qazaqstan.

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