

## ABSTRACT

**Anastassiya Fedorova's dissertation on the topic: "The Role of Information Technology in the Establishment and Development of Civil Society Institutions" in the specialty "6D050200 – Political Science" for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

### **General Description of the Study**

This dissertation is devoted to a political analysis of the impact of information technology, primarily social media, on the development of civil society institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The empirical object of study is youth public organizations, one of the most dynamic and representative segments of civil society.

The relevance of this study stems from several factors. First, Kazakhstan, as a post-Soviet state with authoritarian characteristics of its political regime, is in the process of developing sustainable civil society institutions. The legacy of the Soviet system, paternalistic attitudes, low levels of public trust, and the state's significant influence on public associations create a unique political context.

Secondly, Kazakhstan is demonstrating rapid digitalization. Internet penetration among young people is approaching 100%, and social media has become a part of everyday life. However, high online activity among young people does not always lead to increased civic participation. This raises the question: can social media drive the development of civil society in an authoritarian political system?

Thirdly, the relevance of the study is linked to the state agenda of digitalization and the development of public oversight. The Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, "Kazakhstan in the Era of Artificial Intelligence" (2025), emphasizes the need to integrate information technology into all spheres of public life. The adoption of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Public Oversight" (2023) adds further significance to the topic.

The **object** of this study is civil society institutions represented by youth public organizations in Kazakhstan.

The **subject** of the study is the nature, extent, and mechanisms of social media's influence on the activities of youth public organizations.

The **purpose of the study** is to conduct a comprehensive political science analysis of the impact of information technology and social media on the activities of civil society institutions in Kazakhstan.

To achieve this goal, the following **objectives** were set:

- analyze the main theoretical approaches to understanding civil society;
- examine the development of information technology and social media in Kazakhstan;
- conduct a sociological study of Kazakhstan's youth;
- identify statistically significant factors of offline civic participation;
- conduct in-depth interviews with youth organization leaders and experts;
- develop practical recommendations for government agencies and public organizations.

### **Scientific Novelty of the Study**

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the following:

1. For the first time in Kazakhstani political science, a multi-stage empirical study (2019, 2023, and 2025) was conducted, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the impact of social media on youth civic participation.
2. The authors developed their own definitions of the concepts "civil society" and "youth public organization," adapted to the post-Soviet authoritarian context of Kazakhstan.
3. For the first time, multiple correlation and regression analysis was applied to Kazakhstani data to test theories of technological determinism and social forces.
4. A model of the "conditional mobilizing factor" of social media is proposed, according to which digital technologies enhance civic engagement only in the presence of institutional and offline mechanisms of interaction.

### **Theoretical and methodological basis of the study**

The methodological framework of the study is based on neoinstitutionalist principles, including historical and network institutionalism. Historical institutionalism allows for consideration of the influence of the Soviet past, authoritarian traditions, and the specifics of Kazakhstan's political culture. Network institutionalism emphasizes horizontal connections, trust, and the formation of civic identity.

The study utilizes two main theoretical paradigms: the theory of technological determinism and the theory of social forces. The former views digital technologies as an independent factor in social change, while the latter emphasizes the dependence of technologies on political and social context.

The research methods used included a sociological survey, multiple regression analysis, in-depth semi-structured interviews, comparative analysis, and data triangulation.

### **Empirical basis of the study**

The empirical basis of the study includes:

- results of the author's sociological study of Kazakhstani youth (N=600), conducted in 2019, 2023, and 2025;
- multiple correlation and regression analysis;
- in-depth interviews with leaders of youth public organizations;
- in-depth interviews with Kazakhstani political science experts.

Students from leading universities in Almaty participated in the study. The questionnaire included questions on social media use, awareness of youth organizations, and the level of civic participation.

The source base includes the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Public Associations", "On Non-Commercial Organizations", "On State Youth Policy", "On Informatization", "On Public Control", the state program "Digital Kazakhstan", as well as statistical and analytical materials of international organizations.

## **Key Research Findings**

The study led to the following conclusions.

1. Kazakhstani youth demonstrate consistently high levels of engagement with social media: almost all respondents have social media accounts. However, high digital activity does not automatically lead to increased offline civic participation.
2. Over the study period, young people's digital preferences have transformed. While VKontakte dominated in 2019, by 2023–2025, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, and WhatsApp will become the main platforms.
3. Young people's awareness of the activities of public organizations remains low and fragmented. International and volunteer initiatives are becoming more prominent.
4. The most significant factor in offline civic participation is institutionalized digital participation—following public organization accounts and regularly engaging with their content. Simply having a social media account does not independently influence civic engagement.
5. A steady decline in civic engagement was found with increasing age within the 18-25 age group.
6. In-depth interviews revealed that horizontal connections—friends, classmates, and acquaintances—continue to play an important role in engaging young people in civic activities. At the same time, the phenomenon of "clicktivism," where online activity is not accompanied by real-life participation, has become widespread.
7. The most adequate theoretical framework for analyzing the Kazakhstani context is social forces theory. Social media act not as an autonomous driver, but as an additional mobilization tool, the effectiveness of which depends on the institutional environment and offline interactions.

## **Practical Significance of the Study**

The practical significance of the study lies in the potential for its results to be used by government agencies, youth organizations, and educational institutions.

**For youth public organizations,** the following recommendations are recommended:

1. Shift to systematic social media engagement;
2. Adapt content to the interests of young people;
3. Combine online communication with offline events;
4. Develop sustainable organizational identities;
5. Expand youth participation in political and public institutions.

**The following recommendations are proposed for government agencies:**

1. Reduce administrative barriers to civic initiatives;
2. Support hybrid forms of civic participation;
3. Develop partnerships between businesses and public organizations;
4. Use interactive digital formats for youth engagement.

**The following recommendations are recommended for the education system:**

1. to more actively involve public organizations in the educational process;
2. to develop civic education;
3. to strengthen the practice-oriented study of socio-political disciplines.

### **Dissertation Structure**

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, and appendices.

The first chapter examines theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of civil society.

The second chapter analyzes the development of information technology and social media, as well as their impact on socio-political processes.

The third chapter analyzes empirical data and examines the impact of social media on the activities of youth public organizations in Kazakhstan.

### **Research Results Appraisal**

The main provisions of the dissertation were presented at international scientific and practical conferences in Kazakhstan, Russia, and the United Kingdom.

Articles on the dissertation topic have been published in an international journal indexed in Scopus. Additionally, a monograph, "The Impact of Social Media on the Activities of Youth Public Organizations in Kazakhstan," has been published.

### **Conclusion**

This dissertation is an independent research project devoted to analyzing the mechanisms of social media's influence on the development of civil society institutions in Kazakhstan.

The theoretical significance of this research lies in its development of a neo-institutional approach to the digital environment and its refinement of the conceptual framework for civil society research.

The practical significance of this research lies in its development of recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of youth civic mobilization using social media.

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