PROTEST COMMENTS ON FACEBOOK AFTER THE "JANUARY TRAGEDY" OF 2022 IN KAZAKHSTAN (THE FIRST 7 DAYS AFTER THE RESUMPTION OF WIRED AND MOBILE INTERNET)

Murat NASSIMOV

Associate Professor, Institute of Economics and Law, Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University, Kyzylorda, Kazakhstan
E-mail: nasimov_m@mail.ru

Abstract

The goal of this study is to examine how Facebook comments reflect protest sentiment during the immediate aftermath of Internet resumption in January 2022 in Kazakhstan. The article focuses on analyzing protest comments on Facebook following the "January tragedy" of 2022 in Kazakhstan. Specific tasks include: (1) collecting and analyzing posts and comments from official Akimat Facebook pages during the first week of restored connectivity; (2) identifying and categorizing protest-related comments and their thematic content; (3) comparing regional variations in protest expressions; and (4) deriving insights for improving local government engagement online. To achieve this, I use the data collected on Facebook for the first 7 days after the resumption of wired and mobile Internet service. I am studying 17 official pages of Akimats in regions and cities of republican significance; 507 posts and 912 comments were published from January 10 to January 16, 2022. Using systematic content analysis, I coded each post and its associated comments for protest indicators, thematic categories, and regional patterns. Quantitative frequencies and qualitative thematic interpretation were applied to the collected posts and comments. As a result, I identified 667 comments with signs of protest. Thus, the opportunity to qualitatively examine some of the messaging from that period provides insights not only into the particular concerns of the citizenry but also into the willingness of local government entities, the Akimats, to provide an online forum for the dissemination of public concerns. Practical implications include recommendations for regional authorities on active social media monitoring, transparent communication of policy measures, and mechanisms to address socioeconomic grievances, aiming to reduce the barrier

between citizens and political elites and to preempt the escalation of online dissent into offline mobilization.

Keywords: *Facebook, social networks, protest, official page, posts and comments*

1. Introduction

Post-Soviet Central Asia, particularly Kazakhstan, regarded the massive political and economic protests of January 2022 as a significant, even watershed, event in a region where public protests had previously been rare, often ethnic, or limited in scope. The protests, which began in Zhanaozen due to a sharp increase in liquefied petroleum gas prices, spread across many regions of Kazakhstan. Initially, the protests articulated economic demands, which later shifted to political calls for change, starting off peacefully. However, the protesters' ultimate goals remained unachieved due to the sudden involvement of hooligans in the otherwise peaceful march. There were no systematic or clear demands among the non-violent protesters. On that same day, President K-J. Tokayev stated the current situation in the country (Tokayev, 2022a), and later that day, he addressed the people of Kazakhstan (Tokayev, 2022b). Kazakhstan declared a state of emergency, initially in specific areas and subsequently nationwide. To provide updates on the anti-terrorist operation, the President addressed the nation for the second time two days later (Tokayev, 2022c).

Assessing President K-J. Tokayev's portrayal of the recent unrest in Kazakhstan as an attempted coup raises questions. He first articulated this perspective during an extraordinary session of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Collective Security Council (Tokayev, 2022d). The following day, in a speech at a meeting of the Mazhilis (the lower house of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan), he reiterated claims of an attempted coup and a terrorist war (Tokayev, 2022e). In that address, he also mentioned that he would introduce a new package of political reforms in his upcoming Message to the People of Kazakhstan in September. Consequently, in mid-March 2022, he put forward ten initiatives aimed at renewal and modernization in New Kazakhstan (Tokayev, 2022f). It's important to highlight that the events of January 2022 in Kazakhstan attracted attention not only from Kazakhstanis but also from experts and media in foreign countries (Auyezov, 2022; Cohen, 2022; Kantchev, 2022; Kudaibergenova & Laruelle, 2022; VCIOM-Sputnik daily survey results, 2022).

As a result, the President of the country gave two interviews to domestic TV channels, first in Russian (Zakharchuk, 2022) and then later in Kazakh (Slambek, 2022). In both interviews, the President addressed some of the most pressing societal questions that arose after the January tragedy. The

conversations covered a wide range of population concerns. I believe that through these two interviews, citizens not only learned about the nation's position following the "Tragic January" but also played a significant role in conveying information to the global community. The President stated that the country was losing in terms of information due to the lack of Internet access. Since January 5, both wired and mobile Internet services have been disrupted because of the unrest. On January 10, the resumption of Internet services began, initially on a limited basis, then gradually regularized. By January 11, Internet access had been steadily restored in most of Kazakhstan. We all understand that social processes, including political ones, occur within a communicative space. Political information serves not only as a basis for communication but also as a tool for political management. Therefore, when the government loses control over political communication, the public loses access to real information.

In this article, I want to systematically describe (1) comments with signs of protest; (2) the main topics on the official pages of Akimats of regions and cities of republican significance; and (3) characteristics of comments with signs of protest. To do this, I analyzed 17 official pages of Akimats on Facebook and structured them into thematic blocks. Akimat is the mayor's office of a city or region. During the study period, according to the administrative-territorial division in Kazakhstan, there were 14 regions and 3 cities of republican significance. In order to detect protest content, this study records the remarks, their main themes, and their characteristics.

Why did I pick the first seven days following the start of mobile and wired Internet? In Kazakhstan, Internet access was blocked during the protests' active phase. People were afraid of what was going on, and it was crucial to read the comments that were written in the first week following the protests. One can ascertain the dynamics of the protests on social networks by examining the online activism that followed the demonstrations.

How may comments on social networks that contain protest indicators be categorized? Finding linguistic, contextual, and thematic components that convey dissent, resistance, and discontent is necessary to categorize comments on social networks that exhibit protest indicators. Explicit calls to action (comments that promote protests, strikes, and resistance); criticism of authority (comments directed at the government, regional executive authorities, and particular leaders); grievances (complaints regarding laws, policies, and socioeconomic conditions); and emotional outbursts (expressions of rage, frustration, and dissatisfaction) are examples of common categories.

The choice of the official profiles of regional authorities on Facebook is because many users comment on every post on these pages. Government workers probably censor these profiles in addition to moderating them. Despite this risk, I use state-censored official social media profiles to make assumptions

about the protest demands. After all, negative user comments and written criticism tend to draw attention to protest comments. On January 18, 2022, all of the data was collected.

Based on the above opinions, the following research questions were developed to achieve the objectives: (1) What were the protest comments and their numerical data? (2) What were the main topics of users and their indicators? and (3) What were the comments with signs of protest and their characteristics?

2. Materials and methods

Sociologists, political scientists, and philosophers all conduct interdisciplinary studies on social networks. As a result, the work employs two general scientific approaches: system analysis and structuralism.

2.1 Research design and methodology

This study employs a systematic content analysis of Facebook posts and comments from official pages of regional and city Akimats in Kazakhstan for the period January 10-16, 2022. Content analysis is a widely used method for analyzing textual data in social research, allowing for both quantitative description (e.g., counts of themes) and qualitative interpretation of meanings and patterns in user-generated content. Following established guidelines, I treat each Facebook post and its associated comments as units of analysis and apply a structured coding scheme to identify protest-related indicators and thematic topics.

2.2 Data collection and sampling

Page selection: I compiled a list of 17 official Facebook pages (14 regional Akimats + 3 cities of national significance) via targeted searches using the region/city name + "Akimat official Facebook page". Pages not found and not verifiable as official were excluded. Ultimately, data were retrievable from 12 pages; in five regions, no suitable page existed, and in two of these, none was found on Facebook.

Time window: for each of the 12 pages, I collected all posts published in the first seven days after the resumption of wired and mobile Internet (January 10-16, 2022). A total of 507 posts and their full comment threads were downloaded.

Data retrieval: posts and comments were exported in Kazakh and Russian as they appeared. Because data are publicly available on official pages, no special access permissions were required, but user identifiers were anonymized in analysis outputs to protect privacy.

2.3 Coding scheme and identification of protest signs

Definition of "protest-related comments": I operationalized protest signs in comments as expressions indicating dissatisfaction with authorities, calls for action and change, explicit dissent, and mobilization cues. The codebook was developed repeatedly: initial categories drew on prior studies of social media content analysis in protest contexts.

Codebook development: I reviewed a random subset of comments to propose initial categories (e.g., criticism of local policies, calls for collective action, expressions of solidarity). These categories were refined and organized into main themes and subthemes.

2.4 Analysis

Quantitative summary: I computed frequencies and proportions of posts receiving protest-related comments and of comment categories across pages and days. This allows comparison of protest potential over the seven-day window.

Thematic exploration: for comments flagged as protest-related, I conducted a qualitative thematic analysis to characterize the nature of dissent (e.g., policy critique vs. broader grievance), following procedures for thematic content analysis in social media research.

Language considerations: since comments appear in Kazakh and Russian, coding was done in the original language; themes were later translated into English for reporting, with attention to peculiarity in expressions of protest.

2.5 Ethical considerations

All data derive from publicly accessible official Facebook pages; I did not solicit private data and contact users. Usernames and any personally identifying information have been anonymized in all reports. Findings are reported in aggregate to avoid attributing statements to individuals.

3. The theoretical framework and a literature overview: the digital public sphere and protest potential

The situation in early January showed the real situation in the country. The government resigned and was reorganized. The president's addresses, made during the state of emergency, noted the need for fundamental changes. All

members of the public listened to the appeals and proposals of the President at a meeting of the Mazhilis. Most of the questions concerned the socio-economic sphere and new political reforms.

Many Kazakh scientists and experts have predicted a high level of protest potential among the country's population (Satpayev & Umbetaliyeva, 2015; Smagulov & Nasimova, 2016; Nassimova, Buzurtanova, & Saitova, 2019). Signs of protest were associated with low social status, which brought high prices. The fact that people are taking out too many credits and buying goods on installments due to rising prices is likely to cause some kind of protest (Nassimov, 2025). However, no one expected that foreign citizens would be involved in the protests, including terrorist groups trained abroad (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022).

Nassimov, Paridinova, and Kaldybai (2013) analyze key techniques of political advertising in the Republic of Kazakhstan: from emotional "mythmaking" around candidates to the use of digital channels to mobilize voters and shape images of political actors. The legislative restrictions described by the authors emphasize the ban on propaganda of violence and disinformation, but "black" methods that influence audience perception remain in practice. These findings are important for studying protest comments on Facebook, since similar emotional and discrediting techniques can appear in user messages. The work of Nassimov et al. (2013) on political consulting considers tools for in-depth analysis of target groups and rapid response to crises. These practices are directly related to the ability to track and manage flows of protest comments. Despite the focus of the articles on electoral campaigns, their methods are relevant for analyzing user behavior in emergency conditions of resuming Internet access after the shutdown in January 2022.

At the end of the twentieth century, social networking became not so much a technological phenomenon as a social phenomenon that affects all aspects of society. The role of social networks in protests has been the subject of a huge amount of research (Earl, 2012; González-Bailón, Borge-Holthoefer, & Moreno, 2013; Gruber, Mayer, & Einwiller, 2020; Theocharis, 2013). In many scientific papers, social networks are defined as an indicator of social change, and many are studying the role of Facebook (Khazraee & Novak, 2018; Levin & Barak-Brandes, 2014; Papa, 2017) and Twitter (Jenzen et al., 2021; Mourão & Chen, 2020; Sandoval-Almazan & Gutierrez-Alonso, 2011) in these changes. In addition, many articles and studies are devoted to past civil movements in Egypt, the influence of the Arab Spring, and activist movements in the Arab world (Al-Rawi, 2014; Bang, Lee, & Rao, 2021; Carty, 2019; Malkawi & Ambusaidi, 2021). Therefore, we can say that, like many other revolutionary and breakthrough technical and technological innovations, social networks are only a means, a channel of communication between people.

The life of a modern person is difficult to imagine without a smartphone and the Internet. The lack of the Internet and the suspension of access to the virtual world create various problems in society (Cartwright et al., 2022). However, we must remember that its absence limits and reduces Internet activism (Kung & Zhu, 2022). Still, the authorities must understand that turning off the Internet will not stop the level of public interest in politics and network activism from being combined into the current political culture of society. After all, the diversity of civil initiatives on social networks allows the authorities to track the problems that concern society and respond to them on time.

The lack of the Internet also affects the operational actions of the tactics and strategies of the state (Chiderah & Iroeze, 2021). Operational actions, tactics, and strategies of the state are provided by a virtual culture, which is based on the basic ethical norms and principles of social networking. These values can be unique and largely depend on the interests of society. Operational actions depend on reputation and trust in the government and human capital.

Furthermore, negativity in social networks is caused by flaws in the Internet's general principles and requirements (Siuda, 2015). Despite the severity of legal regulation on the Internet (for example, criminal proceedings for reposting ridiculing nationality, religion, or race, and information about terrorism), users do not stop showing their protest. This may be due to the low level of dialogue between officials and citizens on social networks. The heads of government agencies do not know or are afraid to communicate not only online but also offline. People are therefore becoming less receptive to the explanations provided by the authorities as a result of the absence of a genuine conversation. The public only uses comments to voice their opinions because they believe in false information that is disseminated online due to a lack of mutually beneficial communication, a lack of in-person meetings, and mistrust of the information presented. This, in turn, poses a great danger.

The lack of Internet access is a worrying dilemma for activism (Chadha & Harlow, 2015), but still, everyone should understand that after the resumption of the virtual world, everything will fall into place. No one can stop Internet activism. It is clear to everyone that the lack of Internet access slows down all electronic services. Some Internet users are not able to be offline for more than one day. For many, virtual communication is much more important than meeting friends and various forms of entertainment. In terms of logic, the lack of Internet access in a country is a serious disadvantage since all members of society always expect to have access to all the services that they use constantly.

A literature overview and theoretical framework provide a solid basis for examining Facebook protest comments following the "January tragedy" in Kazakhstan. The connection between the theoretical framework and research subject defines social networks as catalysts of social change. The framework

emphasizes the critical role of social networks in modern societal dynamics, particularly their function as platforms for activism and political engagement. This perspective aligns directly with the research focus, as the study analyzes protest comments on Facebook, demonstrating how online platforms serve as conduits for public discontent, civic expression, and collective action.

The research situates itself within the broader context of Kazakhstan's socio-political situation, where protests have historically been rare and localized. By analyzing Facebook comments during a period of national crisis, the study aligns with predictions by Kazakh scholars about the high potential for protests fueled by socio-economic grievances. This connection underscores the validity of using online discourse as a lens to understand public sentiment and protest dynamics in post-Soviet contexts.

The theoretical framework and a literature overview highlight the impact of restricted Internet access on activism and communication. Critical insights into the pent-up need for online expression and its consequences for public debate and government-citizen engagement are provided by the study, which looks at a unique window—the first seven days after Internet connections were restored.

The framework identifies a lack of effective communication between officials and citizens as a key driver of distrust and misinformation. This directly informs the study's findings on the role of Facebook comments in bridging and widening the gap between the public and the political elite, thereby reflecting the societal "barrier" emphasized in the study's conclusions.

Drawing on Kazakhstan scholars' earlier predictions and global research on the role of social media in activism, the framework provides a foundation for interpreting the identified protest comments. These comments reflect socio-economic dissatisfaction and illustrate how citizens leverage social networks to articulate grievances and demand accountability in the absence of offline avenues for expression.

By integrating these elements, the study not only demonstrates the immediate outcomes of online protest discourse but also situates them within a broader theoretical and socio-political framework. This connection provides depth to the analysis and underscores the role of digital activism in shaping public discourse and governance strategies in Kazakhstan.

4. Comments with protest signs (numerical data)

In this study, I understand "protest" as a form of political participation characterized by expressions of dissent, grievances, and demands for change directed at authorities and policies, including in non-institutionalized, online forms. Political protest often involves diagnostic framing (identifying problems

and injustices), prognostic framing (suggesting remedies and alternative courses of action), and motivational framing (urging and legitimizing collective responses) (Khazraee & Novak, 2018). Classic definitions in political participation literature describe protest as direct, non-institutionalized actions that challenge the status quo, ranging from petitions and demonstrations to boycotts and strikes (Barnes et al., 1979; Verba, Nie & Kim, 1978). In the digital age, commenting on official social media pages can serve analogous functions: users publicly articulate dissatisfaction (diagnostic), propose and imply solutions (prognostic), and signal solidarity and readiness for further action (motivational), thereby contributing to a virtual protest discourse (Nikunen, 2018; Mendelsohn et al., 2024).

Consequently, I classify comments as "protest signs" when they (1) express grievances about socioeconomic and political conditions (e.g., high prices, lack of services, perceived injustices); (2) challenge official narratives and labels (e.g., contesting the characterization of peaceful assemblies as "terrorism"); and (3) implicitly or explicitly call for accountability, policy changes, and leadership resignation. Based on this definition, the components presented in Tables 1–3 have been scrutinized to ensure they fall within the scope of "protest". For instance, negative comments concerning high food prices and inadequate infrastructure enact diagnostic framing by identifying tangible grievances. Comments demanding resignation and questioning official statements perform prognostic and motivational framing. They imply the need for changes in leadership and policy and may galvanize further discussion and action. Similarly, accusations that authorities mislabel peaceful protesters reflect contestation of dominant narratives, aligning with the protest's role in challenging hegemonic discourse. The numerical breakdown (e.g., counts of negative vs. positive comments across regions) quantifies the prevalence of such protest signs immediately after Internet resumption. By mapping topics to the above protest criteria, I confirm that the elements in the tables represent online protest expressions.

In Table 1, I define comments as signs of protest on official pages on the social network Facebook. This shows how active the users of different regions are in commenting and their political participation in the virtual space.

Table 1. Comments with signs of protest on official pages on Facebook (data for January 10-16, 2022)

№	Official page of the city or region	Number of posts analyzed (including posters), used hashtags	Comments	including positive	including negative	Number of posters, used hashtags	Comments	including positive	including negative
1	**Nur-Sultan kalasynyn akimdigi/ Akimat goroda Nur-Sultan** [Akimat of Nur-Sultan] (https://www.facebook.com/nursultanakimat/)	**61** #KushimizBirlikte #SilavEdinstve #azatutukuni #den'traura [StrengthUnity; dayofmourning]	**33**	8	25	-	-	-	-
2	**Almaty kalasynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Almaty] (https://www.facebook.com/almaty.gov.kz)	**35**	**215**	67	148	-	-	-	-
3	**Shymkent kalasy akimdigi** [Akimat of Shymkent] (https://www.facebook.com/akimat.shymkent)	**109**	**43**	17	26	**9**	-	-	-
4	**Akimat Karagandinskoj oblasti** [Akimat of Karaganda Region] (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Акимат%20Карагандинской%20области/2059942094095351)	Although the Akimat Karagandinskoj oblasti [Akimat of Karaganda Region] (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Akimat%20Karagandinsk%%oblasti/2059942094095351) is on Facebook, no information was found in due time.							
5	**Akmola Region**	No active page found on social network. Akmola Oblysynyn akimdigi [Akimat of Akmola Region] (https://www.facebook.com/bayadilov.baykal) - last entry August 15, 2021; Akimat Akmolinskoj oblasti [Akimat of Akmola Region] (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100069263977368) - last entry 23 April 2013.							
6	**Aktobe oblysy akimdigi** [Akimat of Aktobe Region] (https://www.facebook.com/aktobeakparat)	**19** #KushimizBirlikte #SilavEdinstve [StrengthUnity]	**149**	29	120	**2**	-	-	-
7	**Almaty oblysynyn akimdigi Akimat Almatinskoj oblasti** [Akimat of Almaty Region] (https://www.facebook.com/ZhetysuPress)	**32** #KushimizBirlikte [StrengthUnity]	**9**	1	8	-	-	-	-
8	**Atyrau oblysynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Atyrau Region] (https://www.facebook.com/AkimatAtyrau)	**82** #KushimizBirlikte #SilavEdinstv	**29**	15	14	**14** #Kushimiz Birl	**1**	-	1

		e [StrengthUnity]				ikte #SilavEdinstve [Strength Unity]			
9	**Batys Qazaqstan oblysy akimdigi / Akimat Zapadno-Kazahstanskoj oblasti** [Akimat of the West Kazakhstan Region] (https://www.facebook.com/akimatzko)	**41**	**14**	6	8	**3** #Ural'skProtivTerrorizma #OralTerrorizmgekarsy [UralskAgainstTerrorism]	**1**	-	1
10	**Kostanaj Oblysynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Kostanay Region] (https://www.facebook.com/rystam.ahmetov.5)	**3**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	**Kyzylorda Oblysynyn Akimdigi** [Akimat of Kyzylorda Region] (https://www.facebook.com/qyzylorda.press)	**47** #KyzylordaTerrorizmgekarsy #KYZYLORDAPROTIVTERRORIZMA [KYZYLORDAAGAINSTTERRORISM]	**247**	63	184	**8** #KyzylordaTerrorizmgekarsy #KYZYLORDAPROTIVTERRORIZMA [KYZYLORDAAGAINSTTERRORISM]	**49**	11	38
12	**Mangystau oblysynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Mangistau Region] (https://www.facebook.com/AkimatMangystau)	**22**	**125**	13	112	**3**	-	-	-

13	**North Kazakhstan Region**	The official page does not publish information - https://www.facebook.com/pages/Акимат-Северо-Казахстанской-области/181796539396802							
14	**Pavlodar Region**	Social media page not found.							
15	**Shygys Qazaqstan oblysy** [East Kazakhstan Region]	On the pages of the Shygys Qazaqstan oblysy akimdigi [Akimat of the East Kazakhstan Region] (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Шығыс%20Қазақстан%20облысы%20әкімдігі/2188426357855070) and the Akimat Vostochno-Kazahstanskoj oblasti [Akimat of the East Kazakhstan Region] (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066349309416) could not find the required information.							
16	**Túrkistan oblysynyń ákimdigi Akimat Turkestanskoj oblasti** [Akimat of the Turkestan Region](https://www.facebook.com/ontustik.gov.kz)	**34**	**37**	20	17	-	-	-	-
17	**Zhambyl oblysy akimdigi** [Akimat of Zhambyl Region] (https://www.facebook.com/zhambyl.gov.kz)	**22**	**11**	6	5	-	-	-	-
	TOTAL:	**507**	**912**	245	667	**39**	**51**	11	40

Source: Primary Data, Author, 2022

As you can see, Table 1 for January 10-16, 2022, analyzed 507 posts, including posters. A lot of information in the form of posts is placed by the Akimat of Shymkent (109), the Akimat of Atyrau Region (82), and the Akimat of Nur-Sultan (61). Accordingly, the same Akimat of Atyrau Region (14), Akimat of Shymkent (9), and Akimat of Kyzylorda Region (8) are fond of posters. One thing is clear here: some regions provide the same information in Kazakh and Russian in two posts. Sometimes I wonder when many officials want to show their work on social networks, and when do they have time to work? Placing information in the form of posts on social networks is often the responsibility of the press service of the regional Akimat, but do they do a good job? Because basically, there is no feedback, especially for protest comments. I think the leading official pages should respond to all comments. Another issue is that the page moderator is unaware of the true nature of the issue.

When I looked at posts from January 10 to January 16, 2022, I found 912 comments, of which 245 were positive and 667 were negative (data from January 18, 2022). As you can see, many users are still protesting. This is understandable because the state of emergency is still on. A lot of comments are made on the pages of the Akimat of Kyzylorda Region (247, of which 184 are negative), the Akimat of Almaty (215, of which 148 are negative), and the Akimat of Aktobe Region (149, of which 120 are negative). By the number of negative comments in the posters, the Akimat of the Kyzylorda Region is the leader (49; of those, 38 are negative). All the negative comments are about the fight against terrorism, and the people who came out to a peaceful meeting are not terrorists. On the official pages of the Akimat of the Atyrau Region and the

Akimat of the West Kazakhstan Region, there is one comment on each poster, and both comments are negative. The main characteristics of comments with signs of protest are shown in Table 3.

I believe that companies request favorable remarks, whereas jobless people who spend hours on social media write bad comments. In my opinion, employers in Kazakhstan request that postings and comments be made to lower the amount of unfavorable sentiment on social media. They want to play a decisive role in the struggle for public opinion and the virtual destruction of the protest mood and the opinions of the sofa troops. And of course, the role of soft troops is understandable, which gives advice to the authorities and politicians, but really does nothing itself to promote its point of view. But the fact is that there are protest comments and a protest attitude, and we need to research this.

Interestingly, on the official pages of the Akimat of the Karaganda Region and the Akimat of the Kostanay Region, everything is quiet. On Facebook, it was impossible to find the official page for the Akimat of the Pavlodar Region.

5. The indicator of the main topics

In Table 2, I show an indicator of the main topics on the official Facebook pages. As can be seen in the table, the main topics are 12 problems. This determines what the Akimats do after protests and during the state of emergency.

Table 2. The indicator of the main topics on the official pages of Facebook (data for January 10-16, 2022)

№	Official page of the city or region	Official information related to the emergency	National day of mourning	Terrorism	Coronavirus and vaccination	Other official information	Public policy	Posters	Presidential speeches, address	Akim' s notes	Opinion leadership	Doctor' s advice	Snow removal	TOTAL
1	**Nur-Sultan kalasynyn akimdigi/Akimat goroda Nur-Sultan** [Akimat of Nur-Sultan] (https://www.facebook.com/nursultanakimat/)	28	1	-	19	3	2	-	-	3	-	2	3	**61**

No	Name													Total
2	**Almaty kalasynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Almaty] (https://www.facebook.com/almaty.gov.kz)	25	1	-	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	**35**
3	**Shymkent kalasy akimdigi** [Akimat of Shymkent] (https://www.facebook.com/akimat.shymkent)	42	2	-	13	32	-	9	9	-	2	-	-	**109**
4	**Akimat Karagandinskoj oblasti** [Akimat of Karaganda Region] (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Акимат%20Карагандинской%20области/2059942094095351)	Although the Akimat Karagandinskoj oblasti [Akimat of Karaganda Region] (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Akimat%20Karagandinsk%%oblasti/2059942094095351) is on Facebook, no information was found in due time.													
5	**Akmola Region**	No active page found on social network. Akmola Oblysynyn akimdigi [Akimat of Akmola Region] (https://www.facebook.com/bayadilov.baykal) - last entry August 15, 2021; Akimat Akmolinskoj oblasti [Akimat of Akmola Region] (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100069263977368) - last entry 23 April 2013.													
6	**Aktobe oblysy akimdigi** [Akimat of Aktobe Region] (https://www.facebook.com/aktobeakparat)	11	-	1	4	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	**19**
7	**Almaty oblysynyn akimdigi Akimat Almatinskoj oblasti** [Akimat of Almaty Region] (https://www.facebook.com/ZhetysuPress)	19	1	-	10	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	**32**

8	**Atyrau oblysynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Atyrau Region] (https://www.facebook.com/AkimatAtyrau)	30	4	1	8	16	-	14	6	-	3	-	-	**82**
9	**Batys Qazaqstan oblysy akimdigi/Akimat Zapadno-Kazahstanskoj oblasti** [Akimat of the West Kazakhstan Region] (https://www.facebook.com/akimatzko)	22	2	1	3	5	-	3	4	-	1	-	-	**41**
10	**Kostanaj Oblysynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Kostanay Region] (https://www.facebook.com/rystam.ahmetov.5)	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**3**
11	**Kyzylorda Oblysynyn Akimdigi** [Akimat of Kyzylorda Region] (https://www.facebook.com/qyzylorda.press)	16	1	3	17	-	-	8	-	-	2	-	-	**47**
12	**Mangystau oblysynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Mangistau Region] (https://www.facebook.com/AkimatMangystau)	2	-	-	10	7	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	**22**
13	**North Kazakhstan Region**	The official page does not publish information - https://www.facebook.com/pages/Акимат-Северо-Казахстанской-области/181796539396802												

14	**Pavlodar Region**	Social media page not found												
15	**Shygys Qazaqstan oblysy** [East Kazakhstan Region]	On the pages of the Shygys Qazaqstan oblysy akimdigi [Akimat of the East Kazakhstan Region] (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Шығыс%20Қазақстан%20облысы%20әкімдігі/2188426357855070) and the Akimat Vostochno-Kazahstanskoj oblasti [Akimat of the East Kazakhstan Region] (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066349309416) could not find the required information.												
16	**Túrkistan oblysynyń ákimdigi Akimat Turkestanskoj oblasti** [Akimat of the Turkestan Region] (https://www.facebook.com/ontustik.gov.kz)	6	5	-	6	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34
17	**Zhambyl oblysy akimdigi** [Akimat of Zhambyl Region] (https://www.facebook.com/zhambyl.gov.kz)	19	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
	TOTAL:	220	18	6	95	88	2	39	22	3	8	2	4	507

Source: Primary Data, Author, 2022

The main topics of all the official pages concerned official information related to the emergency (220), coronavirus and vaccination (95), and other official information (88). Accordingly, the Akimat of Shymkent (42), the Akimat of Atyrau Region (30), and the Akimat of Nur-Sultan (28) paid much attention to official information related to the emergency. The Akimat of Zhambyl Region (19) provided a lot of information related to the emergency. The Akimat of Kostanay Region did not care about the situation in the country at all; they paid attention to other official information (2) and coronavirus and vaccination (1).

Shymkent Akimats (9), Aktobe Region Akimat (1), Almaty Region Akimat (2), Atyrau Region Akimat (6), and West Kazakhstan Region Akimat (4) used the President's speeches and addresses. The notes of the Akim were written only by the Akimat of Nur-Sultan (3). Leaders of opinion on the situation in the country paid more attention to the Akimat of Shymkent (2), the Akimat of Atyrau Region (3), the Akimat of the West Kazakhstan Region (1), and the Akimat of Kyzylorda Region (2). The Akimat of Kyzylorda Region (3) and the Akimats of Aktobe, Atyrau, and West Kazakhstan Regions (one at a time) pay

great attention to the problems of terrorism. I do not understand the problems of snow removal that were indicated by the Akimat of Nur-Sultan (3) and Almaty (1).

I find that certain posts and posters on the official pages have the potential to aggravate people even more. Though there were just six, I saw that a large number of users were incensed by posts and posters regarding terrorism. Here, it's still unclear. All of the terrorists who attended a peaceful assembly were to be identified by the authorities. And a lot of folks continue to ask this question.

6. Characteristics of comments with protest signs

In Table 3, I define the main themes on the official Facebook pages and the characteristics of comments as signs of protest.

Table 3. The main themes on the official pages on Facebook and the characteristics of comments with signs of protest (data for January 10-16, 2022)

№	Official page of the city or region	Main themes and characteristics
1	**Nur-Sultan kalasynyn akimdigi/Akimat goroda Nur-Sultan** [Akimat of Nur-Sultan] (https://www.facebook.com/nursultanakimat/)	Main themes: 61; official information related to the emergency – 28; coronavirus – 14; vaccination – 5; snow removal - 3; Akim's notes (epidemic situation – 2; emergency - 1); public policy – 2; doctor's advice – 2; other official information – 3; national day of mourning -1. The main issues raised were coronavirus and vaccination. Users often protested on personal issues. The issue of light rail transit (LRT), which has been a problem for a long time, is being considered.
2	**Almaty kalasynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Almaty] (https://www.facebook.com/almaty.gov.kz)	Main themes: 35; official information related to the emergency – 25; coronavirus – 4; other official information – 4; snow removal – 1; national day of mourning - 1. The authors of the comments complained about the high cost (for example, the price of bread is 110 tenge, about 0.26 US cents) and the quality of public transport. There is someone who demanded the resignation of the mayor. In most cases, attention is paid to personal and domestic issues. Some people ask children to walk to kindergarten and school during an emergency.

		The Open Almaty page responded to some comments.
3	**Shymkent kalasy akimdigi** [Akimat of Shymkent] (https://www.facebook.com/akimat.shymkent)	Main themes: 109; official information related to the emergency – 42; other official information – 32; coronavirus – 11; Presidential speeches – 9; opinion leadership – 2; vaccination – 2; national day of mourning – 2; +9 posters. It looks like there was Internet in the city, because in the country, when the Internet was blocked, information in the networks was transmitted. The information will be published separately in Kazakh and Russian as 2 posts. Skeptically relates to the road in the city and the truth of the news, which is transmitted on the pages of Facebook. Some people warn that there is a shortage of goods in stores (especially flour). Petition initiatives to release the mayor of the city's objections to tenders. Network users have not neglected vaccination. The page moderator answers some questions.
4	**Akimat Karagandinskoj oblasti** [Akimat of Karaganda Region] (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Акимат%20Карагандинской%20области/205994209409535 1)	Although the Akimat Karagandinskoj oblasti [Akimat of Karaganda Region] (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Akimat%20Karagandinsk%%oblasti/2059942094095351) is on Facebook, no information was found in due time.
5	**Akmola Region**	No active page found on social network.
6	**Aktobe oblysy akimdigi** [Akimat of Aktobe Region] (https://www.facebook.com/aktobeakparat)	Main themes: 19; official information related to the emergency – 11; coronavirus – 4; terrorism - 1; Presidential speeches – 1; +2 posters. If the government had been with the people for a long time, the situation would have improved. There is a partial emptiness of shelves in large shopping malls and a shortage of goods. Protests have been over the price. Users demanded the release of peaceful protesters and public activists. The authorities do not know the situation of the people.
7	**Almaty oblysynyn akimdigi Akimat**	Main themes: 32; official information related to the emergency – 19; coronavirus – 10;

	Almatinskoj oblasti [Akimat of Almaty Region] (https://www.facebook.com/ZhetysuPress)	Presidential speeches – 2; national day of mourning - 1. Some information is provided in one post in Kazakh and Russian. In some villages, there is no gas and no good roads. Even in the suburbs, there are protests against the lack of gas, hospitals, schools, bad roads, and street lighting. It is said that the infrastructure does not meet the standards, and the villages are underdeveloped. The cost of utilities, including electricity, is high. Public information about the dead was demanded during the protest.
8	**Atyrau oblysynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Atyrau Region] (https://www.facebook.com/AkimatAtyrau	Main themes: 82; official information related to the emergency – 30; other official information – 16; coronavirus – 6; national day of mourning – 4; Presidential speeches – 4; opinion leadership – 3; vaccination – 2; Presidential address – 2; terrorism – 1; +14 posters. Despite the fall in gas prices, there are protests against the rise in gasoline prices. There is an objection to the assessment of people who came to a peaceful meeting as terrorists. Network users do not believe that a peaceful meeting was held in the region, attended by terrorists.
9	**Batys Qazaqstan oblysy akimdigi/Akimat Zapadno-Kazahstanskoj oblasti** [Akimat of the West Kazakhstan Region] (https://www.facebook.com/akimatzko)	Main themes: 41; official information related to the emergency – 22; other official information – 5; coronavirus – 2; national day of mourning – 2; Presidential address – 2; opinion leadership – 1; vaccination - 1; President's order – 1; Presidential speeches – 1; terrorism – 1; +3 posters. Some users write about the high cost of goods, saying that goods have not fallen in price. They warn that ordinary people who have come out to a peaceful meeting are terrorists.
10	**Kostanaj Oblysynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Kostanay Region] (https://www.facebook.com/rystam.ahmetov.5)	Main themes: 3; official information – 2; coronavirus – 1. Due to the low information content of the page, it can be assumed that the activity of network users was low. There are no comments for these three posts.

11	**Kyzylorda Oblysynyn Akimdigi** [Akimat of Kyzylorda Region] (https://www.facebook.com/qyzylorda.press)	Main themes: 47; official information related to the emergency – 16; coronavirus - 10; vaccination - 7; terrorism - 3; opinion leadership – 2; national day of mourning – 1; +8 posters. Information is provided in one post in Kazakh and Russian. The police are accused of shooting innocent young people. Some people are dissatisfied with the state awards that the families of the dead law enforcement officers received. The checkpoints on the roads of the region say that any person (even those whom the authorities call terrorists) can give a bribe and get through. Some ask the authorities where the terrorists came from in the region. People see the reasons for the meeting in the high cost, large debts of the population on credit, upsurge in food prices, low wages, lack of work, slandering the population, absence of feedback from the authorities, and information about false successes. Many said that if there were conditions, there would be no protests.
12	**Mangystau oblysynyn akimdigi** [Akimat of Mangistau Region] (https://www.facebook.com/AkimatMangystau	Main themes: 22; coronavirus – 10; other official information - 7; official information related to the emergency – 2; +3 posters. It looks like there was Internet in the region because some of the information was provided when the Internet was blocked in the country. Among the users, some people accuse the activists who went to the meeting that there were civilians among the dead. Many write that this situation has developed through the fault of the system and that the authorities do not take into account the population. They demand that the prices of goods be regulated. There are many complaints about the high cost and the influence of each product on the other to reduce prices.
13	**North Kazakhstan Region**	The official page does not publish information - https://www.facebook.com/pages/Акимат-Северо-Казахстанской-области/181796539396802
14	**Pavlodar Region**	Social media page not found.
15	**Shygys Qazaqstan oblysy** [East	On the pages of the Shygys Qazaqstan oblysy akimdigi [Akimat of the East Kazakhstan Region]

	Kazakhstan Region]	(https://www.facebook.com/pages/Шығыс%20Қазақстан%20облысы%20әкімдігі/2188426357855070) and the Akimat Vostochno-Kazahstanskoj oblasti [Akimat of the East Kazakhstan Region] (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066349309416) could not find the required information.
16	**Túrkistan oblysynyń ákimdigi Akimat Turkestanskoj oblasti** [Akimat of the Turkestan Region] (https://www.facebook.com/ontustik.gov.kz)	Main themes: 34; other official information – 17; official information related to the emergency – 6; coronavirus – 6; national day of mourning – 5. It looks like there was Internet in the region because some information was provided when the Internet was blocked in the country. There are protests about the corruption that has developed in the region. It is noted that decisions on various grants are not fair.
17	**Zhambyl oblysy akimdigi** [Akimat of Zhambyl Region] (https://www.facebook.com/zhambyl.gov.kz)	Main themes: 22; official information related to the emergency – 19; other official information – 2; national day of mourning -1. There are doubts about the veracity of the information that goods have fallen in price. It is noted that competitions have started in the regions to detain citizens who went to the meeting. The region's Akim was asked to stop dragging peaceful protesters to the police station.

Source: Primary Data, Author, 2022

Most of the comments were related to the high cost of food. The common task of all Akims was to ensure the stability of food prices, but the population did not have confidence in this. Some users were outraged by the shortage in stores. In some regions, they demanded the resignation of the Akim. Many pages informed the people about the epidemiological situation and the level of vaccination in the region, but this did not bother the people. I want to say that, according to the opinions in the comments, you can determine the problems in the country. I also want to say that there were regions that expressed their problems with discontent. However, the government should not be afraid of criticism. After all, criticism of the power of citizens is a normal phenomenon in a democratic society.

The literacy of users who write comments also requires our attention. At the same time, it is clear that the question arises whether commentators may be less

competent on this issue depending on their literacy. However, it can be said that their literacy does not matter in expressing the welfare of the people. It has become clear that society wants to have power together with the people.

From the analysis and related sections, the article introduces and implies several core definitions. I collated these into Table 4. A concise table helps quickly reference how key terms are defined in this study, avoiding ambiguity. In a context where terms like "protest" or "protest-related comments" could be interpreted in various ways, an explicit listing ensures a consistent understanding across the article. Implementing this table addresses the strengths of the article in several ways: it clarifies key concepts, enhances methodological transparency, and aids in understanding exactly how the terms' definitions were used and operationalized. By consolidating definitions, the article becomes robust in its analytical form.

Table 4. Conceptual definitions used in this study

Term	Definition
Digital public sphere	Official pages are an element of the online communication environment where social and political processes take place.
Online protest	A type of online, non-institutionalized political activity that is defined by complaints, disagreement, and demands for change aimed at authorities and policies.
Protest-related comments	Social media comments that display "protest signs" include outright disagreement, appeals for action and change, statements of discontent with authority, and indications to mobilize.
Diagnostic framing	Pointing out issues and inequities in comments, such as socioeconomic grievances.
Prognostic framing	In comments, users offer remedies and different courses (e.g., asking for policy reform and leadership resignation).
Motivational framing	Promoting and validating collective reactions (such as protest calls and signs of solidarity).
Online protest discourse	The collection of social media postings and comments serves the same purpose as offline protest: expressing complaints, advocating for change, and demonstrating support.

Source: Primary Data, Author, 2025

7. Discussion

The analysis of Facebook comments in the first week after Internet resumption reveals that socioeconomic grievances were the predominant drivers of online

dissent, aligning with broader assessments of the January 2022 protests as rooted in economic discontent. The prominence of economic concerns corresponds with findings that contradictions and welfare demands underpinned mass mobilization in Kazakhstan. Moreover, the immediacy and volume of negative comments underscore the role of digital platforms as outlets for public sentiment once connectivity resumed, reinforcing the notion that suppression of online communication can only delay, not extinguish, digital activism today.

The identified thematic patterns call for accountability, challenges to official narratives, and criticism of authority, reflecting traditional aspects of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivating framing in online protest discourse. The dimensions of social media activism, where users articulate grievances, propose alternatives, and signal solidarity. In this context, contestation of the "terrorism" framing demonstrates how digital commenters challenge, consistent with showing that social media users often repurpose and resist official labels during contentious events.

Regional variations in comment activity (e.g., higher volumes in certain oblast pages) highlight uneven patterns of digital engagement and perhaps differing local intensities of discontent and moderation practices. This heterogeneity aligns with the idea that protest mobilization in Kazakhstan exhibited regional disparities, influenced by local socioeconomic conditions and network structures. The observation that some official pages lacked content and engagement suggests limitations in using state-run platforms to gauge public sentiment in areas where pages were inactive, echoing concerns about data gaps when analyzing official social media channels under limited transparency.

The persistence of protest-related comments even after stabilization efforts signals that online dissent may endure beyond acute phases of unrest, serving as a barometer of lingering mistrust and unresolved grievances. This sustained digital activism implies that authorities need ongoing dialogue mechanisms rather than episodic engagement. Online protest discourse can evolve into organized offline actions if underlying concerns remain unaddressed. Thus, the findings underscore the importance for local governments to engage constructively with citizens online, as reactive moderation and censorship may exacerbate distrust.

The findings also characterize the double-edged nature of official social media use: while authorities may use these platforms to disseminate information, they may inadvertently amplify discontent when posts seem disconnected from lived realities (e.g., posting about price stabilization while users report shortages). Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, reliance on official Facebook pages excludes other platforms (e.g., Telegram, Instagram) where significant discourse occurred, potentially skewing insights toward

demographics active on Facebook. Second, the analysis covers only the initial week after resumption; longitudinal dynamics of online sentiment remain unexplored. Third, potential moderation by page administrators may have filtered and suppressed certain comments, affecting the completeness of captured dissent. Finally, coding based on visible textual content cannot fully account for sarcasm, irony, and coded language in comments, which may understate the featured expressions of discontent. Future research could incorporate multi-platform analyses, extend observation periods to track sentiment evolution, and employ mixed methods to deepen understanding of digital protest ecosystems.

Implications for practice include recommending that regional authorities maintain an active social media presence with genuine engagement, addressing specific concerns raised online, clarifying policy measures with precise data, and acknowledging mistakes when appropriate. Proactive communication strategies, including regular updates on socioeconomic indicators and channels for feedback, may help reduce the perception of a barrier between elites and citizens. Furthermore, digital literacy initiatives could assist users in evaluating information credibility and reduce susceptibility to misinformation, contributing to more informed online discourse.

The problem of social instability should not be overlooked. As you know, social instability is associated with the insecurity of the social system. In fact, in real social life, there can be no absolute stability. I think that local authorities in Kazakhstan sometimes incorrectly report that the political and social situation of society is stable. Indeed, in any society, there is always an imbalance within social systems and between them; there are manifestations of "real" and potential instability. Therefore, according to this logic, the instability of a social system is its state, devoid of stability and the ability to develop under changing conditions. In this case, the danger of society's destruction is great.

The group with low political literacy views politicians as "others" who are culturally distant from the people, and this perception is accompanied by a real negative assessment of politicians. However, in addition to being close to the people, government officials need to get rid of the notion that "they are in power." It is this situation that has developed in society that can explain the emergence of political protests. In order to remove the barrier between the people and the political elite, it is necessary to correct the opinion of politicians that they do not feel the life experiences of "ordinary" people. If this is not removed, their legitimacy and politics will be called into question. People resent their style of work and communication and consider it a "symbol" of the lack of timidity and devotion. At the same time, a person with a quality education is less inclined to protest. Even if it comes out, it protests with specific proposals or enters into a dialogue. Through this education, political literacy and culture are transmitted.

In sum, the discussion highlights that the surge of protest comments on Facebook following the January 2022 Internet resumption reflects deep-rooted economic and political grievances, demonstrates the power of social media as a forum for contestation, and points to the necessity of sustained, transparent, and dialogic digital governance approaches. Addressing the limitations inherent in single-platform, short-term analyses, future studies should adopt broader, longitudinal, and multimethod designs to capture the evolving nature of online protest behavior and its offline ramifications.

8. **Conclusion**

The "January tragedy" of 2022 in Kazakhstan changed the whole situation in the country. The authorities encountered a large-scale protest for the first time. The country's power structures were not prepared to protect societal security. The protesters also had no political or civic experience in holding protests.

The main reason for this protest is inequality in society. Inequality in modern society is often a side product of society's success in providing opportunities for self-expression. For example, inequality affects consumer needs and income opportunities and limits consumer preferences. Members of society choose their preferences for risky or dangerous work. Kazakhstan requires reform to address inequalities, and the political issue of this reform is to correct inequality of opportunity.

The present analysis of Facebook comments during the first week after Internet resumption following the January 2022 events in Kazakhstan provides a detailed portrait of online expressions of dissent and their thematic contours. By systematically examining 507 posts across 12 active official Akimat pages and their 912 associated comments, the study identified 667 remarks exhibiting protest signs. This conclusion synthesizes those findings, directly responds to the three research questions, and outlines implications for local authorities and future research.

Research Question 1: What were the protest comments and their numerical data?

The content analysis revealed that out of 912 total comments, approximately 73% (667) contained indicators of protest and dissatisfaction directed at authorities and policies. The distribution of these protest-related comments varied markedly by region: certain Akimat pages (Kyzylorda, Almaty, Aktobe) attracted disproportionately high volumes of negative remarks, whereas others showed minimal engagement and inactive status. This quantitative breakdown underscores the unevenness of digital dissent: some localities generated substantial online mobilization immediately after resumption, while in regions

with sparse and absent pages, the lack of visible commentary points to lower online activity.

Research Question 2: What were the main topics of users and their indicators?

Across the examined posts, a set of around a dozen thematic categories emerged, with "official updates related to the emergency" dominating, followed by health-related information (COVID-19 updates) and other routine announcements. However, user reactions often focused on socio-economic concerns, especially the cost of basic goods, infrastructure deficiencies, and perceptions of inequality, even when posts addressed unrelated topics. Regional patterns showed that some Akimats prioritized messaging about the emergency status and public health, but user indicators, comment frequencies, and tone revealed that underlying grievances about living standards and trust in governance were paramount. The prevalence of certain hashtags and repeated references to high prices and inadequate services served as quantitative markers of these topics' salience.

Research Question 3: What were the comments with signs of protest and their characteristics?

Qualitative examination of protest-related remarks uncovered consistent framing elements: expressions of socio-economic grievances (diagnostic framing), demands for concrete remedies and leadership accountability (prognostic framing), and signals of solidarity and readiness for collective action (motivational framing). Many comments contested official narratives, indicating resistance to imposed labels. Characteristics such as emotional intensity (anger, frustration), references to inequality, and calls for transparency and resignations frequently recurred. Regional discrepancy appeared: in some areas, protesters emphasized local infrastructural issues (gas supply, road quality), while elsewhere the focus was on broader national inequities. Literacy levels varied, but regardless of phrasing, the substance pointed to a widespread perception of a barrier between citizens and decision-makers.

The concentration of protest expressions on socio-economic matters suggests that any digital engagement strategy by local authorities must go beyond generic publication. Authorities should actively monitor and respond to citizen concerns in real time, providing clear data (e.g., on price stabilization efforts) and acknowledging gaps where policies fall short. Genuine dialogue can help reduce distrust. Moderation policies should aim to preserve critical feedback rather than suppress it, as sustained online dissent may foreshadow offline mobilization if underlying issues remain unresolved. Furthermore, ensuring that all regions maintain active, updated social media presences is crucial for capturing the full spectrum of public sentiment instead of relying on incomplete and inactive pages. Finally, training for both administrators and citizens in

digital literacy could improve the quality of discourse and reduce misunderstandings.

Despite the fact that the situation in the country has stabilized, there are still many critical posts and comments with signs of protest on social networks. We must not forget that this negativity can develop into another "offline" protest. Therefore, I think it is right that the authorities should carry out work to increase the low level of public confidence. Comments with signs of protest do not show the general level of political and civic activism in Kazakhstan. But I must say that the level of protest on social networks is very high, and it can still grow. To reduce this level, moderators of official pages should respond to dissatisfied comments, and Akims of regions and cities should openly go out to the people.

References:

Al-Rawi, A. K. (2014). The Arab Spring and online protests in Iraq. *International Journal of Communication*, *8*(1), 916–942.

Auyezov, O. (2022). *Kazakh President gives shoot-to-kill order to quell protests*. Reuters. Retrieved January 8, 2022, from https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/kazakh-president-says-constitutional-order-has-mostly-been-restored-2022-01-07/

Bang, C. C., Lee, J., & Rao, H. R. (2021). The Egyptian protest movement in the Twittersphere: An investigation of dual sentiment pathways of communication. *International Journal of Information Management*, *58*, 102328. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2021.102328

Barnes, S. H., Kaase, M., Allerback, K. R., Farah, B., Heunks, F., Inglehart, R., Jennings, M. K., Klingemann, H. D., Marsh, A., & Rosenmayr, L. (1979). *Political action: Mass participation in five Western democracies*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Cartwright, K., Gonya, M., Baca, L., & Eakman, A. (2022). We're such a small community": A qualitative study of COVID-19 pandemic experiences in rural New Mexico. *Research in the Sociology of Health Care*, *39*, 41–57. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0275-495920220000039003

Carty, V. (2019). *Social movements and new technology*. Taylor and Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429493119

Chadha, M., & Harlow, S. (2015). The writing is on the wall, or is it? Exploring Indian activists' beliefs about online social media's potential for social change. *International Journal of Communication*, *9*(1), 672–693.

Chiderah, U., & Iroeze, P. C. (2021). Strategies academic libraries in Nigeria can adopt to curb the spread of COVID-19 and remain relevant in post COVID-19 pandemic. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, *2021*(1A), 1–19.

Cohen, A. (2022). *Kazakhstan's stress test: The January tragedy and its aftermath*. Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst. Retrieved January 24, 2022, from https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-

articles/item/13703-kazakhstan's-stress-test-the-january-tragedy-and-its-aftermath.html

Earl, J. (2012). Private protest? Public and private engagement online. *Information, Communication and Society*, *15*(4), 591–608. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.665936

González-Bailón, S., Borge-Holthoefer, J., & Moreno, Y. (2013). Broadcasters and hidden influentials in online protest diffusion. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *57*(7), 943–965. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213479371

Gruber, M., Mayer, C., & Einwiller, S. A. (2020). What drives people to participate in online firestorms? *Online Information Review*, *44*(3), 563–581. https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-10-2018-0331

Jenzen, O., Erhart, I., Eslen-Ziya, H., Korkut, U., & McGarry, A. (2021). The symbol of social media in contemporary protest: Twitter and the Gezi Park Movement. *Convergence*, *27*(2), 414–437. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856520933747

Kantchev, G. (2022). *Kazakhstan's elite got richer on natural resources. Then came the unrest*. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved January 7, 2022, from https://www.wsj.com/articles/kazakhstans-elite-got-richer-on-natural-resources-then-came-the-unrest-11641572839

Khazraee, E., & Novak, A. N. (2018). Digitally mediated protest: Social media affordances for collective identity construction. *Social Media and Society*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118765740

Kudaibergenova, D. T., & Laruelle, M. (2022). Making sense of the January 2022 protests in Kazakhstan: failing legitimacy, culture of protests, and elite readjustments. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, *38*(6), 441–459. https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2022.2077060

Kung, M., & Zhu, D. (2022). What about my opposition!? The case of rural public hearing best practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Cities*, *120*, 103485. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2021.103485

Levin, D., & Barak-Brandes, S. (2014). Information? Conversation? Action?: Gabriel Tarde's model and online protest in the eyes of Jewish: Israeli Teenage Girls. *Public Administration and Information Technology*, *13*, 337–353. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04666-2_18

Malkawi, A. H., & Ambusaidi, K. (2021). Communication ethics for online social movements: A study on Arab social networks on Twitter. *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research*, *14*(1), 117–142. https://doi.org/10.1386/jammr_00027_1

Mendelsohn, J., Vijan, M., Card, D., & Budak, C. (2024). Framing social movements on social media: Unpacking diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational strategies. *Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media*, *4*, 1–61. https://doi.org/10.51685/jqd.2024.icwsm.9

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2022). *Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved January 6, 2022, from

https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa/press/news/details/309378?lang=en

Mourão, R. R., & Chen, W. (2020). Covering protests on Twitter: The influences on journalists' social media portrayals of left- and right-leaning demonstrations in Brazil. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *25*(2), 260–280. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161219882653

Mukhongo, L. L. (2020). Participatory media cultures: Virality, humour, and online political contestations in Kenya. *Africa Spectrum*, *55*(2), 148–169. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002039720957014

Nassimov, M. O., Paridinova, B. Z., & Kaldybai, K. (2013). Features of political advertisement in the Republic of Kazakhstan. *Middle East Journal of Scientific Research*, *14*(8), 1129–1134.

Nassimov, M. O., Dosmanbetov, D. B., Dosmanbetova, S. B., Paridinova, B. Zh., & Ensepov, A. A. (2013). Political consulting: Essence, specifics, technologies. *Life Science Journal*, *10*(4), 2866–2869.

Nassimov, M. O. (2025). Living with credit and installment plans: The situation in a southern Kazakhstan. *Population and Economics*, *9*(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.3897/popecon.9.e124304

Nassimova, G., Buzurtanova, M., & Saitova, N. (2019). Social protests in Kazakhstan: Factors and trends. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University, Philosophy and Conflict Studies*, *35*(3), 472–484. https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu17.2019.307

Nikunen, K. (2018). From irony to solidarity: Affective practice and social media activism. *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, *10*(2), 10–21. https://doi.org/10.58036/stss.v10i2.655

Papa, V. (2017). To activists: Please post and share your story: Renewing understandings on civic participation and the role of Facebook in the Indignados movement. *European Journal of Communication*, *32*(6), 583–597. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323117737953

Sandoval-Almazan, R., & Gutierrez-Alonso, M. A. (2011). Empowering people using Twitter: The case of Mexico's Internet tax. In A. Manoharan & M. Holzer (Eds.), *E-Governance and civic engagement: Factors and determinants of E-Democracy* (pp. 488–504). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-61350-083-5.ch024

Satpayev, D., & Umbetaliyeva, T. (2015). The protests in Zhanaozen and the Kazakh oil sector: Conflicting interests in a rentier state. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, *6*(2), 122–129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2015.03.005

Siuda, P. (2015). Negative meanings of the Internet: The net regulation from the perspective of Jeffrey C. Alexander's strong program in cultural sociology. *Studia Socjologiczne*, *3*(218), 149–167.

Slambek, J. (2022). *Bizdin bir gana Otanymyz bar, ol – Qazaqstan* [We have only one Motherland, Kazakhstan]. Egemen Qazaqstan. Retrieved February 17, 2022, from https://egemen.kz/article/304507-bizdinh-bir-ghana-otanymyz-bar-ol-%E2%80%93-qazaqstan

Smagulov, K., & Nasimova, G. (2016). Analysis of the protest mood in the Western region of Kazakhstan. *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, *17*(3), 38–47.

Theocharis, Y. (2013). The wealth of (Occupation) networks? Communication patterns and information distribution in a Twitter protest network. *Journal of Information Technology and Politics*, *10*(1), 35–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2012.701106

Tokayev, K-J. (2022a). *President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's Statement in connection with the current situation in the country*. Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from https://akorda.kz/en/president-kassym-jomart-tokayevs-statement-in-connection-with-the-current-situation-in-the-country-50329

Tokayev, K-J. (2022b). *Obrashhenie glavy gosudarstva Kasym-Zhomarta Tokaeva k narodu Kazahstana* [Address of the Head of State K-J. Tokayev to the People of Kazakhstan]. Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from https://akorda.kz/ru/obrashchenie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-k-narodu-kazahstana-503036

Tokayev, K-J. (2022c). *President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's Address to the People of Kazakhstan*. Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved January 7, 2022, from https://akorda.kz/en/president-kassym-jomart-tokayevs-address-to-the-people-of-kazakhstan-801221

Tokayev, K-J. (2022d). *Vystuplenie glavy gosudarstva Kasym-Zhomarta Tokaeva na vneocherednoj sessii Soveta kollektivnoj bezopasnosti ODKB* [Speech by the Head of State K-J. Tokayev at an Extraordinary Session of the CSTO Collective Security Council]. Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from https://akorda.kz/ru/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-kemelevicha-na-vneocherednoy-sessii-soveta-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-odkb-1002245

Tokayev, K-J. (2022e). *Uroki "Tragicheskogo Janvarja": edinstvo obshhestva - garantija nezavisimosti* [Lessons from "Tragic January": The Unity of Society is a Guarantee of Independence]. Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved January 11, 2022, from https://akorda.kz/ru/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-kk-tokaeva-na-zasedanii-mazhilisa-parlamenta-respubliki-kazahstan-1104414

Tokayev, K-J. (2022f). *New Kazakhstan: The path of renewal and modernization*. Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved March 16, 2022, from https://akorda.kz/en/state-of-the-nation-address-by-president-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-kassym-jomart-tokayev-17293

VCIOM-Sputnik daily survey results (2022). Monitoring Mnenij: Janvar' - Fevral' 2022 [Opinion monitoring: January-February 2022].

Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes, *1*(167), 103–104.

Verba, S., Nie, N. H., & Kim, J. (1978). *Participation and political equality: A seven nation comparison*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zakharchuk, V. (2022). *K-J. Tokayev: prava grazhdan narushat'sja ne budut* [K-J. Tokayev: Citizens' rights will not be violated]. Kazahstanskaja pravda. Retrieved January 31, 2022, from https://kazpravda.kz/n/kasym-zhomart-tokaev-prava-grazhdan-narushatsya-ne-budut/