

**Factors influencing civic and political
engagement among students in Kazakhstan**

by

Bakhtiyar Rakhimov

Zhanna Igenbekova

Ratmir Bolatuly

supervised by

Aziz Burkhanov

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY

NUR-SULTAN, KAZAKHSTAN

November 21, 2021

This page is intentionally left blank

Abstract

Participation of the young generation in democracy promotes active citizenship, strengthens social responsibility and can enhance democratic processes and institutions. Young people can offer to societies much, from innovation to creativity and new thinking, therefore young people today will become leaders and decision-makers in the future.

The research covers both undergraduate and graduate students since they are young people attending higher education institutions. In order to collect information for the research literature review was studied, a survey distributed among students in 6 universities via online service and online interviews conducted with representatives of 5 universities who are responsible for student affairs.

Based on survey and interview results conducted, our research team learned that certain factors significantly affect the level of civic and political engagement of students. The majority of the hypotheses were not confirmed and survey analysis demonstrated unpredicted results.

We identified that there are several factors influencing the civic and political engagement of students that showed some issues to be improved. Therefore, the main recommendations are to conduct youth policy more, conduct transparent dialogues between executive bodies and youth, develop mass media content for youth, increase the number of youth organizations, and do more research on this topic.

Table of content	
Abstract	3
Chapter 1. Introduction	5
1.1 Problem Statement/Description	5
1.2 Literature review	6
1.3 Research Question	12
1.4 Methodology	14
Chapter 2. Findings	16
Chapter 3. Discussion	25
3.1 Distribution of results between questions	25
3.2 Distribution of interview results	28
3.3 Confirmation/refutation of the hypotheses	36
Chapter 4. Conclusion and recommendations	45
References	47

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement/Description

Youth is a particular socio-demographic group and the future of any country. Young people's civic and political activity is usually understood as a youth carrier of social innovation. Hence, the increase in its socio-political engagement becomes one of the conditions for finding new forms of the social device. Therefore, the task of socio-political understanding and engagement is discussed as a priority by various states and public institutions.

The problem of weak activity among young people in solving modernization tasks, including Kazakhstan, is current and socially significant. Therefore, the issue of socio-political engagement in the country's life among modern youth problems occupies a special place. Since in turn, it affects the state balance between the needs of society in maintaining stability and at the same time in constant updating.

However, if we take deeper, the current young people represented by students are the future generation, from which many managerial and other solutions in any state depend. In digitalization and daily changing world trends, it is essential to understand and evaluate young people's desires, preferences, and focus. Since it directly connects with their behavior in the country's society, where they live, this is reflected in the upbringing of future generations, and in general, affects the civil and political activity of youth. Thus, students are an important component of a state's society.

Recently, a particular study of the socio-political activity of young people in Kazakhstan is of specific importance, especially in the student environment. Although this phenomenon has an explicit macrosocial character and concerns all population categories, the exact students will be considered within the framework of this work as a primary source and object of study. Moreover, because students are an intellectual and spiritual elite of the future society, establishing their value orientations and social-political engagement is of particular value.

In a pandemic and strict restrictive measures, we decided to research not all the youth as a whole but to concentrate on students. This is because first, students are one of the most active parts of youth. Secondly, practically all classes are held online these years, and students are most active in a digital environment. In addition, taking into account the coverage of various regions and universities of the country, the distribution of questionnaires and interviews will be better conducted with students; thus, qualitatively rich data can be gathered.

1.2 Literature review

The sociologists and political scientists of the world have traditionally paid sufficient attention to young people's civic and political activity. There are also works in domestic literature dedicated to youth issues, including certain aspects of the socio-political activity of young people. For example, the theoretical foundations of a modern understanding of social and political activity among young people, including students, were laid in authors' works: Laruelle, Watson, Kilybaeva, Korostikov, Stockemer, and many others.

Having studied the literature of different authors on the topics of activity among young people globally, our team paid attention to the fact that Kazakhstan's youth were less studied and analyzed than in other countries. There are many works of Russian authors about Russia's youth or students of Central Asia countries. Indeed, some significant works were written about Kazakhstan too. For instance, *The Nazarbayev Generation: Youth in Kazakhstan* (Laruelle, 2019) and other research, which we took as the basis and emphasized a lot of helpful information.

Based on Kilybayeva's (2018) work in quantitative and qualitative analyses, we found interesting similarities and differences in civil and political activity manifestation among Kazakh and Kyrgyz youth. It has been proven that both Kazakh and Kyrgyz youth are interested in politics. Simultaneously, they assess their ability to effectively influence the authorities' political decisions through traditional participation forms and do not use the opportunities of protest actions, considering

them ineffective. In general, in this study, the author concludes that the Kazakh youth rates their political activity lower than the Kyrgyz.

Korostikov comes to a similar conclusion in his work '“Russia: Youth and Politics” (describing young people and their interest in politics in Russia) (2014) that the decrease of interest in traditional electoral politics among young people is a global trend. However, in Russia, the new generation does not trust anyone except their friends and acquaintances. Thus, as in other studies, the author notes the passivity of young people in the country's political life.

The article "Specificity of students youth's political activity" (Volegova, 2015) talks about the problems and prospects of student youth's political participation at the present stage. The analysis of the level of university students' political activity in Yekaterinburg and Kostanay was carried out. The results showed a high interest in political processes in the country and the world of students from Russian and Kazakhstan universities. Still, at the same time, both countries' young people show a low level of actual political activity. Therefore, the author offers several recommendations, one of the first stages in developing a unified strategy for developing the young generation. A program will be set to support and stimulate student youth.

In addition, Kilybaeva (2018) also associates the low level of political activity with the work of state programs, that political activation is related to the ability of young people effectively to influence the political decisions of the authorities. In this regard, the state needs:

- to improve the state youth policy as an essential factor in the formation of political activity;
- to carry out scientific and applied research to determine the degree of political activity;
- develop social programs for youth;
- to expand mechanisms for the legitimate expression of young citizens' interests through the institutions of the state and civil society.

At the same time, Korostikov (2014) concluded that socio-political education and the education system in Russia are built so that even interested people cannot

become experienced in management and politics. The author stated the crisis of humanitarian education in Russia. The article emphasizes that students of humanities or technical specialties do not have any subjects or courses to study political foundations, and thus, young people develop apolitical moods.

One of the research articles that we also would like to mention in our literature review is “Youths Civic Uses of New Media in Five Digital Cities in East Asia” (Wan-Ying Lin et al.). The online version of this article can be found on the Journal of Adolescent Research website. The authors of this article discussed the Asian youth aged between 12 and 17 in five major Asian cities: Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei, and Tokyo. The data was collected in 2007, and the paper concludes with a discussion of differences in Internet use among Asian youths between 2001 and 2007. The quantitative data collected during this research is accurately represented in several tables and gives us well-organized information regarding the sample characteristics of teens, online youth activities including discussions, and youth real-life civic activities in five cities with a percentage of response in each city. The findings confirm the potential of the Internet to engage teenagers in becoming citizens, however entertaining and commercial activities remain dominant in cyberspace. Youth also discuss public affairs, search for civic or political information and network with friends and make new connections with strangers. The authors think that when the time comes, social networking can be transformed into mobilizing forces. In addition, the authors gave suggestions for future studies, such as comparing the levels of civic interest and engagement between youth and adults to get a picture of the generational effect.

Another journal article published in 2019 on digital literacy through digital citizenship “Online civic participation and public opinion evaluation of youth minorities in Southeast Asia” (Audrey Yue et al.) also attracted our attention and is included in the literature review. The article extends the existing digital literacy studies by focusing on digital citizenship. Proposing that digital citizenship is a practice through which civic activities in the various dimensions of citizenship are conducted, this article considers how the concept of digital citizenship can furnish further insight into the quality of online civic participation that results in claims to

and acts of citizenship. The article presents original case studies with Southeast Asian young people. It argues that Southeast Asian youth digital citizenship foregrounds civic participation as emergent acts that serve to make society a better place. The authors of the article highlight how digital citizenship is actualized through online engagement that results in civic participation.

One of the research articles reviewed was conducted by professors of Volgograd State University in 2015. The article examines the formation of social and political activity student youth: socializing factors and pedagogical attitudes (Vasileva, 2012). The authors refer to the data from the Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinions and the Zircon Research Group for the period 2006-2007, characterizing the socio-political activity of Russian youth. The conducted research allowed the authors to conclude that there is a low level of the social and political activity of the Volgograd student youth, which is typical not only for the region under study but also for Russia as a whole. The authors assume that the low level of socio-political activity of young people results from unformed political competence, which consists of political knowledge, skills, and accumulated political experience. Realized in medium educational institutions state, departmental, regional, municipal, and school programs for the education and socialization of students are not from the competence of young people in politics. Therefore, the authors highlight the need for educational reforms and the importance of including social and political education. Currently, the media, civic organizations, and families attempt to fulfill this function in vain, and the youth have no trust in the institutions. On the other hand, suppose the government is interested in politically active and critical thinking youth. In that case, political socialization should be managed with the help of pedagogical and educational technologies implemented in educational institutions at all levels.

Searching for the various sources of information, our group's attention was attracted by the Canadian article published by the Journal of Youth Studies titled "Students' political engagement: a comprehensive study of University of Ottawa undergraduate students" (Stockemer, 2012). The author found a high degree of political interest among students and discovered complex engagement patterns. For example, the individual's political interest is impacted by the program of study, year

of study, academic performance and payment of their own tuition, and the political participation of their parents. One more important conclusion is that the author could not support the assumption that gender and involvement in extracurricular non-political activities somehow foster political interest. The recommendation for future studies includes conducting a similar survey among other Universities in Ottawa and comparing the results, which may demonstrate the interrelation of the type of the school and civic engagement. Finally, future studies may evaluate the impact of high school political involvement on engagement in college.

One of the books that helped us learn more about political illiteracy is the book “Political Literacy and Civic Thoughtfulness” (Tam, 2016). According to the author, one of the main problems of political illiteracy is that political understanding remains absent from the educational plan. There are a variety of educational courses in IT, Art and design, or learning languages, but politics is not an option. When many citizens poorly understand politics, the propagandists and debaters can confuse and deceive the public. The author of the book also highlights the importance of civic thoughtfulness to take part in the decision-making process of those who decide what is good or bad for the well-being of the members of society. The book’s main idea is to educate the reader on the importance of cognitive thoughtfulness, mutual responsibility, cooperative inquiry, and civic participation.

Another article includes two publications interpreting the youth civic engagement “The handbook of research on civic engagement in youth” (Sherrod, 2010) and ‘The engaged university: international perspectives on civic engagement (Watson, 2011). The handbook reports evidence of the transformation in youth’s civic interest and engagement. The second publication reviews the comprehensive empirical study of twenty universities worldwide and the civic engagement of the community members. Both publications break the geographical barriers and global understanding of youth civic engagement. The major contribution is the advancement of the view of youth civic engagement. It provides a constructive outlook and is grounded in recognizing the current realities, interests, and experiences that shape the day-to-day civic life of diverse youth.

Moreover, both articles increase the awareness of diversity in our understanding of civic engagement. These volumes cover a diversity of topics, perspectives, and approaches to youth civic engagement. The handbook provides both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In addition, it raises some issues regarding research and evaluation methods, making it necessary reading for those who plan to continue to do more detailed research in this field.

“Socio-political activity of Russian student youth: sociological analysis” (Tikhonov, 2011) states that in developed capitalist states, social and political activity is included in increasing the future generation’s competitiveness and is considered a quality of life factor. From the point of view of modern science, social and political activity as a whole represents an increase in any activity in society or participating in different social groups, in various public organizations and movements, promotions, and in youth communities.

However, in Russia, youth was left aside from socio-political life in the recent decades, and the government showed interest in them only in the election period. Our team found interesting similarities with the work and situation in Kazakhstan. Despite that, the last few years have somewhat changed, and the problems of young people turned out to be nominated by our countries’ current leadership for one of the first places in the government policy.

Nevertheless, the Opinion Institute and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung survey shows that young Kazakh citizens are not interested in civic initiatives or engaging in politics. Therefore, we find studying the level of civic and political engagement among students in Kazakhstan an exciting and vital issue. After all, Satpayev et al. (2014) described the youth factor is essential in any society’s political life. This is especially true for countries in political transition - the transition from one socio-political state to another, including Kazakhstan. Moreover, since the youth is the most progressive part of any state, it is needed to work with them because in 20-30 years, they will be in power, and their task will be to find that stratum of young people that they once were.

We tried to fill in the missing niche by our contribution, and we do hope this work will help future researchers in this topic. Our team decided to take a narrower

orientation and consider the factors affecting students' civic and political engagement in Kazakhstan. We believe that certain things in one way or another to a greater or lesser extent influence the level of civic and political activity among students.

1.3 Research Question

The civic and political engagement of the younger generation is changing and depends on various external factors. By **political engagement**, we mean the level of knowledge of the political system and the awareness of the roles and functions of the government. By **civic engagement**, we understand the different kinds of participation in the state's social life as active citizens (being active followers in social media, volunteering, charity, and participation in protests). Our work aimed to study the specifics of civic and political participation among several university students depending on various factors such as the city of origin, the language of instruction, gender, age, social vulnerability, study program and specialization, and others.

Our Research Question is the following: *What factors influence civic and political engagement among students in Kazakhstan Universities?*

Representatives of student youth are a significant social group serving the source of the replenishment of the intelligentsia. They related among themselves an everyday activity and form in this sense a particular socio-professional group. The specifics of this group are associated with the public activity of students, which, in combination with the territorial concentration, generates their community of interests, group identity, specific subculture, and lifestyle. Interestingly, that student group is complemented by an age category that does not have other socio-professional groups. Such socio communities are enshrined by many political, cultural, and sports student organizations.

It should be understood that students as a subject of political activity are temporary and do not occupy a permanent place in the production system. However, they are determined by the nature of the public system and are directly dependent on the country's socio-economic and cultural development level. Thus, we think that various factors influence this formation of student civil and political activity.

For example, our team considered the starting position of students and their parents as an essential factor influencing their civic and political engagement levels. In particular, it is possible to distinguish groups of students living in the city, where their university is located, and students coming from remote towns and villages. As a result, representatives of two different groups will implement different social strategies. Therefore the analysis of the social-economic status of students as a factor determining their social and political activity should include consideration of demographic characteristics (age, sex), social parameters, and the economic status of students (living conditions, income level, etc.).

Based on the literature review and demographic situation in Kazakhstan we formed several hypotheses. Therefore, the research hypotheses are based on the assumption that the effectiveness of the development of the civic and political activism of students depends on:

Hypothesis 1.

Students from low-income families are more likely to be less active in civic and political engagement. Our group wants to check if family income can be a factor that influences students' civic and political life.

Hypothesis 2.

Language of school/University education correlates with students' civic/political activism. Considering that in Kazakhstan we have schools and universities with Kazakh, Russian, and English language education, we want to test if it is possible that students' activity depends on such a factor as language.

Hypothesis 3.

Students accommodated on-campus residence halls are more likely to be more active in civic engagement (volunteering, performing arts, debates, etcetera).

Hypothesis 4.

Students coming from rural areas are more likely to be less active in civic and political engagement; an interesting fact is that many people coming from rural areas become successful specialists in city life, however, it can be disputable. Thus, another hypothesis to understand is that the place of living and birth can influence students' civic and political life.

Hypothesis 5.

Graduate students (30-35 years old), who had a long gap between undergraduate and graduate programs, are more likely to be more active in political engagement, but less in civic engagement;

Hypothesis 6.

The number of students using internet resources of information (news portals, social media) is larger than the number of students using traditional resources of information (TV, radio and newspapers)

Hypothesis 7.

Students interested in political and governmental news are more likely to be active participants in a digital environment (social media, websites, portals, forums, etc).

Hypothesis 8.

University students are more likely to express their opinion online as active followers in social media by pressing likes, writing comments, reposting certain information, rather than physically participating in real protests (offline), parades, and other meetings.

1.4 Methodology

To identify the factors influencing civic and political engagement among university students, we decided to use the interviews with the representatives of each university's administrations and surveys among students that will be recognized as primary data. Also, statistical analysis and web-sites observation will be done to collect secondary data.

The first tool that we used in our research was the surveys among students, which we believe will help us understand the factors that influence their civic and political engagement, how universities and their environment affect them, etc. The surveys included the questions that will help separate students into groups by gender, city, type of university, education language, level of family income, etc. At the same time, using language questions helped us disclose the ethnicity issue considering the

enormous diversity of different nationalities in Kazakhstan. The questions related to family income enabled us to reveal the socialization of participants.

The second tool that we used was the semi-structured interviews with representatives of the administrations of each university because we need to understand what is done to students' civic and political engagement. There is usually a special person or department that is responsible for political activities within the university. These specialists face different problems during the work with students, have several limitations in actions, etc. Therefore, we tried to disclose the issues in each university through interviews. There were 15 questions asked, but during the process, any appearing questions also took place. All interviews have been converted into text as being qualitative data. All these above tools can be recognized as reliable primary data and collected personally.

Chapter 2. Findings

Initially, 6 universities were planned to be involved in the survey and interviews that are divided into three main groups:

- Western education:
 - Nazarbayev University (hereinafter - NU) in Nur-Sultan, established in 2010, is recognized as the country's flagship academic institution with aspirations to become a global-level research university.
 - KIMEP University (hereinafter - KIMEP) in Almaty, established in 1992, is the oldest and largest North American format university in Central Asia. The main areas of education are business administration and social sciences.
- Private universities:
 - Aktobe Kazakh-Russian International University (hereinafter - KRIU) in Aktobe, established in 1994, is the first international non-state university in the western region of Kazakhstan. The main areas of education are law, economic, technical, and humanitarian sciences.
 - Turan University (hereinafter - TU) in Almaty with a subsidiary in Nur-Sultan, established in 1992. The university has 4 faculties: economics, humanities and law, the Academy of Cinema and Television, and STEM – English-language programs.
- State universities:
 - Kazakh State Agrotechnical University (hereinafter - KATU) in Nur-Sultan, established in 1957, the largest agrarian university of Central and North Kazakhstan, the first university of Nur-Sultan. The university aspires to become a research university of the international level in the sphere of the agro-industrial complex.
 - D. Serikbayev East Kazakhstan Technical University (hereinafter - EKTU) in Oskemen, established in 1958, is one of the largest universities in Kazakhstan, the leading center of science, education, and culture in East Kazakhstan oblast.

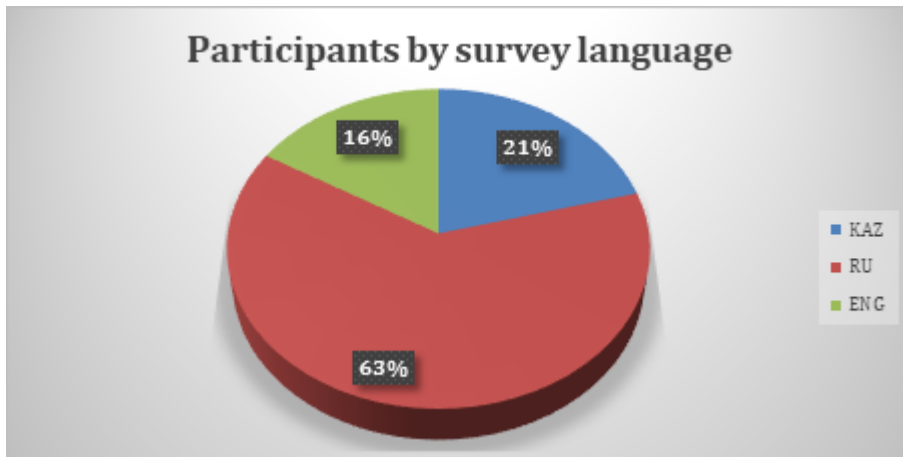
We decided to divide the groups to have more appropriate comparable information. In addition, in case of an insufficient level of participants, it was planned to add Shakarim University into the list of universities. Shakarim University (hereinafter - SU) is a regional public university, named after Shakarim Kudaiberdyuly and located in Semey, East Kazakhstan region, established in 1934. The university's areas of education are social, humanitarian, natural, technical, agricultural, business and legal fields.

Since later, one private university (KRIU) became unavailable for participation in the research, the substitution by SU became relevant.

All selected universities took part in the survey and interviews, except for SU that participated in the survey but could not provide the representatives to be interviewed.

The first challenge the research faced, the period of research and students' academic year in most universities started at different times, therefore when the research period was to finish, the students were fully busy entering the new academic year. This situation led to a lower number of students participated in the survey, instead of the expected 480-600 respondents, the actual number of respondents was 317. The survey was distributed among university students in three languages. Results showed that the majority of participants prefer the Russian language to respond to the survey. The reason is that Kazakhstani government could not organize a smooth transfer from the USSR education system to modern with preferable Kazakh language.

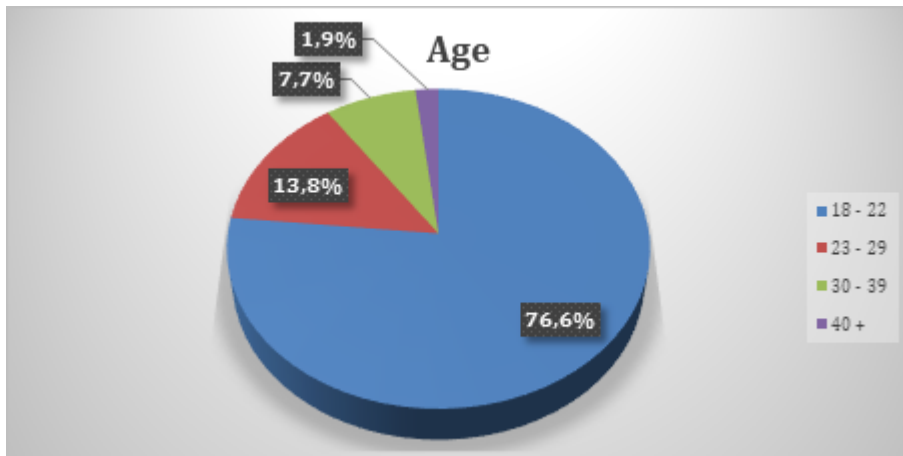
Figure 1. Breakdown of participants by survey language



Question #1 - Your Age

The surveys were distributed among universities and in general, the majority of the students are bachelors who are usually at age 18-22. As a result, 77% of participants are at this age.

Figure 2. Breakdown of participants by language

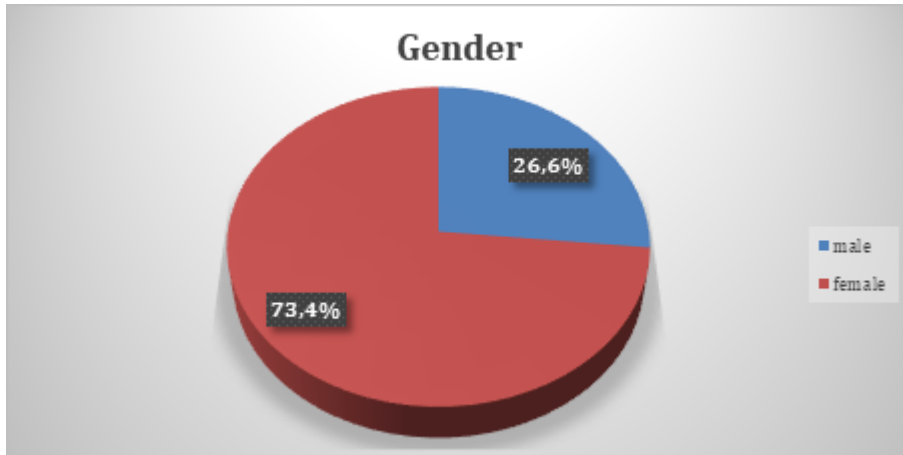


Question #2 – Gender

The survey showed that 3 participants out of 4 are female. Overall in Kazakhstan, the women population is larger than male population by 6-7%. The survey was arranged in cities where the difference between female and male populations is even larger than average statistics in Kazakhstan. In addition, the female population has become more active on a social level, while the male

population was always passive, therefore female participants exceed male participants.

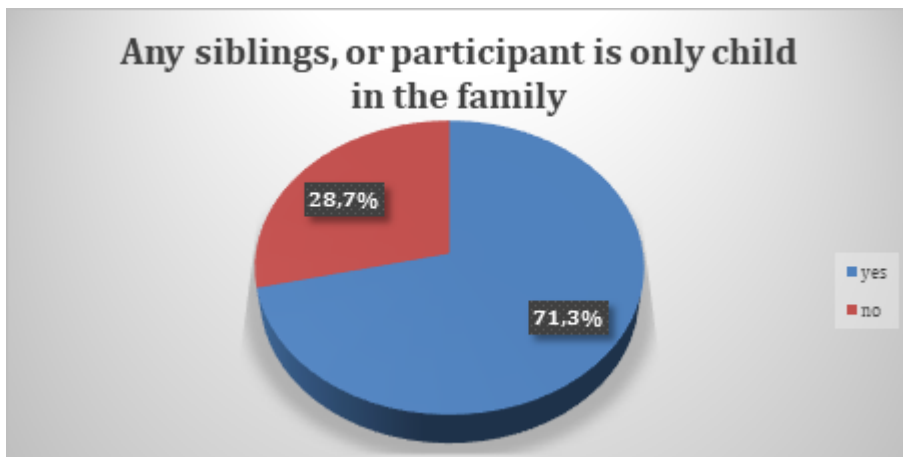
Figure 3. Breakdown of participants by gender



Question #3 - Do you have any siblings, or are you the only child in the family?

The result showed that the majority have siblings. Based on the historical background, families always tried to have as many as many children, therefore in most cases, modern Kazakhstani families have at least 2 children.

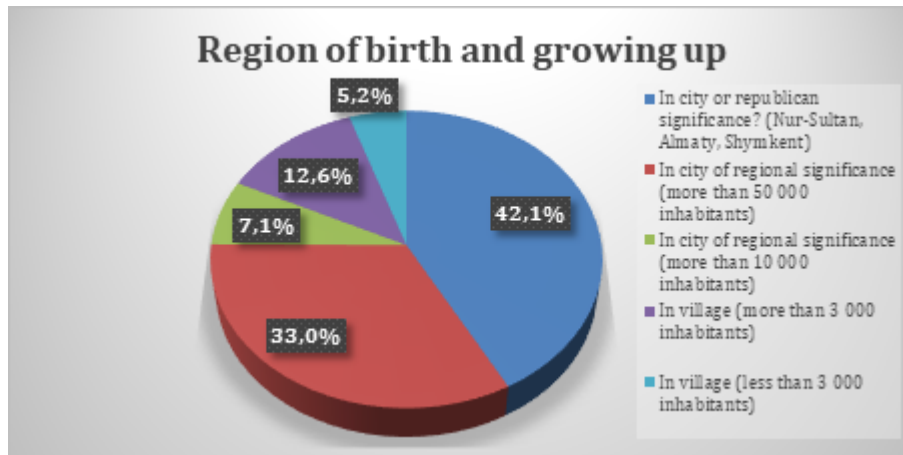
Figure 4. Breakdown of participants by having a siblings



Question #4 - Indicate the region where you were born and raised?

According to official data, the population in urban areas is approximately 60%, and the surveys were arranged in universities located in cities. Therefore, the results showed that the majority of the participants are from large cities, 75%.

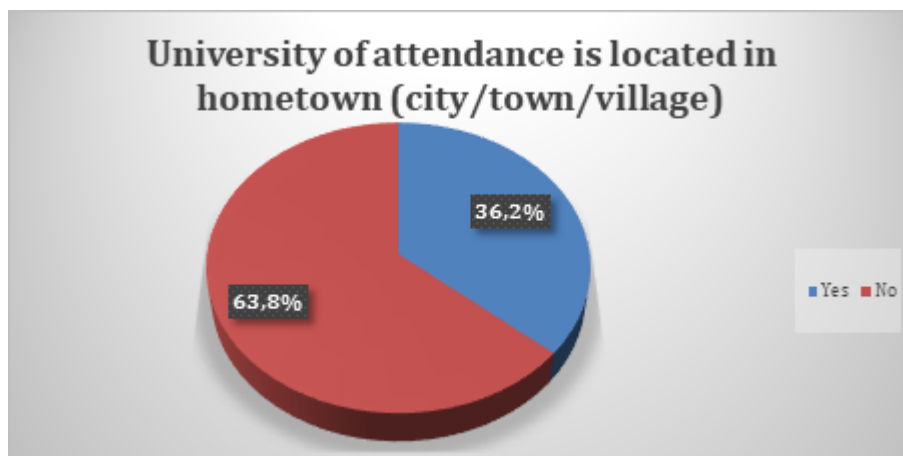
Figure 5. Breakdown of participants by region of birth and growing up



Question #5 - Is your university that you're attending located in your hometown (city/town/village)?

Considering the previous question, since the best universities are located in the largest cities, it was expected that the percentage of participants attending universities in their hometown will be higher, however, the results are contradictory. The main explanation can be that a large number of students move to another large city for education.

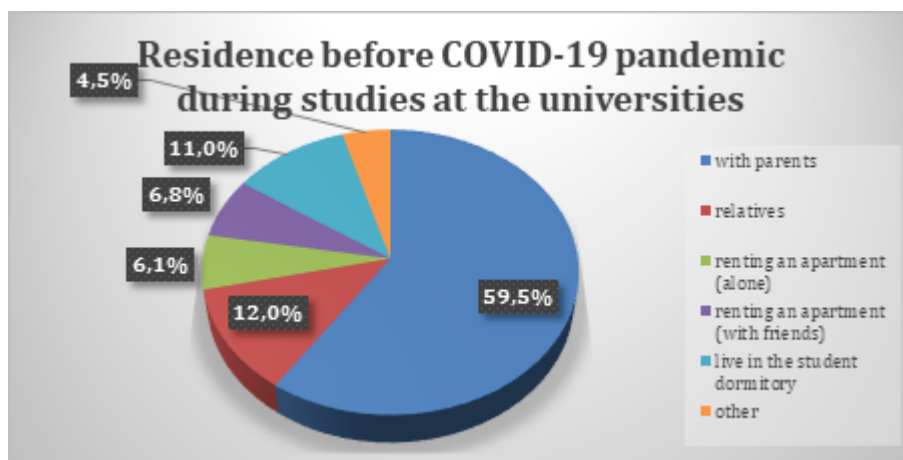
Figure 6. Breakdown of participants by the presence of a university in the hometown (city/town/village)



Question #6 - Where did you reside before the COVID-19 pandemic during your studies at the universities?

Since the majority of participants at age 18-22, most of them resided with parents before the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, children usually separate from their parents only after graduation from university.

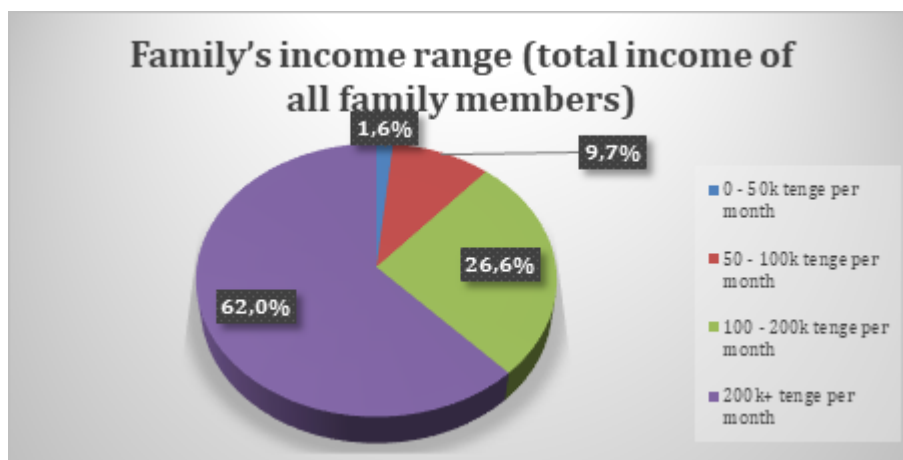
Figure 7. Breakdown of participants by residence before COVID-19 pandemic during studies at the universities



Question #7 - Please, indicate your family's income range (total income of all family members)

The majority of participants, 62%, are from families with an income of 200k+ tenge per month. The main reason is official statistics that show the average salary is 250k tenge. In addition, the question asks about family income, therefore the total average family income is approximately 500k tenge.

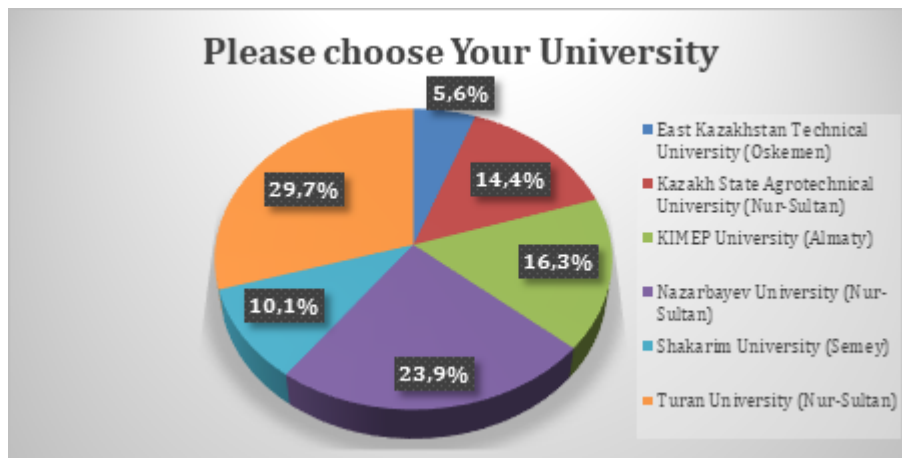
Figure 8. Breakdown of participants by family income



Question #8 - Please choose Your University from the list below

The results showed that participants from universities located in big cities are more active in the survey, 84%. The state universities from Nur-Sultan and western education universities participated almost at the same level, 44% and 40%, respectively.

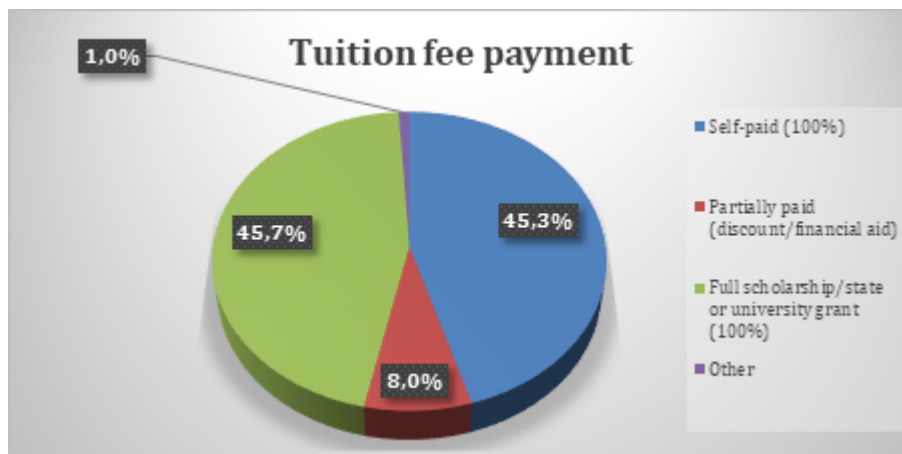
Figure 9. Breakdown of participants by university



Question #9 - How do you pay the tuition fee for your study?

Based on the results, the majority of participants (91%) are either self-paid (46%) or granted (45%). 46% of self-paid is mostly related to KIMEP and TU because these universities are private and education is payable. The main reason is that state universities provide both paid and granted education. State universities provide a lot of grants for students.

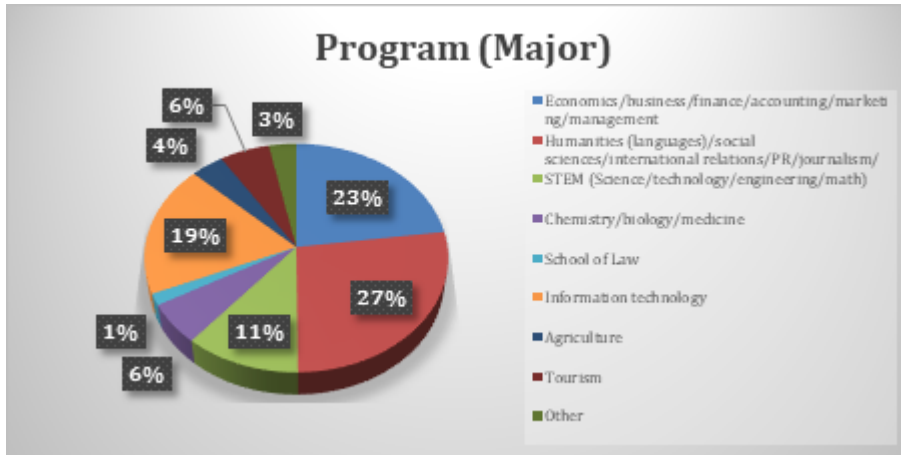
Figure 10. Breakdown of participants by tuition fee payment



Question #10 - Please choose the option where your Program (Major) is listed in

The majority of participants are from business/economics and humanities, 50%, probably because TU and KIMEP, 46%, are related to these programs.

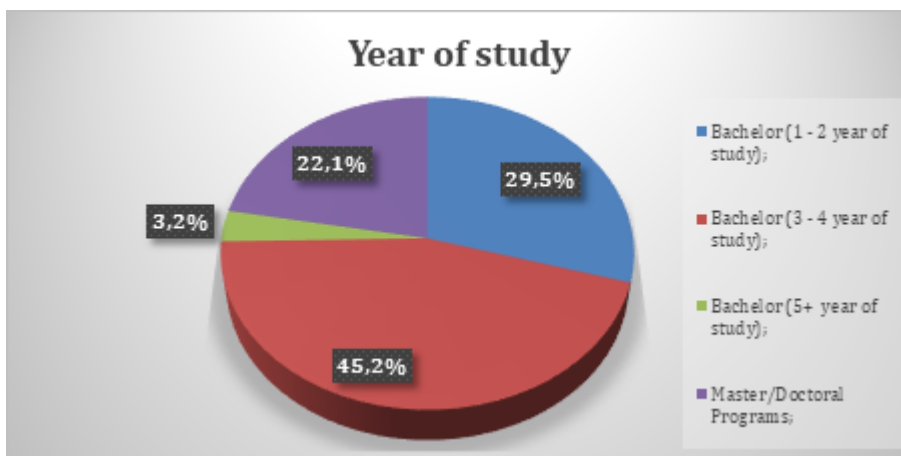
Figure 11. Breakdown of participants by program (major)



Question #11 - Please, indicate your year of study.

The bachelor (1-2 year and 3-4 year) occupies 75% because, in general, the majority of students in universities are bachelors. There are a few programs that last 5+ year period, therefore the percentage is at a low level.

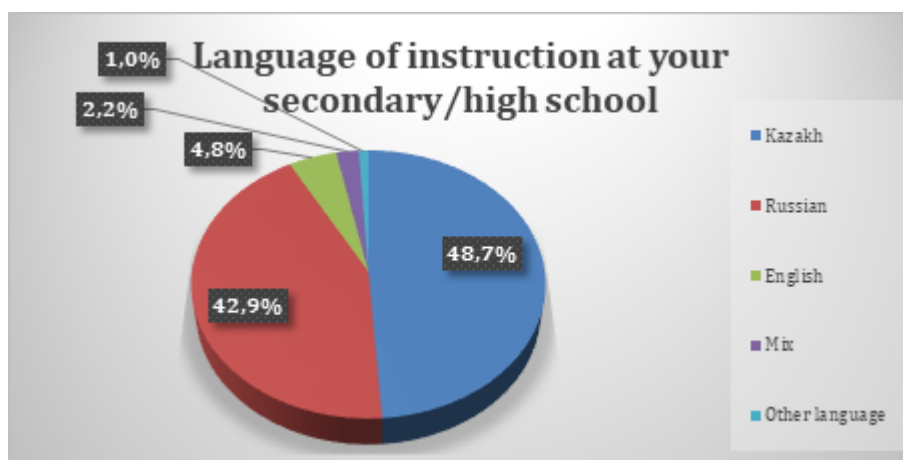
Figure 12. Breakdown of participants by year of study



Question #12 - Please, select your language of instruction at your secondary/high school

Since in most cases, schools in Kazakhstan are monolingual education, and the impact from the USSR is significant, the Kazakh and Russian education prevails. In the last decade, the number of schools has grown and in most cases, the number of Kazakh classes is larger than Russian classes, therefore Kazakh education is almost half of all participants. The results showed only 8% of education on either another language in monolingual education or the education was mixed (2-3 languages).

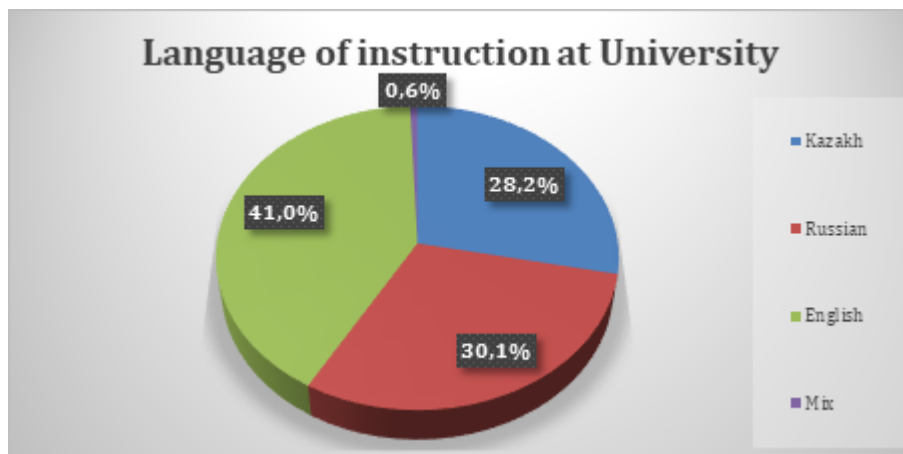
Figure 13. Breakdown of participants by language of instruction in secondary/high school



Question #13 - Please, select your language of instruction at the University

40% of participants are from KIMEP and NU, therefore 41% is related to English education. Kazakh and Russian languages are almost at the same level because in all other universities students can select the language to study.

Figure 14. Breakdown of participants by language of instruction in university



The second challenge was the pandemic situation, all interviews were conducted via online conference services. The representatives of each university tried to provide the research team with enough time for interviews, in most cases, the interviews were postponed to a later period. There was a case when the representative of SU got sick with coronavirus, therefore the interview was postponed several times and later it was canceled.

The research team expected a higher number of the survey participants, but they were satisfied with the achieved level. Unfortunately, not all planned interviews were conducted, but the research team received good feedback from different types of universities about factors influencing civic and political engagement among students in Kazakhstan.

Chapter 3. Discussion

3.1 Distribution of results between questions

After identification of the average portrait of the respondents, our research group smoothly switched to the main part of the questionnaire. Next series of questions are aimed at determining the general students' understanding of civic and political engagement, their perception of these terms and level of their participation as well as the factors that in their opinion affect their engagement in certain activities.

Almost half of the respondents (150 out of 313) have prior experience in civic and political participation (debate clubs, volunteerism, charity, school self-governance/council). And almost the same number of respondents (161 out of 313) participate in extracurricular non-academic social student life at the university. At first glance it may seem that the same students simply continue being active in their university life however only 94 students out of 150 still have interest in social student life, and 54 students out of 150 do not participate or used to but no longer do so. Another interesting number is that out of 162 students who had no prior experience at high schools 65 students do participate in non-academic university life. Our research team correlates this phenomena with another factor that is related to active involvement of students by student oriented services of the universities that pay more attention to the extracurricular student life programming. In our opinion students are less involved in non-academic activities during their middle and high school studies, because at this level of their education they are more focused on academics and the school administration pays more attention to schooling.

In students opinion, being a person well informed about the political life of your country means to be aware of current political debates and policy programs (90 out of 313), to be aware of the Ministries/Ministers/roles and functions (10 students out of 313), to know all the political parties and their leaders (11 out of 313), to know three branches of government: legislative, executive and judicial (17 out of 313). 182 respondents think that knowing all of the items mentioned above make them a person

well informed about the political life of their country and based on their answers only 76 students consider themselves as so.

180 students do not consider themselves as politically active people and 89 participants are not sure about the answer. Out of forty one respondents who consider themselves as politically active persons, eleven students evaluated 5 points, twelve students evaluated 7 points and six students evaluated 10 points out of a maximum 10. Despite the fact that the majority of students are not politically active, 235 students follow the current political events (rather yes than no), 60 students do follow the political activities and news and almost the same number of around 60 students do not.

Concerning the sources of information, the vast majority of the respondents use social media (Instagram, Telegram, Facebook, WhatsApp and others), 30 students read electronic versions of newspapers, 27 respondents watch television and hard copies of newspapers. It is obvious that digitalization plays a huge role in the daily routine of modern human beings.

Another interesting observation our research team made is that two third of the respondents have an interest in knowing more about political processes taking place in Kazakhstan. 212 students out of 313 would like to know more (yes, rather yes than no) about politics, and one third is not interested (no, rather no than yes). 188 participants answered that they would like to have a more significant influence on the political situation in the country and only 78 would not, however the number of students who think that their involvement helps change the situation and the number of students who do not think so, are almost equal: 129 and 133 respondents consequently. 251 participants think that the active participation of young people in the political life of the country is necessary, 29 respondents do not think so. The separate block of questions and answers on political attitude and participation have been placed into the comparative table (see below) in order to give more clear picture on political activism among students of Kazakhstani universities:

Table 1. Political participation of Kazakhstani students.

Questions on political attitude and participation	Yes / Rather yes than no	No / Rathe r no than yes
Would you like to know more about political processes taking place in Kazakhstan?	212	101
Would you like to have a more significant influence on the political situation in the country?	188	78
Do you think that your involvement helps change the situation and the number of students?	129	133
Do you think that active participation of young people in the political life of the country is necessary?	251	29
Do you think that educational institutions (primary/secondary/middle/high schools, colleges, universities) contribute to active citizenship formation?	162	112
Are you an activist of any political party or some socio-political movement?	25	271
Do you think that the mass media in Kazakhstan provide enough information to form a personal opinion on politics?	92	179
Do you often participate in political discussions on the Internet?	41	258
Have you ever been involved in or heard about “forced volunteerism” towards the student community, when university administration pushes students to join different events involuntarily?	106	146

Based on these answers we may conclude that two third of the respondents are interested in the political life of the country and moreover they would like to have a more significant influence on the political situation in the country, however, almost 50% of the participants do not think that their involvement helps change the situation. Factors are mostly limiting the youth involvement in a country’s political life are the following: disinterest (116 responses), lack of time (103 answers), unawareness (138 answers), the futility of participation or insignificance of a single participation (140

responses), tradition and habit (48 responses). As students were given a chance to pick several answers the total number of factors exceeded the number of participants.

3.2 Distribution of interview results

In addition to the surveys, interviews with representatives of each university were arranged to receive their opinions that were aimed to help test hypotheses. Under the representative, we understand the employee who worked in the Department of Student Affairs (or otherwise on the name, but similar in functioning). Therefore, with the prism of their experience working with students, they can also make arguments to confirm or refute these hypotheses.

The interviews were conducted based on oral consent. Most of the interviewees gave their support to the use of their names in work. However, names will not be present in this research.

Thus, the NU's representative became a person who was the head of the Department of Student Affairs since 2010. Before that, they worked at a similar position in Kazakh-British Technical University (Almaty) - this is Interviewee #1.

Interviewee #2 - representative of KIMEP, started a career in Academic Affairs in 1996, and has been an Associate Vice President for Student Affairs since 2013.

The next Interviewee #3 - is an employee of EKTU, also working with youth policy and startups, development of social, business, and scientific projects.

The fourth respondent from KATU also has about 20 years of experience in high schools and universities - Interviewee #4.

The last representative of TU, Interviewee #5, Vice-Rector for academic affairs, with approximately 30 years of experience, including work in both schools and universities of Kazakhstan.

The first two questions in our interview were about work experience and understanding of the civic and political activity. Next, questions were asked devoted to a deeper analysis of this topic based on the experience of people working with

students and their immediate opinion regarding factors affecting civic and political engagement among students.

The third interview question sounded, is civic and political engagement among students a critical issue for society? All 5 interviewees positively responded to the question. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that they are convinced that civic and political involvement among students is an important issue for society. Furthermore, the first respondent, the representative of NU, added that students are one of the active segments of our society whose learning is extremely necessary to improve the quality of life and the country's general situation.

Interviewee #5, the representative of TU, expressed his mind like this: students are a significant political force worldwide. Therefore, civil and political involvement among students is a critical issue for society. Indeed, the state does not pay great attention to the upbringing of Kazakhstani students of citizenship. However, they are probably not ready to demonstrate a political position, but still, students should develop their civil position.

The next question asked about the civic and political activity of Kazakhstani students overall and the particular university (from 1 to 10, where 1 most inactive and 10 is most active). Interviewee #1: All students in civil terms - 5, in political - 3. Students at NU, civil position - 6-7 score, and in political - without comment. Interviewee #2 estimated civic activity 1-2 out of 10 points for all Kazakhstan students in general and KIMEP. For political activity 0.5 scores also for all students in Kazakhstan, including KIMEP.

Representative of EKTU, interviewee #3 determined civil activity among all students in Kazakhstan 8 out of 10, political activity 6. With almost the same for EKTU students - 7 in civil activity, in political - 5. KATU interviewee #4 decided to put 3 points in civic and political activity among students in Kazakhstan and KATU itself. Interviewee #5 put 5 - for civil, 2 for political activity in general for all students of Kazakhstan. To summarize, overall, Kazakhstan students have 4.6 points in civic activity and 2.9 in politics, according to administrative staff who work and contribute to non-academic life in universities.

The next question in the interview was regarding the personal position of the respondent, as an active participant, both in the civil and political life of the country, received the following answers. Given the posts of respondents and many years of work experience in universities, most are bent towards the fact that their position itself implies an active civil position. And instead, to a lesser extent or even relatively low activity in the political life of Kazakhstan.

The next part of the interview consisted of specific issues, the first of which sounded like this: What do you think graduates (30-35 years), who had a long break between undergraduate and master/doctoral studies, most likely, will be more active in political life, but less in civilian life?

Expanded answers were obtained, which, although there were points of contact, still possessed every uniqueness of thought. The first respondent from NU suggested the following response: it can only be assumed that these students should be active in political life and less involved in social life.

KIMEP, represented by the Student Affairs employee, revealed a question that Master's students and doctoral will not be involved in civic and political activities. They can be engaged in it only if they get a degree to make a career in the civil sector or admit to politics. Or in the civil service, in this case, they will be involved.

Interviewee #3, EKTU: 30-35 years old People who already have experience, they worked somewhere after the university's release, in any case, then they already understand the country from the inside, more consciously applies. Most likely, some political activity rises because, in politics, people are already going when older, then you have any life experience. The civil position in principle is formed during the student and activity. That's why there may be a political life for them more active than civic life.

The representative of KATU agreed with the statement because, firstly, the practice of politics implies that the youth decide on their intentions to engage in politics. Secondly, it is necessary to be a member of any party. In the third, mature political views are usually formed, as a rule, at an older age.

Interviewee #5 from TU said that there would be more activity in civil positions. But, this is when they begin their careers and peak of it when they try not

to participate in political activities and not get involved in political movements. And also rise in household problems in family life, they are in 30-35 age, they still allocate the family and career more time. So, therefore, there is no place for any political activity in their life.

The following questions were about the correlation of the language of education in high school and the civil and political activity of students? All respondents (interviewed representatives of different universities) unanimously stated that the language would not happen at all. It is possible to learn in any language, which does not affect civic and political positions formation. Civil and political human activity does not depend on the learning language. This position is influenced by the environment (friends, classmates, parents), professors who teach public disciplines. The idea was also said that activity depends on the person himself and not the language he speaks or learns.

Related question regarding the language of university training and its possible impact on students' level of participation in civic and political life?

To this question, interviewees answered that if the student is interested in participating in the civic and political life of the university, it will take regardless of the language. The NU representative expressed an exciting idea that, at least in general, the language of university training does not affect the level of students' participation in the civil and political life of the country. Nevertheless, there might be an exception, in only a small percentage of universities, where training goes in English. In this case, according to the interview, a small percentage of students have a slightly different worldview and public political life since communication with foreign professors and other languages, travels, and cultures. He assumes all of this should expand the student's horizons. As a result, the visions are better than life and improve this life in general.

On this issue, whether students from rural areas are likely to be less active in the civil and political life of the country's opinions of representatives of universities working in close relationships with students were divided. The NU representative brought an example from Kazakhstan that in the country's management, the first political, social activists were primarily from villages. Of course, it is necessary to

clarify what countryside is, because - it can be a rural place, and maybe a suburb. And whether it will be politically active depends on the environment in which a student will fall and which grinding and roughly speaking will turn out when they release and which person it becomes. To a greater extent, the young man has grown up in conditions of great opportunities of the cities, having a wide range and access to various types of education, and a self-realization is a person with more opportunities to become active rather than a person from the rural area. Although in the age of the Internet, these boundaries are now erasing, for example, 20 years it is easy to change mind. It can be assumed that after 10 years, this gradation comes between a student from rural areas or urban. But today, students from rural areas will be less active than urban ones.

On the contrary, the KIMEP representative expressed his opinion that rural youth is more active than urban. Because firstly rural young people, when they start to make a career, they are usually more successful in their career, because nothing is given to them easily. They are accustomed to working on the result, unlike urban children who are more often more difficult to care for parents and various conditions. If you look at the country, everything is almost all starting from our first president. They are from the countryside. But about activity, maybe they will be more active youth. Again, because urban youth have their comfort zone, they may not want to leave it.

EKTU interviewee, in turn, bowed to the belief that rural youth is less active. Since 80% of all students of the university are from the countryside. And if we say a student has nowhere to live or lacks the money to admit, there is no civic position. In turn, students who live at home have a desire and time to deal with some kind of activity, both in the civil and political sphere. But, again, it cannot happen everywhere, because there are a lot of students who come from the countryside and have a clear position in life. Therefore, it is difficult to answer unequivocally, but most likely that this assumption is more true.

KATU interviewee did not agree with our alleged hypothesis that rural youth is less active in the civil and political life of the country. Thus, reinforcing its

assumption as an example that many Kazakh poets, thinkers, and philosophers were out of the countryside.

On behalf of the TU representative, a response was received that the level of civil and political activity among urban or countryside students depends on the region. For example, by analyzing the position of their students, the observation was that a more active civil position manifests in the southern region, that is, students from the countryside. At the same time, in the northern and central parts of Kazakhstan, more urban students show more activity; this indicator fluctuates depending on the region.

The next question stands if interviewees agree with the statement that socially vulnerable students from low-income families are likely to be less active in civil and political life. When answering this question, all the interviewees found it difficult to answer categorically, as the question, of course, requires a more detailed study. For example, according to the NU representative, in such a situation, it all depends on the individual characteristics of the student. Sometimes it can be met with representatives of socially vulnerable categories of the population among students who were very and very active in the public life of the university. And I met many people from rich families who were not active, if not to say that very passively. Therefore, it is difficult to say anything definitively.

In general, respondents' answers can be divided into two options. Option 1: Students from low-income families are likely to be less active in civil and political life because they will be much more important than the pressing issues - accommodation, food, pastime. And the second option, when such students are more active, is to change the quality of life of socially vulnerable families. Thus, the general response to this question will depend on the situation and the family's social status. At the same time, since there is no reliable data to answer, it is a tough question to answer unequivocally.

For the next question, three responses are positive, against two respondents who believe that accommodation in the dormitory does not affect the activity of students in civil or political involvement. And in more detail, we received the following response from the representative of NU: I am prone to the idea that the

accommodation in the campus has a favorable effect on the active participation in the public life of the university and society as a whole. Under all the reasons - this is a sense of community, as a young man is attached to the primary norms of the human dormitory. Unlike students living in their families and forced to obey parents' rules, students living in a hostel are faster than the main primary norms of the human dormitories. It feels more responsibility, develops time management. This is quick and easy access to all types of student activities. These are all the factors that should inevitably lead to the person's formation to more tell so active empathy. And this is an important factor - it also leads to the errors in which the student will learn, as he is independent, which will inevitably lead to greater activity in public life and political life.

The representative of KATU also agreed with this statement, explaining that accommodation in the community instills certain values formed by the majority. Being part of this community, students take the norms of behavior and implement themselves more actively together with classmates.

Vice-Rector of Turan University for the academic affairs told us that students who live in the dormitory remain after studying and after training sessions at the university and actively participate in volunteering and various clubs and extra academic work—in addition, and especially for the weekend, actively involved in volunteering activities. Thus it can be concluded that those living in the hostel are more active.

In turn, the interviewed representatives of the KIMEP and EKTU agreed that accommodation on campus does not affect activity; it may be more dependent on various student organizations, but not the very fact of living on campus.

On the question of the fact that the number of students using Internet resources of information (news portals, social networks), more than students using traditional information resources (TV, radio, and newspapers) was obtained by one positive response from all respondents. After all, young people are not watching television or newspapers, only the Internet.

In the question regarding the correlation between following political and government news and active participation in the digital environment for students, the

opinions of representatives of universities were again divided, where there were arguments in support of approval. A student who does not have interest and therefore is not knowledgeable in political life can not comment on those or other posts, participate in the dialogues, and somehow express anyway. And publish your point of view on certain political events in the country. On the other hand, unlike a student who closely monitors the news, already has basic knowledge of the country's political system, knows all the political arena players. So he has his preferences, and therefore, most likely, it is the last one that will be an active participant in social networks in matters of political life. And at the same time, this is not necessary; that is, a student interested in politics and government news does not necessarily be an active participant in a digital environment; this is dependent on the student. It can be active or passive and without it.

For the next statement that students now more often express their opinion on social networks than in real protests, all respondents mostly agreed. The unanimous positive answer to this question is, most likely, it is. A couple of examples from the text of the interview: *since the Internet implies faster and easy access to the expression of their thought and thus it gives rise to a huge army of sofa experts* (NU). *In social networks, everyone communicates on equal terms, and everyone can express their real point of view. In contrast, in reality, not every person and a citizen, especially politicians, can frankly express their opinion about certain events or power* (KATU).

The last question was about "forced volunteering" in the student community. When the university administration causes students to participate in various events does it happen in reality or not? We can generalize answers to this question as everyone has heard and knows about forced volunteering. However, Universities do not use this tactic anymore. Therefore, it can be concluded that 5-6 years ago, volunteerism could be forcible and more common. Nowadays, the situation has changed, especially in pandemics when it is not allowed to gather in groups. Hence, it is no longer present for university administration to force their students into any kind of event. However, we cannot reject that it was experienced before.

3.3 Confirmation/refutation of the hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. Students from low-income families are more likely to be less active in civic and political engagement.

Survey results show that students from low-income families are as active as students from families with higher incomes. Moreover, according to our survey results, students from socially vulnerable families are even 10% more active in civic engagement. The difference between numbers is insignificantly small (see Table 2. below).

Table 2. Low-income family students comparative table.

status	low income (< 100 000 KZT)	higher income (>100 000 KZT)
share	35 students (11%)	272 students (87%) students
civic engagement	19 of them (51%) <u>do not</u> participate	178 of them (65%) <u>do not</u> participate
	15 of them (42%) <u>do</u> participate	94 of them (35%) <u>do</u> participate
political engagement	5 of them (14%) - politically active people.	36 of them (13%) politically active
	20 students (57%) not active.	154 of them (57%) not active.

Higher involvement of the socially vulnerable category of students is explained by the higher motivation of the given group. Students with lower income are more likely to be willing to invest into their future today to be successful tomorrow. Having unequal conditions at the start they realise that they need to work much harder during their study, to get not only hard but also soft skills actively participating in students' social life. All the knowledge and skills obtained at the university can transform them into well-rounded individuals who will certainly

succeed in his/her professional career. However, the given argument cannot be applied to the entire population of the students from low-income families. As the survey results show, 51% of the given category of students do not actively participate in civic activities. This can be explained by the fact that students are often busy at their part-time jobs helping their families to earn extra money. This fact is also supported by the information received from the interviews with university administration representatives. Some of them answered that students' involvement may depend as from students' family social status as from other factors.

Hypothesis 2. Language of school/University education correlates with students' civic/political activism.

According to the interview results, students affairs administrators state that language of instruction does not influence much on students' civic and political engagement. Based on their professional experience, students from different educational backgrounds and language of instruction are almost equally active in extracurricular social life, so interviewees cannot surely say that students from high schools with Russian language of instruction are more active than students from Kazakh language of instruction. However one of the interviewees believes that students with English language of instruction would be more active in non-academic university life. It was by the fact that students with English language of instruction are able to communicate with international faculty members and get more global cultural exchange.

According to our survey results based on surveys conducted among students, respondents with Kazakh language of instruction are comparatively more active in both civic and political life. Students with English language of instruction are less active than students with Kazakh language of instruction, but more active than students with Russian language of instruction. Students with Russian language of instruction are the least active among the respondents.

Based on both interviews and questionnaire results, our research team came to the conclusion that the second hypothesis related to the language of instruction is partially confirmed. So language of instruction does not impact political engagement,

but has more influence on civic engagement of students. The difference between answers of students of Kazakh, English and Russian languages of instruction are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Civic and political engagement of the students with different languages of instruction (Kazakh, English and Russian).

Language of instruction	Kazakh	English	Russian
share	<i>88 students (28%)</i>	<i>129 students (41%)</i>	<i>94 students (30%)</i>
civic engagement	<i>44 of them (50%) do participate</i>	<i>46 of them (36%) do participate,</i>	<i>20 of them (21%) do participate,</i>
	<i>43 of them (48%) do not</i>	<i>83 (64%) do not</i>	<i>74 (79%) do not</i>
political engagement	<i>18 of them (20%) active</i>	<i>17 of them (13%) active</i>	<i>6 of them (6%) active</i>
	<i>42 of them (48%) not active</i>	<i>72 of them (56%) not active</i>	<i>64 of them (68%) not active</i>

Hypothesis 3. Students accommodated on-campus residence halls are more likely to be more active in civic engagement (volunteering, performing arts, debates, etcetera).

Based on survey results campus residents are significantly more involved in active student life than the students who live outside of the university campus. Physical presence at campus gives students more opportunities to get acquainted with various knowledge communities, find different student organizations based on their interests, and be more flexible in terms of timing. As most of the extracurricular activities start after classes, students accommodated on campus do not need to spend much time on transportation as they live in the residence halls 24/7. The vast majority of the students living in the student dormitories are not locals, so they spend more

time communicating with their classmates and student buddies, rather than local students who less likely get the accommodation on campus and spend their spare time with their families. Local students are less involved in campus student life due to the more connections to the city they live in for many years. Table 4 shows the comparison of two categories of students: campus residents and other students who do not live on campus.

Table 4. Civic and political engagement of campus residents and other students.

Status	campus residents	off campus residents
share	<i>34 students (11%)</i>	<i>279 of respondents (89%)</i>
civic engagement	<i>20 of them (59%) participate</i>	<i>90 of them (32%) participate</i>
	<i>14 of them (41%) do not participate</i>	<i>188 of them (67%) do not participate.</i>
political engagement	<i>5 of them (15%) - active people.</i>	<i>36 of them (13%) - active students</i>
	<i>19 students (56%) - not active.</i>	<i>161 students (58%) - not active</i>

Our survey results show that the factor of living on campus does not affect the political awareness or interests of the students. Both categories of students demonstrate a low level of political interests and participation. In this hypothesis the result of the survey and interview matches. Two out of five interviewees believe that accommodation on campus does not really affect the students' involvement in nonacademic social life, the other three administrators think oppositely. In addition to this, university administration staff members think that political engagement does not depend much on the residential status of the students. So taking into account all the arguments mentioned above, our research team may conclude that hypothesis number 3 is confirmed.

Hypothesis 4. Students coming from rural areas are more likely to be less active in civic and political engagement;

Students coming from rural areas are more active in civic and political engagement. Our team’s expectation regarding the place of origin is not confirmed. We expected to receive the result, when students living in urban areas would be more active than those who came from rural areas. However the results were opposite, moreover students from rural areas are even 6 % and 3% more active in civic and political engagement respectively. So hypothesis number 4 is not confirmed. The detailed information is represented in Table 5.

Table 5. Civic and political engagement of students from rural and urban areas.

status	rural area	urban area
share	<i>55 students (18%)</i>	<i>255 students (82%)</i>
civic engagement	<i>23 of them (42%) - active</i>	<i>86 of them (34%) - active</i>
	<i>32 of them (58%) not active</i>	<i>169 of them (66%) – not active</i>
political engagement	<i>9 of them (16%) - active</i>	<i>32 of them (13%) – active</i>
	<i>28 of them (51%) – not active</i>	<i>152 of them (60%) – not active</i>

On this issue, opinions of student service oriented staff members are split into two parts: those who believe that students from urban areas are more active; students from rural areas are more active. It is challenging to answer this question, given that many politicians and prominent figures of Kazakhstan are from rural areas. However, the interviewed people also substantiated that urban youth have more chances to be active both in civic and in the country's political life.

Hypothesis 5. Graduate students (30-35 years old), who had a long gap between undergraduate and graduate programs, are more likely to be more active in political engagement, but less in civic engagement;

After analyzing the data received, our research team came to the conclusion that graduate students consider themselves comparatively more well informed and more active in the political life of the country than undergraduate students. However after a certain age, the interest and active participation in political life decreases down to the level of undergraduate students. In Table 6, the information on the level of political and civic activeness of undergraduate and graduate students is represented.

Table 6. Comparison of the level of interest and participation in political and civic life between undergraduate and graduate students.

status	Undergrads (18-22)	Grads (23-29)	Grads (30+)
Students who:	240 (77%)	43 (14%)	30 (9%)
<i>well informed about political situation</i>	56 of them (23%)	14 of them (32%)	6 of them (20%)
<i>follow current political events</i>	173 students (72%)	38 students (88%)	24 students (80%)
<u>politically active</u>	30 students (13%)	9 students (20%)	2 students (7%)
<u>participate in social life</u>	86 students (36%)	14 students (36%)	10 students (33%)

Student affairs staff members during the interview shared their own opinion regarding given phenomena. They believe that this takes place because of the changes in priorities, when a family, career and other liabilities start playing a bigger role in their lives, leaving less time for other activities. Moreover, they have to allocate time for continuing their education at graduate school. The exception could be those graduate students who have chosen public administration or public policy as their career path. In this case, they will be well informed about the political situation, follow current political events and will be much more politically and civically active than other students.

Hypothesis 6. The number of students using internet resources of information (news portals, social media) is larger than the number of students using traditional resources of information (TV, radio and newspapers).

The number of students using internet resources of information (news portals, social media) is much larger than the number of students using traditional resources of information (TV, radio and newspapers). Only 57% of respondents watch TV, listen to the radio and read newspapers (hard or soft copies). The vast majority of 249 students (80%) of the respondents use social media resources, newsportals, youtube and discuss political events with friends.

Expected results related to this hypothesis were confirmed by conducted research. Another question which arises from this conclusion is what other transformations of civic and political involvement may occur in the future. How rapidly developing digitalization changes our perception and participation in civic and political life of our country? Will citizens of Kazakhstan become more free and active in civic and political life of the country? These and other related questions require further in-depth research and analysis.

Hypothesis 7. Students interested in political and governmental news are more likely to be active participants in a digital environment (social media, websites, portals, forums, etc).

According to the survey results the level of participation in a digital environment among students who follow political events is extremely low. Students believe that there are certain factors limiting the youth involvement in a country's political life. 75% of the respondents confirmed that they follow current political situation in Kazakhstan, and only 16% of them participate in political discussions; 37% of respondents think that the factors limiting the youth involvement in country's political life are: Disinterest, unawareness, insignificance of a single participation; 28% experience the lack of time. The rest of the respondents choose "Tradition", "Habit", "Other reasons" or "All of the above" as the main reasons for their low participation in political discussions. All the percentages mentioned above are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Level of participation in a digital environment of the students interested in

political and governmental news.

<i>Students who:</i>	Total # of participants	<i>Answered positively</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Rather Yes than No</i>
<i>follow current political situation in Kazakhstan</i>	313 students (100%)	235 students (75%)	60 of them (19%)	175 of them (56%)
<i>participate in political discussions</i>	313 students (100%)	38 students (16%)	17 students (7%)	21 students (9%)

Despite the fact that 75% of respondents answered that they follow current political events, only 19% answered with confidence, 56% preferred the answer “Rather Yes than No” which automatically puts them into the position of people with no special interest in political news. We would rather position them as average citizens who have a slight interest in politics which is a bit more than those who do not have interest in political events at all. Bad news is that only 7% of those who follow current political news, participate in political discussions. In other words 17 participants participated in political discussion for sure and 21 respondents preferred to pick the answer “Rather Yes than No”, which does rather demonstrate an average level of participation in a digital environment. Factors limiting the civic and political involvement are provided in the section 3 “Discussions”, subsection *Distribution of results between questions* right after Table 1 on page 18. The factors are: disinterest, lack of time, unawareness, futility of participation or insignificance of a single participation, tradition and habit or all the factors together.

Hypothesis 8. Based on the results of the interviews, it can be concluded that university students are more likely to express their opinion online as active followers in social media by pressing likes, writing comments, reposting certain information, rather than physically participating in real protests (offline), parades, and other legal demonstrations.

Our research team also included the question if the student has ever been involved or heard about “forced volunteerism”, which can be also considered as civic

activity under certain pressure from University Administration. 27% of the participants have been involved in or heard about “forced volunteerism” towards the student community, when university administration pushes students to join different events involuntarily. 34% of respondents answered that they have never been involved or heard about that. And 13% are not sure about the answer.

Table 8. Forced volunteerism experience.

Have been involved or heard about “forced volunteerism”	Have never been involved or heard about “forced volunteerism”	Not sure
84 students (27%)	107 students (34%)	41 students (13%)

Almost all the interviewed staff members confirmed that they have heard about forced volunteerism which was pretty much a common phenomenon several years ago. They believe that this problematic phenomenon is no longer practiced at Kazakhstan Universities and students are free to decide by themselves if they would like to take part in certain activities or not.

Returning back to the main goal of Hypothesis 8, we may conclude that students are more likely to be more active online using social media tools rather than physically participating in legal demonstrations. First of all, due to the cultural habit or feature of the national character, Kazakhstani University students do not express any protest sentiments. Moreover, the Government of Kazakhstan pays serious attention to the development of Youth Policies. No serious mass protests or demonstrations have been ever conducted by University Students on the territory of independent Kazakhstan. A new generation of young Kazakhstani citizens was raised and educated in a relatively democratic and free environment. University students are not afraid to openly express their opinion on social media platforms, forums and portals.

Chapter 4. Conclusion and recommendations

As we see based on the results, students' opinions regarding the necessity of involvement and whether it helps to change the situation in the country, split by almost the same share. 41% of participants believed that their participation helps change the situation in the country and 42% disagree. Overall this shows that many young people do not think that the political situation can be changed. However, most of the participants believe that the involvement of young people is necessary. So there is a dilemma. Some participants think that young people should be active, not themselves; they want to delegate this responsibility to others. At the same time, more than half of the participants want to have a more significant influence on the political situation in the country. Still, as we understood, only part of them want to be active in political and social engagement. Half of the participants think educational institutions contribute to active citizenship formation.

Based on results regarding the involvement, we formed some recommendations:

1. Youth policy should be conducted at a more active phase to engage university students as individuals by introducing particular academic disciplines at schools, colleges, and universities. In western countries, these types of academic disciplines were introduced many years ago. Therefore young people discuss political and civic issues not only in educational institutions but also in families.
2. Youth organizations should be created because the principle of self-governance and self-realization is relevant and significant in youth policy. These actions will encourage young people to develop, operate, and run their youth organizations or clubs, leading to more political and civic engagement.
3. Transparent dialogues between executive bodies and youth should be conducted to attract young people to solve problems.

The representatives from both educational institutes and local authorities should organize periodical meetings or conferences to hold these transparent dialogues. Then, young people can express their opinions, worries, and

recommendations on these meetings to be recognized as a valuable platform to be heard as an essential part of society.

The research showed that more than half of the participants were not satisfied with the volumes of information provided by mass media in Kazakhstan to form a personal opinion in politics. The young people understand that information is controlled and provided in the form needed for representatives of authorities. Two-thirds of the participants want to learn more about the political processes in Kazakhstan as it is presented in western countries where most of the population knows most of the political processes in their country.

Our recommendation regarding the information provided by mass media is to create more political content to attract a younger audience. There are a lot of examples from developed countries of how they provide information to citizens, what rights the mass media have, and what information is mainly presented on local television. For instance, political talk shows or debates can show the oral fight between different political opponents that will provide arguments for their political positions so a young generation will understand politics more. Moreover, it will probably help young people decide what political direction to support. For this purpose, mass media should be free from any pressure from authorities to create appropriate political content.

Based on research results, only 8% of participants are active in a political party or socio-political movement that shows very low involvement of young people. Therefore, to learn new ideas and become more involved in the political and civic field, the political parties and socio-political movements should recruit a young electorate. As mentioned above, there is a lack of information about politics, and therefore there is less information about the political and civic involvement of youth. To collect more data, more funds need to be allocated and additional research should be done to cover more regions of Kazakhstan and involve more people and universities.

References

- Ashurov, Z. (2011, February). The youth policy of Uzbekistan in the period of the global financial and economic crisis: Overview and results.
- Burkhanov, A., Sharipova, D., Kosnazarov, D., & et al. (2019). *The Nazarbayev Generation Youth in Kazakhstan* (M. Laruelle, Ed.). Lexington books.
- Isayev, A. (2016). Youth interest in politics. *Yekaterinburg*.
- Kilybayeva, S. (2018). Political activity of young people of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: a comparative analysis.
- Kilybayeva, S., Nassimova, G., & Massalimova, A. (2017). The Kazakhstani youth's engagement in politics. *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 9(1).
- Korostikov, M. (2014, April). Russia: Youth and Politics. *Russia NIS Center*.
- Pastor, D. A. (2018, November). Civic engagement assessment: Considerations in measuring college students' political participation. *Center for Assessment & Research Studies*.
- Schulz, W. (2005, September 10). Political Efficacy and Expected Political Participation among Lower and Upper Secondary Students. *Australian Council for Educational Research*.
- Shaukenova, Z. (2014). Social activity of Kazakhstan's youth in modern socio-political realities. *Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Science*, 144-158.
- Stockemer, D. (2012, December). Students' political engagement: A comprehensive study of University of Ottawa undergraduate students. *Journal of Youth Studies*. 10.1080/13676261.2012.693587
- Tam, H. (2016). *Political literacy and civic thoughtfulness* (J. O'Brien & S. Duffy, Eds.). The centre for welfare reform.
- Tikhonov, V. (2011). Socio-political activity of Russian student youth: sociological analysis. 24-35, 154-177.
- Umbetaliyeva, T., Rakisheva, B., & Teschendor, P. (2016). Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan. *Friedrich Ebert Foundation Kazakhstan*.
- Vasilyeva, E., & Poltavskaya, M. (2015, June). Formation of socio-political activity

of student youth: socializing factors and pedagogical installations. *Internet journal "Sciencewood"*, 7(3), 13. 123PVN315

Volegova, A. (2015). Specificity of students youth's political activity. *Department of Theory and History of Political Science*.

Zakharova, I. (2018). Political values and political activity of university students. *Future Academy*. www.FutureAcademy.org.UK