

**'Allegedly': Unveiling Kazakhstani Media's Ideological and Visual Spins on Prominent  
News Narratives**

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# **'Allegedly': Unveiling Kazakhstani Media's Ideological and Visual Spins on Prominent News Narratives**

## **Background**

On November 9, 2023, the tragic death of Saltanat Nukenova took place – the case so resonant that it haunted the country for the following months. The national scandal involved Kuandyk Bishimbayev, a former government official and minister, who was arrested and charged with the murder of his 31 year-old wife, Saltanat Nukenova. Surveillance footage and forensic reports revealed that Nukenova had been brutally beaten over the course of several hours in a private room at the upscale Bau Restaurant in Astana (owned by Bishimbayev), leading to her death. Subsequently, the case not only gained such immediate public attention because of the violence and nature of the crime, but also due to the high-profile status of Bishimbayev – who in the past was imprisoned for corruption charges after his short term of being the Minister of National Economy.

Naturally, as more of the details surrounding the case emerged, the public outrage intensified, surfacing not only nation-wide but internationally, which sparked discussions regarding many things, like political corruption, judicial accountability, but most importantly – gender-based violence. The case rapidly garnered so much attention, becoming a symbol of systemic issues, including the failure of legal institutions to protect victims of domestic violence and perceived impunity of political elites. In a way, this case became the final “nail in the coffin” for the Kazakh nation, as domestic violence had been a long-standing problem the country was tackling with, including corruption – and the media has a crucial role in funneling these discussions. Given how well documented the case was, such as the presence of surveillance footage, the general public seemed to have a unified opinion on the matter (including media

outlets), which meant a lot for the Kazakh society, however, discourse at the end of the day is discourse, and it shall always have some underlying tones to it – a voice per se, so the way different news outlets covered the case illustrates broader patterns in Kazakhstani media discourse, particularly how language and visuals are used to construct competing ideological perspectives. While some news sources framed the case as a tragic result of an abusive system, others adopted a more neutral and procedural stance, showing it more as a legal matter rather than a social crisis. These competing narratives reflect something much deeper, which are the divisions in Kazakhstan’s media landscape, where we have state-aligned and independent media that operate under different ideologies.

This study examines the difference between state-aligned and independent media outlets and the way they delivered news particularly surrounding the case of Saltanat Nukenova by taking two news outlets that represent the respective categories. Thus, examining how four Kazakhstani news outlets – **TengriNews**<sup>1</sup>, **ZTB**<sup>2</sup>, **Batyr Jamal**<sup>3</sup>, and **The Village**<sup>4</sup> – used **linguistic and visual strategies** to shape public perceptions of the Nukenova case. In the next following paragraphs I shall give a brief explanation of each news outlet – give a picture to how they are overall known to the general public.

**TengriNews** is a popular news outlet in Kazakhstan, in fact they position themselves as “the main news portal of Kazakhstan”. Tengrinews is a portal that the general public associates with the government as they are funded by the government. They cover a large range of topics and have captured a wide-range audience. Their feed is strict and official with the incorporation

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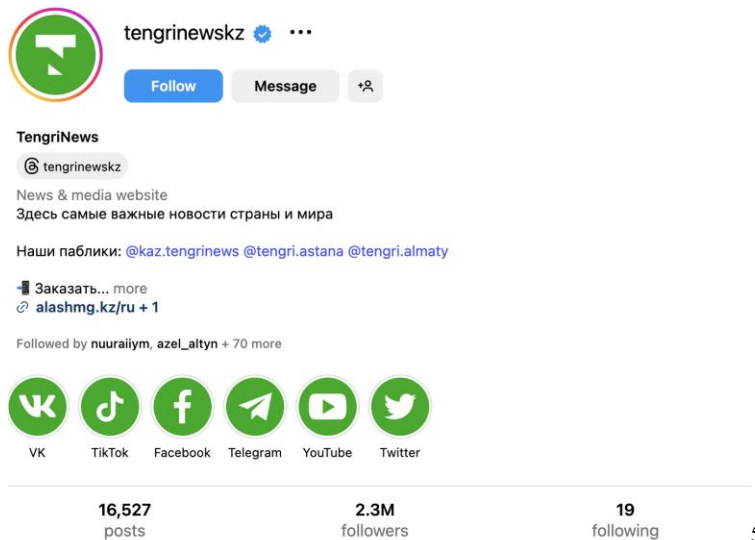
<sup>1</sup> TengriNews’ Instagram Page: <https://www.instagram.com/tengrinewskz/?hl=en>

<sup>2</sup> ZTB’s Instagram Page: <https://www.instagram.com/ZTB/>

<sup>3</sup> Batyr Jamal’s Instagram Page: <https://www.instagram.com/batyrjamal/?hl=en>

<sup>4</sup> The Village’s Instagram Page: <https://www.instagram.com/villagekazakhstan/?hl=en>

of the logo's colour palette in the editing. It is a typical news portal that a person imagines if they are to think of one.

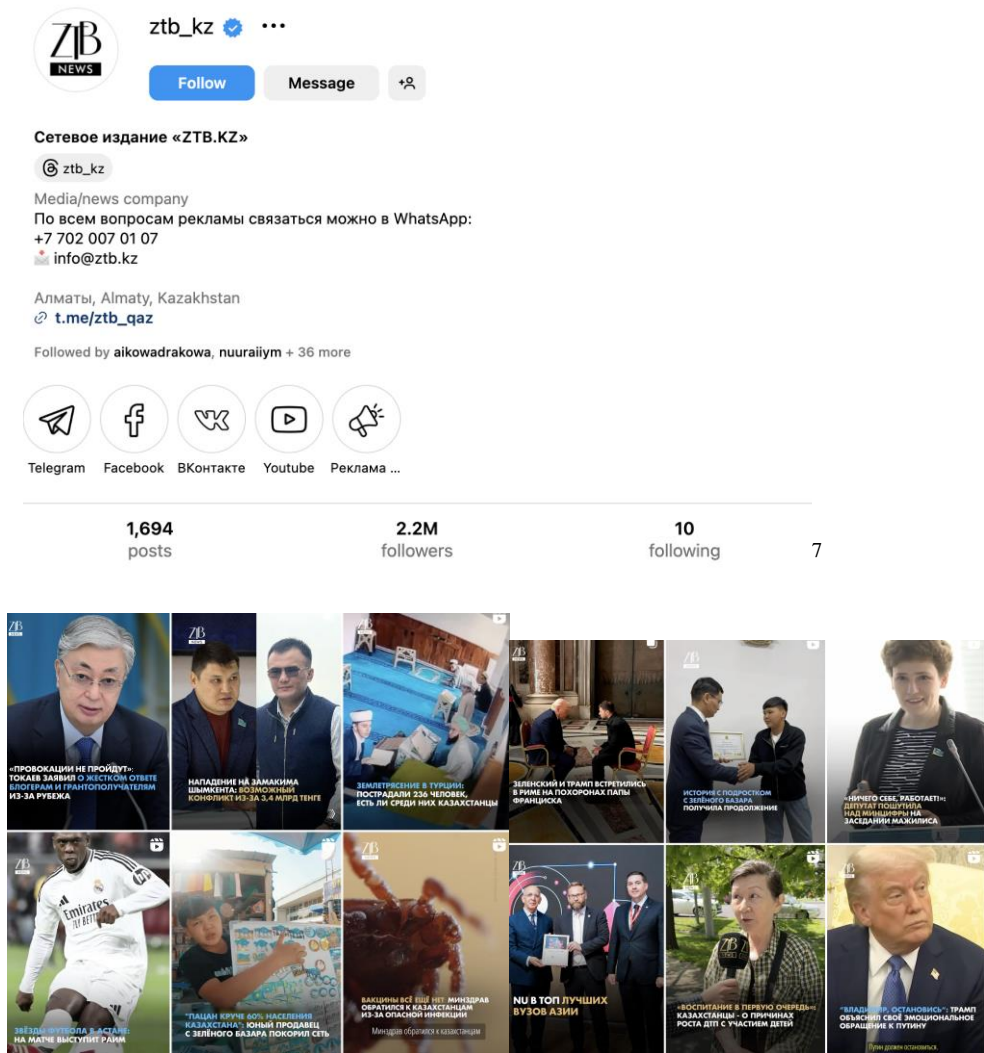


**ZTB** is another news outlet I chose that represents the more mainstream and conservative category. Like the previously mentioned media organization, it covers nearly everything that happens in the nation throughout the day, and sometimes international news. It also has a wide-ranged audience, spanning from adolescents to seniors. Their style, however official, still

<sup>5</sup> Main page of TengriNews on Instagram

<sup>6</sup> Recent feed of TengriNews' Instagram Page

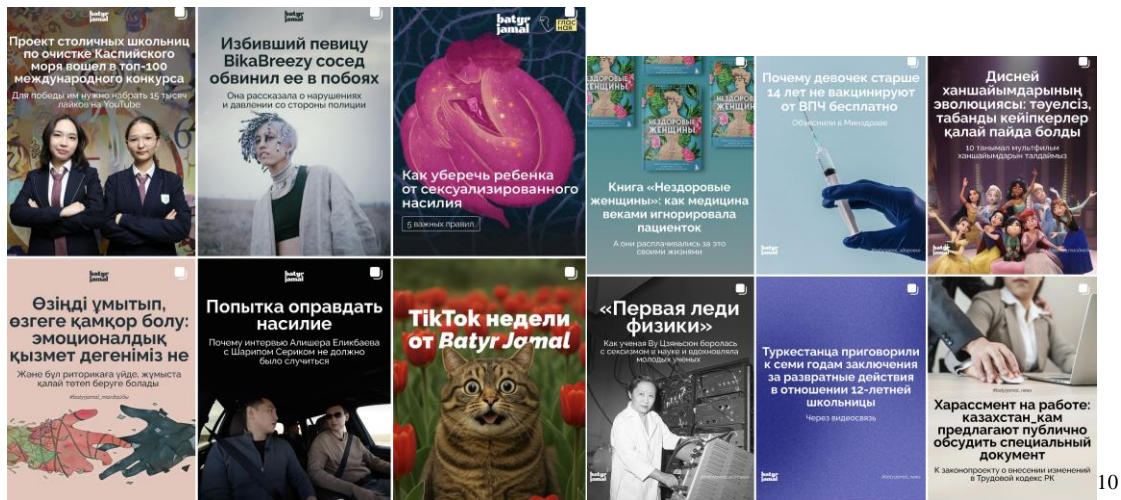
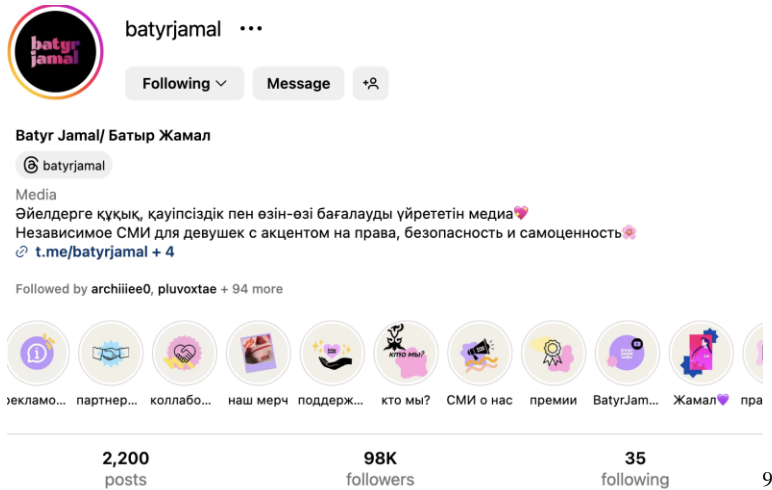
occasionally deviates towards having some “shock value”, whether it be the titles or use of visuals – it is mostly implicit and hidden within the “thread” of photos of one post. While they do not officially state that they are pro-government, the public deems it as a government aligned source.



**Batyr Jamal** is an emerging independent news outlet that is centered on feminism. Their bio states: “Independent media for girls with an emphasis on rights, safety and self-worth”. It is

<sup>7</sup> Main Page of ZTB on Instagram  
<sup>8</sup> Recent feed of ZTB’s Instagram Page

quite well known among the younger generations. Their feed style is quite creative with the usage of bright colours. They are open with what partnerships they have as they label their posts with the hashtag #партнерский underneath their posts related to the partners. Batyr Jamal also has a separate “highlight” titled “партнерский” on their Instagram page compiling all of these posts.

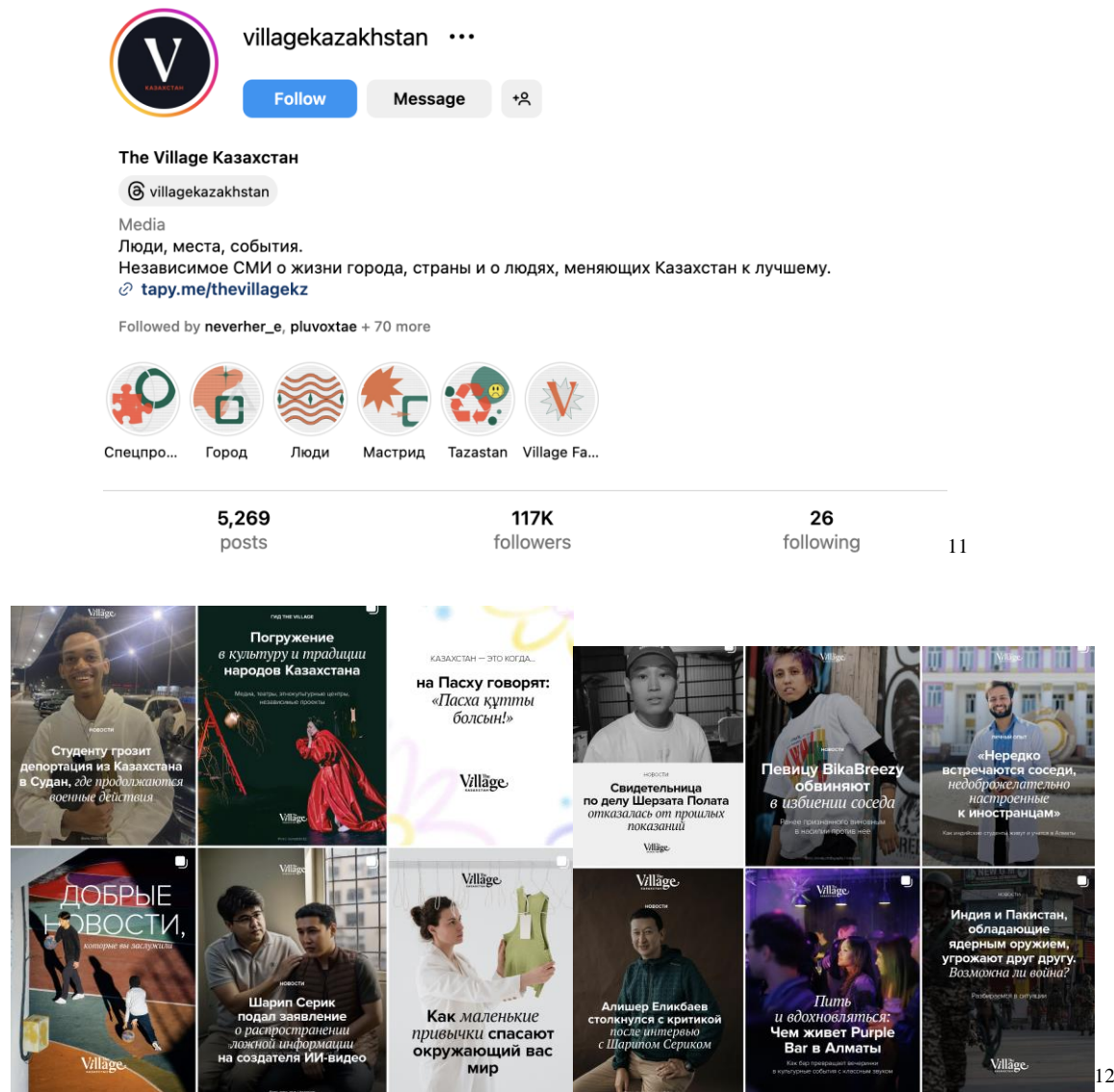


The Village is a popular media outlet that is also popular amongst the youth to middle aged adults. The Village mostly focuses on urban life and culture in major Kazakhstani cities

<sup>9</sup> Main Page of Batyr Jamal’s Instagram

<sup>10</sup> Recent Feed of Batyr Jamal’s Page

such as Almaty and Astana. It also covers a diverse range of topics including current events, business, entertainment, lifestyle, and food. They occasionally emphasize storytelling from the perspective of everyday citizens. The Village also has creative editing like Batyr Jamal, moreover, these two latter media outlets are founded by the same journalist, Aisana Ashim.



<sup>11</sup> Main Page of The Village’s Instagram

<sup>12</sup> Recent feed of The Village’s Page

Through critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), I will focus on how news texts construct meaning through *conjunctions, nuclear relations, appraisal strategies, and visual framing*.

## **Main Analytic Focus**

The goal of this study is to investigate how discourse elements shape media narratives about the Nukenova case and how these linguistic and visual choices construct different ideological positions, but it also seeks to answer a larger, meta-question: *How do these textual and visual choices construct competing ideological positions, and what do these differences reveal about the outlets' alignment with or resistance to dominant power structures in Kazakhstan?*

In order to explore these issues specifically, I am aiming to dissect and answer the following questions in order to structure my sociolinguistic analysis of news media stories:

- 1. How do Kazakhstani news outlets structure narratives about the case?**
- 2. What information is presented as central (versus peripheral in the coverage)?**
- 3. How do subtle judgements in the language of the text shape emotional and moral evaluations of the victim, the accused, and the legal system?**
- 4. How do visual framing techniques (images, colors, layout) contribute to ideological positioning in news discourse?**

By addressing these questions, I hope to uncover how media coverage reflects broader ideological and political divisions in Kazakhstan's public discourse and contribute to the fields of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by applying Martin & Rose's framework. There is quite some contribution to media discourse, especially when looking at issues like state control and propaganda (Nussipov & Dragomir, 2019; Bryanov

et al., 2023), including how government-aligned outlets reinforce dominant narratives (Kudaibergenova, 2020), however, there has been little focus on the linguistic and visual mechanics of news framing in domestic violence cases. Given the rising influence of social media-based news sources (e.g., Instagram and Telegram) and the growing demand for independent journalism, understanding how different news outlets construct narratives is crucial. Furthermore, I hope to contribute to the broader social and political implications. Domestic violence remains a pervasive issue in Kazakhstan that persists and is made worse by weak laws and cultural shame (*uyat*). Ultimately, this capstone project not only looks at how media narratives are constructed but also sheds light on their role in either perpetuating or challenging the power dynamics that enable gender-based violence.

## **Literature Review**

This following literature review will combine foundational readings across several intersecting fields, including Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), linguistic registers, gender and nationalism, media studies, and media bias. These areas provide the theoretical and methodological foundation for my project, as they set up a basis in understanding the context behind the discourse on the Saltanat Nukenova case. As my project is based on the surrounding discourse on the Saltanat Nukenova case, it is crucial for me to begin the project by establishing the foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis, which is the backbone of my whole capstone thesis. Because of this, I have decided to begin my literature review by laying the framework and going over the basics of CDA (theories and methods).

Critical discourse analysis goes beyond the surface and digs deeper into the hidden meaning behind texts and conversations. It specifically looks at the way language is utilized to

reinforce power, social hierarchies and ideologies. Because I am looking into the discourse on a case that is intertwined with social injustice and media narratives, it is important to examine how language is used. My goal is to uncover how media and public commentary not only reflect but also shape societal attitudes toward the case by analyzing the language. According to Ruth Wodak, an Austrian linguist whose research is predominantly rooted in discourse studies and in critical discourse analysis, any social phenomenon can be critically investigated using CDA (Wodak, 2011, p.302). CDA does not necessarily analyze a linguistic unit, instead it looks at social phenomena that require investigation through a multimethodological and interdisciplinary lens. Furthermore, Wodak acknowledges the increasing significance of multimodality in modern society – the contemporary communication and its relevance to CDA. She highlights that discourses are frequently manifested via multiple modes that go beyond text as they now encompass images and other forms of communication. It is crucial for me to go over multimodality as my research involves the analysis of posts from social media, such as the Instagram and Telegram platforms, and for example, investigating the choice behind the imagery. Wodak goes on to point to the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), who have developed a social semiotic theory to analyze multimodality. This theory provides a framework for examining the communicative potential of visual elements in media and exploring how language intersects with images, design, color, and spatial arrangement. This multisemiotic nature of today's texts, according to Wodak, often reflects the ideological character of these texts (Wodak, 2011, p.309). As an example, the author illustrates the manipulative potential of right-wing populist rhetoric in European media (Wodak, 2011, p.310).

The example Wodak used can be tied to something else – discourse and ideology – how discourse influences and is influenced by power dynamics, the significance of context in

uncovering ideological structures embedded in everyday communication. Van Dijk's work (1996) delves into this, specifically, the mechanisms through which dominant groups manipulate access to discourse, in other words, how the "bigger" groups are reinforcing social hierarchies. These dominant groups utilize discourse to legitimize their power and marginalize subordinate groups. They achieve this by controlling who gets to speak, what topics are discussed, and how those topics are framed and whoever has control "indirectly controls the minds of people, and therefore also their social practices." (Van Dijk, p.36). This control extends to various social institutions, including media, education, and the legal system. In my case, I will be taking a look at how the media has this power. In fact, in his work, Van Dijk brings an example of how the British tabloid media took a toll on the perception of immigrants by framing them as a "swamping tide" (Van Dijk, p.98).

While Wodak and Van Dijk provide the foundation for understanding how discourse reflects and reinforces power structures, Martinez brings a more methodological lens for CDA. One of the methods I found to be most relevant for my study was his mention of Martin's proposal of the three-levelled model of context which is an expansion of Halliday's ideas about register and genre. Martin's model consists of register, genre and ideology. Martin reinterprets Halliday's parameters of register, which consist of field, tenor, and mode. Field is interpreted in terms of the participant's role as a member of an institution. Tenor is described in terms of social inequality along the dimensions of status, contact, and affect. Mode considers both the interpersonal and experiential dimensions (Martinez, 2007, p.133). On the other hand, genre is more abstract than register, it acts as a frame for the social purpose behind participants' behavior in discourse. The model, actually, aligns closely with Wodak's emphasis on multimodality and Van Dijk's focus on power structures. Therefore, the model should have no problem in providing

a cohesive framework for examining how the textual and visual components of social media posts work together to shape discourse.

As many of the previous works have stated, discourse is shaped by the social constructs around us. Fairclough's "Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research" (2003) delves into the study of CDA, but one of the more interesting and relevant chapters I found was the one on the relationship between governance and genres. When we think of genres related to governance, the first things that come to mind are probably the policy documents, legislation and regulations, which are characterized by their function of recontextualization, which is "the appropriation of elements of one social practice within another, placing the former within the context of the latter, and transforming it in particular ways in the process" (Fairclough, p.32). This, in other words, is the transformation of the original meaning and purpose of the appropriated elements to fit the new context.

The most crucial literature to my project, especially the framework, is Martin & Rose's "Working with Discourse" (2007) book, which explores the analysis of discourse through the framework of Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and explores how language functions in social contexts. The authors analyze various texts, such as personal stories regarding the apartheid in South Africa and the Truth and Reconciliation Act in order to demonstrate concepts like conjunction, ideation, and appraisal. These three concepts serve as the backbone to my project. Conjunction looks at the interconnections between activities in a discourse, including reformulating, adding to, sequencing, and explaining them. Logical meanings are used to create temporal, causal, and other kinds of connections. Conjunction has two aspects: one interacts with ideation to organize activities, and the other interacts with periodicity to organize information. There are four main types of conjunction: addition, comparison, time, and consequence. External

conjunctions relate activities and are used to construe a field beyond the text, and include cause, means, and purpose. Causal relations are a type of consequence that show that one event obligates another to happen. For example, the conjunction "because" means that one event obligates another to happen, as cause and effect. Internal conjunctions are used to organize texts, and they are internal to the text. Conjunctions can be realized through grammatical metaphor and be reconstrued as processes, things, or qualities. For example, a consequential conjunction can be presented as a process, such as "is likely to lead to".

Ideation concerns to how experience is construed in discourse, focusing on activities, participants, and their qualities, and how these elements are related. It is one of the three metafunctions of language, and it realizes the field of a text. Nuclear relations are a part of ideation and concern the relationships between people, things, processes, places, and qualities within a clause. The core of the clause includes the process, the medium (the thing or person that is central to the process), and may also include the range (the class or part of the process). There are four degrees of nuclearity: the center, which is occupied by the Process; the nucleus, which includes the Medium and any Range; the margin, which includes Agents and Beneficiaries; and the periphery, which is occupied by Circumstances. Appraisal is concerned with evaluation – the attitudes negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved, and the ways values are sourced and readers aligned. Appraisal is used to establish the tone or mood of a passage of discourse. There are three main types of attitude: affect (expressing emotion), judgement (judging character), and appreciation (valuing the worth of things).

As we move on from the theoretical foundation, I would like to now discuss some research regarding the media landscape of the post-Soviet countries, specifically, the media credibility in Kazakhstan, which heavily relies on and is influenced by the dominant national

narratives. Bryanov et al. (2023) conducted a cross-national experiment with participants from Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan to examine how people's perceptions of the credibility of foreign news are influenced by dominant media narratives. It was found that, across all three countries, news that aligned with the most prevalent narrative was perceived as more credible than news that challenged that narrative (Bryanov et al., 2023, p.115). One of the impacting factors that was discussed in the paper was the government support as a moderating factor. However, as the study was conducted with the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict happening, it was found that, comparatively to Russia, there was not a significant moderating effect of government support on news credibility for Kazakhstani participants (Bryanov et al., 2023, p.121). This, as previously mentioned, could be due to the lack of conflict between Russia and Kazakhstan at the time of the study. Moreover, by looking at the findings of the study, we can infer that even in a country like Kazakhstan, where the government has heavy influences on the media landscape, public trust in news is not solely determined by alignment with the dominant narrative. Yet, there are a few limitations, as that suggestion stems from the context of the statistics regarding Kazakhstani users reading Russian news, moreover, the study only presented news items in Russian to Kazakhstani participants, which may have excluded some Kazakh-speaking individuals. Therefore, that factor might have affected the generalizability of the findings for Kazakhstan. Nonetheless, the study was still useful to read as it shows that Kazakhstan, to some extent, is still dependent on dominant media, maybe not to the degree as the citizens of the Russian Federation, but still there is some effect.

Bryanov et al.'s study parallels a study conducted by Azamjon Oltmishevich Dadakhonov, who investigated the challenges and opportunities in integrating Media and Information Literacy (MIL) into the school curriculum in Central Asian countries, with a specific

focus on Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Dadakhonov argues that MIL is essential in order for students to hone their skills to critically analyze and evaluate information, particularly in the digital age. MIL promotes responsibility in not only the consumers, but also the creators of media content, fostering informed decision-making and civic engagement. Unfortunately, the integration of MIL in the Central Asian education systems is quite behind, compared to the many Western countries that have already implemented MIL into their schools. This lateness is due to the later adoption of digital technologies and the influence of the Western pedagogical approaches. Aside from mentioning the challenges, such as the low baseline of media literacy among the population, a lack of localized teaching resources, and a lack of long-term funding, the paper mentions some solutions pertaining to Kazakhstan. One of them was the call for the government to take action, specifically the necessity of fighting against propaganda: “Activists in Kazakhstan have demanded the government shut down the broadcasting of Russian state TV channels, highlighting the need for independent tools to counter propaganda.” (Dadakhonov, 2024, p.61). The low overall level of media literacy in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, according to the study, suggests that a significant portion of the population might be susceptible to misinformation or biased narratives – this is crucial information to keep in mind for my study.

The low levels of media literacy in Central Asia, as highlighted by Dadakhonov, not only leave citizens vulnerable to misinformation but also have a contribution to the reinforcement of existing societal norms. This susceptibility is especially visible in Kazakhstani online spaces that often perpetuate the harmful stereotypes regarding gender, and, on top of that, normalize violence against women. Aizada Arystanbek’s study (2023) investigates how standards of hegemonic femininity in Kazakhstan’s online spaces are used to policing women’s bodies and behaviors, ultimately leading to the normalization of violence against women who do not

conform. Arystanbek argues that the public discourse in Kazakhstan's online spaces reinforce hegemonic femininity, which "consists of the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity" (Arystanbek, 2023, p.2), leading to the normalization of women facing violence. This is due to a combination of factors, including: the glorification of national culture, which often includes traditional gender roles and expectations (p.2, 5); victim-blaming and the stigmatization of survivors of gender-based violence, which shifts the focus from the perpetrator's actions to the victim's behavior (p.7-10); the association of Kazakh women's honor with their male relatives, which undermines their agency and autonomy (p.12); the tendency to blame "outsiders" or "Western" influence for the erosion of traditional values and the rise of gender-based violence (p.7). She goes on to dissect the discussions of a few cases involving rape by a stranger on the Talgo train and physical domestic violence by a husband with the comments on posts related to the Talgo case, in which a woman was raped by two train conductors involved widespread victim-blaming and slut-shaming, often justifying the perpetrators' actions and questioning the victim's credibility (Arystanbek, 2023, p.7). Then, we have comments on posts discussing domestic violence, including statements from public figures that normalize or condone violence against women, which often underscore the expectation that Kazakh women should endure abuse for the sake of family and children, reflecting a deeply ingrained societal acceptance of violence within the home. Finally, comments blaming "Western" influence and the erosion of traditional values for the prevalence of gender-based violence, reveal a certain tendency to defend in a deflecting manner where the responsibility is brushed off to the internal cultural factors – used as a scapegoat. Because of this – it is no wonder that we are seeing the rise in participation of Kazakhstani women in activism. According to Dr. Elena Maltseva, an associate professor from

the department of political science at the University at Windsor, who examined the contributing factors to the Kazakhstani women's political mobilization and activism in recent years, the recent rise in women's political activism in Kazakhstan is a result of three factors: changing socioeconomic conditions leading to rising grievances among women, evolving cultural and social attitudes about the role of women in society, and the increasing influence of social media, which helps women overcome limited political opportunities (Maltseva, 2021, p.336).

Another work that was focused on the bilateral relationship between social media and gender was done by a Kazakh professor from Cambridge and UCL. In her work, Diana Kudaibergenova explored how social media, specifically Instagram, shapes the perception of gender, sexuality, and tradition in Kazakhstan and Russia by tying it to nationalism. As previously mentioned above, particularly in the CDA sections, we have established that the dominant groups have the authority and power to control the "mainstream" narrative. Kudaibergenova mentions that as well, and touches on the concept of "nationalizing regimes" in Russia and Kazakhstan, which, in essence, is the process of how power elites seek to control narratives around national unity and traditional values. She goes on to argue that this control clashes with the more globalized and diverse perspectives often found on social media, which is why the control of social media and online spaces is the goal for many of the regimes (Kudaibergenova, 2020, p.367). The author also touches upon the "Uyat" discourse, which translates "shame" from Kazakh. In Kazakhstan, the notion of "Uyat" is constantly used to police behavior, particularly related to women's bodies and sexuality.

Along the process of material-collecting, I realized that I must also introduce myself to journalism studies, look at the way people engage with the news, particularly at how digital platforms are changing the way people consume news, and how these changes impact audience

behavior and news production. The Department of Mass Communication and Media Research at the University of Zurich examines the evolution of news media logic, introducing the concept of audience logic, which prioritizes user engagement and connection-building. While commercial logic, characterized by sensationalism and negativity, persists, audience logic is rising, especially in digital-native outlets (Blassnig et al., 2022, p.64). With that it is natural to consider the audience that consumes the media. Majó-Vázquez et al. analyzes audience overlap networks to compare news consumption across countries. Their research revealed a lack of fragmentation – the idea that audiences are becoming increasingly divided in their news choices due to the multiplication of media outlets – with audiences concentrating around a few major outlets, primarily legacy media (Majó-Vázquez et al., 2019, p.237). Then, when looking into the mode of online news consumption, it was found that the mobile news consumption growth surpassed desktop use. Mobile app users, in particular, show high engagement compared to mobile browser users, which highlights the relevance of mobile app audiences for news producers (Nelson & Lei, 2018, p.619).

While on the topic of journalism studies, it is important to look into the mechanisms of funding in the landscape of government-controlled Kazakhstani media. Thus, it was best for me to look into the 2019 report from the Center for Media, Data and Society at Central European University called "Funding Journalism", which examines how the Kazakhstani government strategically allocates funding to control the media landscape, particularly online news outlets. The report concludes that this funding structure undermines independent journalism and promotes pro-government narratives (Nussipov & Dragomir, 2019, p.4).

Finally, the last paper that I would like to dissect in my literature review is the interdisciplinary research on media bias. Hamborg et al. (2018) urges for an interdisciplinary

approach to be taken when studying media bias, meaning to take into account both qualitative and quantitative research. By combining the models of media bias from the social sciences with the automated approaches from computer science, we are bound to create a more effective and insightful analysis of media bias. Apart from that, the authors also outline a model from social sciences that conceptualizes how media bias manifests – the “news production and consumption process” (Hamborg et al., 2018, p.409). The process describes s that occur during news production. I found the source to be incredibly useful as it was the first time I became familiar with a model process pertaining to media bias.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how four Kazakhstani news outlets (TengriNews, ZTB, Batyr Jamal, and The Village) constructed narratives around the Saltanat Nukenova case. The study integrates linguistic and visual discourse analysis to uncover how different news sources frame the event through *conjunctions, nuclear relations, appraisal strategies, and visual framing*. The methodological framework I utilized is drawn from **Martin & Rose's (2007)** discourse analysis model, which explores how meaning is construed in text through ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. This framework allows for a multi-layered analysis that considers both the linguistic choices within news texts and the broader ideological positions they *may* reflect.

### **1. Data Collection**

The dataset consists of 40 Instagram posts (10 from each respective news outlet) from the selected media outlets, covering their publications on the Nukenova case between November

2023 and May 2024. I did not include coverage from the appeal process. The posts were chosen based on availability and relevance during different stages of the case. These sources were chosen based on their diverse ideological positions, audience reach, and narrative framing:

1. **TengriNews** – A mainstream, state-aligned news agency.
2. **ZTB** – A digital media outlet that often sometimes indulges in sensational elements.
3. **Batyr Jamal** – A feminist-oriented news platform known for advocating women’s rights and challenging patriarchal structures.
4. **The Village** – An independent urban media outlet.

To organize and analyze the data, I used an Excel spreadsheet, documenting key information such as the date, news outlet, and link to the post. This allowed me to track the progression of coverage over time. I analyzed both the linguistic features (using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)) and the visual elements (images, colors, design) from a Critical Discourse Analysis stance in the posts. The categorized data may be accessed at this link:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bhjKXGgk2gZU4YrPv\\_8dFTPgfuZx7vXLxpH4XAs00Po/edit?gid=14756545#gid=14756545](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bhjKXGgk2gZU4YrPv_8dFTPgfuZx7vXLxpH4XAs00Po/edit?gid=14756545#gid=14756545)

## 2. Framework

**Conjunctions:** Conjunctions play a key role in constructing the logical flow of narratives and shaping reader perception. This study applies *Martin & Rose’s (2007)* typology of conjunctions, which divides them into external and internal types. The **external** conjunctions, which link events across the text, showing relationships like *cause* (e.g., because), *time* (e.g., then), and *contrast* (e.g., but); **internal** conjunctions reveal how outlets guide readers’ interpretation through argumentative framing (e.g., however to counter claims, thus to assert

conclusions, or moreover to amplify evidence). Each news outlet's use of conjunctions was analyzed to determine whether their narratives emphasized causality, contrast, or neutrality. The frequency and distribution of different conjunction types were quantified to track trends in argumentation styles across the sources.

**Nuclear Relations:** Nuclear relations refer to how information is structured within clauses, distinguishing between core (nuclear) and peripheral elements in news discourse, essentially helps us identify what is foregrounded and what is in the background. Using Martin & Rose's Nuclear Model of Experience we can break down the study of the news coverage into the following four levels of importance: the center which is the main action or event (*process*), the next layer, *nucleus*, includes the key people or things involved in the action, further we have the *margin*, which are less than the central figures, and finally the *periphery*, the background details, such as the when and where. When taking these elements into account, we can see how different news outlets take over the control of the story and see what gets presented as more important versus it being pushed to secondary. These choices are never neutral.

**Appraisal:** Appraisal analysis focuses on how attitudes, emotions, and values are embedded in discourse. Following Martin & Rose's (2007) framework, this study examines three core aspects: *affect*, *judgement* and *appreciation*, which will be explained in more simple terms for the sake of this given study. Affect is for expressing feelings, an evaluation for whether language is positive ("Saltanat was a loving mother") or negative ("She was trapped in violence"). Judgement is for evaluating people's character ("Bishimbaev was cruel") or institutions. Lastly, appreciation is how things, such as events, are rated like shocking reactions ("The case horrified the nation") or criticism of how things were handled.

**Visual Framing:** Beyond linguistic elements, this study also analyzes visual framing strategies in Instagram posts and online articles. Pictures are not neutral; they influence the audience to feel a certain way and prime them to focus on some specific parts of the story. For example, some outlets might utilize personal photographs of the victim smiling in order to make her feel “relatable”; dark dramatic courtroom visuals might be used to highlight the gravity of the situation; the usage of bold bright colours, such as red, to encapture the reader’s attention; neutral colours to appear unbiased; small, simple text to avoid drama; plain language to seem factual, etc. These choices do not just illustrate the news – they reinforce (or sometimes contradict) the written narrative, “instructing” readers what to notice and how to feel.

## **Results**

### **I. Conjunctions**

Conjunctions – the logical connectors in text – shape how events are related and arguments are built. Martin & Rose distinguish external conjunctions, which link real-world events in sequence or cause-effect, from internal conjunctions, which organize the writer’s argument and guide the reader.

In this case, conjunction use varies by outlet and reveals different narrative strategies:

**TengriNews:** Uses justificatory and conditional conjunctions to present the accused’s perspective in a procedural tone. For example, TengriNews highlighted Bishimbaev’s courtroom statements: “если бы знал, то не сделал бы...” (“if I had known, I wouldn’t have done any of it”), using an “if...then” construction that frames his defense as a hypothetical justification. It also favors contrastive connectives like “но” (“but”) in quoting him (“я виноват, но не в умышленном убийстве” – “I am guilty, but not of intentional murder”), which introduces an

internal counter-argument to split blame. These internal conjunctions structure his plea for leniency, implicitly aligning the narrative with legal logic over emotion.

**ZTB:** Employs contrastive and additive conjunctions to heighten drama and highlight contradictions. ZTB often uses words like “однако” or phrases like “отметим, что...” (“note that...”) to signal shifts or counterpoints – for instance, noting that media were not allowed in the courtroom despite public interest. Such adversative links set up tension between what is expected and what happened (e.g. public demands vs. secretive trial). Additive conjunctions string together a chain of sensational details: “..., и ..., и ...” (“..., and ..., and ...”), piling on facts of the case (the conflict, the attack, the death) to build intensity. This external conjunction strategy guides readers through a dramatic timeline (“then... then... finally...”) while also inserting internal commentary (“however,” “meanwhile”) to underscore irony or injustices, which results in some gripping narrative that moves briskly from one shock to the next, reinforcing ZTB’s penchant for sensational storytelling.

**Batyr Jamal:** Relies on temporal sequencing and additive conjunctions to provide a thorough, step-by-step account of the case. Many Batyr Jamal updates begin with a specific date or time marker (e.g. “13 мая...” – “May 13...” when the verdict was delivered) to anchor each post in the unfolding chronology. This use of time conjunctives (external sequencing like “then, next, after”) ensures the audience can follow the legal process in order. The posts methodically add information (in addition, furthermore) as new evidence emerges, rather than inserting the outlet’s opinion. Batyr Jamal’s conjunction use is relatively neutral – focusing on when and what happened – but this itself is a framing: it conveys the seriousness of each development and cumulatively highlights the protracted nature of the abuse and trial. By enumerating events and evidence (rather than jumping with “because” or “but”), Batyr Jamal lets the facts speak,

implicitly inviting readers to see the causal pattern of systemic failure without overtly stating it. In short, the narrative is structured like a factual timeline, which in an advocacy context underscores how extensively the case had to progress before justice was served (75 updates over the trial, including explainers on court procedures).

**The Village:** Makes heavy use of causal and contrastive conjunctions to construct an outspoken, morally charged narrative. The Village often links clauses in ways that imply causality or highlight hypocrisy. For example, one Instagram caption began “Во время того как Салтанат умирала, Бишимбаев общался с другими женщинами” – “While Saltanat was dying, Bishimbaev was chatting with other women.” The “while” (external conjunction of time) here does more than mark simultaneous events – it creates a stark causal contrast that implicitly condemns the accused, prompting the reader to question his callousness. Such pairing of events (her suffering vs. his indifference) acts like a cause-effect in the court of public opinion, even without an explicit “because”. The Village also uses internal conjunctions to counter expected narratives; for instance, it may start a sentence with a transition like “Однако” (“However”) to introduce activists’ perspectives or expert commentary that challenge the official line. By interweaving these countering conjunctions, The Village ensures that the story is not just a sequence of legal events but a debate in which the outlet’s stance – demanding justice and accountability – is clear. The logical flow leads readers from horrific details (because of systemic issues) to an implied conclusion about social change (thus something must be done – even if “thus” isn’t stated outright, the narrative logic makes it evident).

## II. Nuclear Relations

How information is ranked in a news story, like what is foregrounded as central versus and what is backgrounded or omitted, reveals an outlet's focus and ideological stance. Martin & Rose describe discourse in terms of a nuclear model of experience, where the core "doer + deed" (process and main participants) forms the nucleus, surrounded by more peripheral details of circumstance. In news coverage, this translates to which elements of the case are treated as the central news and which are treated as context. We compare what each outlet places at the center of its narrative versus what it pushes to the margins:

**TengriNews:** Foregrounds the legal process and the accused as the nucleus of the story, while backgrounding broader social context. In Tengri's articles and posts, the headlines and lead sentences focus on the immediate event (the arrest, the charges, court proceedings) and Bishimbaev's role. For example, the initial TengriNews post featured the fact that the suspect "has been detained" and noted that details were pending official confirmation. The centre of these sentences is the action (detention, trial) and the person of the accused, treating Saltanat's death as the outcome of a crime to be adjudicated. Meanwhile, details like the history of domestic abuse or the larger trend of domestic violence are absent –pushed to the periphery. TengriNews did not explicitly mention "domestic violence" as a social issue in its early coverage, nor did it delve into Saltanat's personal life beyond identifying her as the victim. This reinforces an institutional framing: the case is presented as a discrete legal matter, somewhat isolated from gender-based violence discourse. By keeping contextual elements (e.g. prior abuse, public outcry, or systemic failures) out of the nucleus, TengriNews' coverage reinforces a procedural, apolitical narrative.

**ZTB:** Foregrounds the sensational details and public interest angles, while backgrounding deep policy analysis. In ZTB's initial post, the central information included the

graphic nature of the crime and the fact that Saltanat died on the scene (“Saltanat’s subsequent death before medical help could arrive” is stated plainly). ZTB also put human interest front and center by including a series of personal photos of the couple (“happier times”) attached to the news update. This means the emotional context, such as who the people were, what their relationship looked like, is pulled into the nucleus of the story, making the tragedy more relatable and shocking for readers. At the same time, ZTB immediately noted the broader discussion point: activists’ demands to criminalize domestic violence were mentioned in coverage, signaling that public advocacy was part of the story. By foregrounding those elements, ZTB frames the murder not just as one man’s crime, but as part of a pattern that society is reacting to.

Backgrounded in ZTB’s framing is any meticulous courtroom procedure or the intricacies of law – these are touched on (e.g., noting media was barred from the courtroom), but mainly to criticize lack of transparency or to heighten suspense. Detailed legal explanations or the structural follow-up (like In essence, ZTB gives readers the big headlines: a shocking crime, a powerful perpetrator, a victim who suffered, and a society outraged – setting the stage for public debate, if not a detailed policy discussion.

**Batyr Jamal:** Foregrounds the victim’s story and systemic context through exhaustive coverage, leaving little truly “backgrounded.” As a feminist platform, Batyr Jamal ensured that Saltanat’s identity as a victim of gender-based violence remained central. Over the course of the trial, Batyr Jamal produced dozens of updates (by their own count, ~75 posts), indicating that no aspect of the case was too peripheral to report. Early posts likely highlighted the core event (the murder and arrest), but Batyr continued to foreground context: for example, they even published an explainer on how Kazakhstan’s court system works, implicitly to educate readers on why such cases might fail or succeed. This shows that the legal system itself became part of the story’s

nucleus – not just what happened, but how the institutions handle it. Batyr Jamal does not shy away from mentioning the term “domestic violence” (it explicitly situates the case in that category in its commentary, if not in every IG caption) and it certainly does not ignore Saltanat’s experience. Thus, Batyr Jamal’s “nuclear” focus is both the event and the environment of the event (the societal and legal conditions around it).

**The Village:** Foregrounds the societal impact and moral narrative, also including necessary case facts as support. The Village’s coverage treats the case as emblematic of systemic issues from the start. Practical details (who, what, when) are also reported, but often as part of a larger critique. For instance, The Village might lead an article not with the crime itself, but with the public outrage and debates it sparked, thereby foregrounding the social reaction as equally important as the crime. They also “humanize” Saltanat, rather than just calling her “the wife of X” or a generic victim, The Village emphasizes her suffering and identity (in one piece, they highlight she was “brutally beaten over the course of several hours”, ensuring readers grasp the horror she endured). By doing so, Saltanat isn’t just a peripheral casualty in a crime story, she is the central figure, representing all victims of domestic violence. Backgrounded elements in The Village’s coverage might be the procedural minutiae (they are covered, but always framed within commentary). The Village does include details like the accused consulting a psychic or sending casual texts while his wife was dying – but notably, they use those “background” details as evidence to support the central narrative of his depravity and the system’s absurdity. In essence, The Village turns what could be peripheral (bizarre WhatsApp messages, etc.) into key narrative pieces that reinforce their angle.

### **III. Appraisal**

Appraisal refers to the language of attitude and emotion in discourse: how writers/speakers convey feelings, judgments, and values. It encompasses affect (emotion), judgment (moral evaluation of people), and appreciation (evaluative descriptions of things/events). Through appraisal choices, media texts align readers to particular viewpoints and biases.

**TengriNews:** Adopts a restrained, neutral tone with minimal overt appraisal. In line with its procedural style, TengriNews largely avoids emotionally loaded adjectives or explicit moral commentary. The language is factual: Saltanat is referred to by name and as “the wife/victim” without embellishment; Bishimbaev is “the accused” or “former minister” who “allegedly” did X, Y, Z. This use of “allegedly” and similar terms (“якобы” – “supposedly” in Russian) is significant as it signals that the claims are yet to be proven, showing that there is distance between the outlet and the accusations. Such phrasing can actually have a dual effect: legally it sounds neutral, but it also plants doubt about the veracity of his defenses (e.g., experts “supposedly” concluded something, implying the reporter isn’t fully endorsing that conclusion. However, Tengri does not call Bishimbaev “cruel” or “ruthless” – any negative judgment is usually delivered indirectly, perhaps by quoting someone else or by the stark facts themselves. For instance, Tengri’s report might describe the injuries in clinical terms or simply state the outcome (Saltanat’s death) without adjectives. The attitude is kept impersonal. Even when describing the crime, TengriNews chose wording like “violent attack” or “conflict occurred” rather than hyperboles. And where independent outlets might say “the court failed her,” Tengri would say “the case is under investigation”. This measured tone exudes an air of objectivity (consistent with TengriNews’ self-stated mission of being “objective”. Readers of TengriNews are not explicitly invited to feel outrage or sympathy; they are offered a seemingly

balanced account, which in effect could normalize the event as just another news item. Notably, even positive appraisal of the victim is scarce – little is said about Saltanat as a person (no mentions of her being kind, or a mother, etc., in early reports). This absence of affect might be seen as a subtle bias of its own: it keeps the story at arm’s length, perhaps making it easier for a reader to remain *detached* (or even to cast doubt on her, as some commenters did).

**ZTB:** Uses a dramatic and emotive tone, especially in conveying the horror of the crime and the public’s reaction. From the first reports, ZTB employed words that carry strong negative appreciation of the event (the crime was “шокирующее” – shocking, the murder described in terms of its “sensational” nature. The caption text delivering the news did not shy away from describing the husband’s act as a violent attack resulting in death – this explicit depiction is a form of negative judgment of the perpetrator (he is implicitly “violent” and guilty of a grave wrongdoing). ZTB’s inclusion of the couple’s happy photos next to this text also amplifies the evaluative effect: visually, it creates irony and provokes an emotional response.

In terms of language, ZTB likely used powerful verbs and adjectives: e.g., “убил” (killed) without euphemism, “жестоко избил” (brutally beat) if quoting sources – terms that condemn the act clearly. When mentioning the activism angle, ZTB’s tone aligns with the campaign, using phrases like “требуют защитить жертв” (“women demand to protect victims”), which carries a positive judgment of those demands (suggesting they are justified) and a negative judgment of the status quo (victims are unprotected).

**Batyr Jamal:** Maintains a critical and empathetic tone, consistent with its feminist stance, though often letting facts speak with implied appraisal. In its comprehensive coverage, Batyr Jamal did use emotionally charged language at times – especially when pointing out the gender violence aspect. For example, Batyr Jama; may refer to the case in terms of “домашнее

насилие” (domestic violence) which itself is a strong framing, classifying the crime under a term that carries social condemnation. A key aspect of Batyr’s appraisal is judgment of social actors: Bishimbaev is not treated neutrally. When reporting the verdict, Batyr Jamal might simply state it factually (“приговорил к четырем годам” – “sentenced to 4 years”), but surrounding coverage (and the outlet’s reputation) frames that as outrageously lenient for a murder, thus indirectly judging the justice system as failing. Batyr Jamal’s content outside the strict newsfeed (such as stories or op-eds) surely labels the act for what it is: a product of patriarchal violence. Batyr Jamal also engages positive appraisal of the victim and supporters: for instance, giving space to Saltanat’s family or feminist activists bestows dignity and legitimacy on their perspective (a form of positive judgment toward them).

**The Village:** Leverages strong, explicit appraisal to shape a clear moral narrative. The Village’s language often blends reporting with pointed description. For example, they might describe Bishimbaev’s behavior during the incident in terms that signal disgust or moral shock – recounting how he was worryingly more concerned with texting a psychic than saving his wife (implying a negative judgment: selfish, cruel). The Village does not hesitate to use adjectives like “жестокий” (brutal) for the crime or to say the case “shocked the nation” – an affect of public horror. When discussing during the legal process, The Village likely uses appraisal to critique: phrases such as “безнаказанность” (impunity) or “не защитили ее права” (“failed to protect her rights”) convey a negative judgment of institutions, holding them morally accountable. This ties into media literacy and ideology – The Village is making the values component overt: readers are told what is condemnable and what is praiseworthy. Positive appraisal is reserved for those seeking justice (e.g., portraying activists or supportive lawyers in a favorable light, maybe noting their “настойчивость” – persistence or “солидарность” –

solidarity). Perhaps The Village’s most striking use of appraisal is in its editorial voice: at times the outlet’s coverage reads as an appeal to conscience. For instance, they might write about Saltanat in a way that invites sympathy: describing her as “молодая женщина, мать, чья жизнь трагически оборвалась” (a young woman, a mother whose life was tragically cut short) – layering positive affect (tragedy, sorrow) and appreciation (the loss of a valuable life). In criticizing Bishimbaev, they can be scathing, either through direct epithets (like calling the act “ужасающее” – horrifying) or through irony (the meme The Village posted illustrates him making excuses, which satirically appraises him as pathetic or blame-shifting). The Village’s evaluative language thus does a lot of work: it paints Saltanat as an innocent victim, Bishimbaev as a cruel perpetrator with no honor, and the state/judicial system as complicit if they do not deliver justice. This high degree of appraisal is a form of framing – by negotiating attitudes so openly, The Village actively positions its audience to agree with a specific moral standpoint.

#### **IV. Visual Framing**

##### **TengriNews:**

- 1) The following post was the debut of the news. An official picture of Bishimbayev in the middle of a speech with a neutral face from his government serving days. It is formal and front-facing. No image of Nukenova, in fact Nukenova is not even mentioned in the images text, it centers on Bishimbayev's arrest. No creative use of colour, bureaucratic editing with the background blurred. Caption is neutral and fact-based: "Задержан Куандык Бишимбаев" (Kuandyk Bishimbayev has been detained).



- 2) The following screenshot is from a video of Bishimbayev’ speech during the judicial debates. It displays solemn Bishimbayev making his speech with exasperated sighs. It is a tight “close-up” , him in the cubicle in dim lighting with a remorseful expression, accenting the fact that he “loved, loves” Nukenova and did not intentionally carry out the act. The caption highlights his defense: "не ожидал сурового обвинения" (I did not expect a harsh accusation).

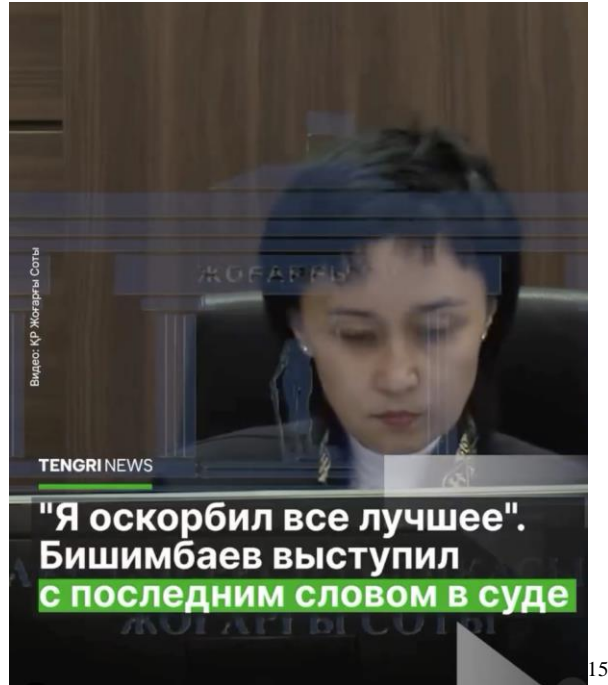
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<sup>13</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/p/CzbmN-Zt0n0/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CzbmN-Zt0n0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)



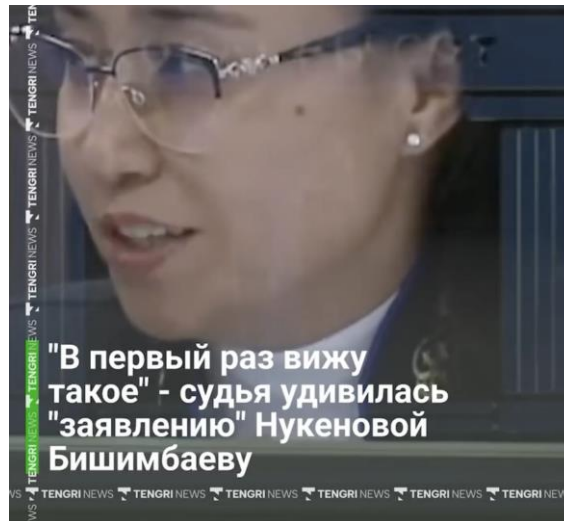
- 3) The following screenshot is from the last fragment of Bishimbayev’s pleading speech towards the jury and judge. He begins by sympathizing with them and highlights that they have no easy job as they are to determine a person’s fate. His head is bowed occasionally as he is reading from his script. The caption highlights one of his utterances:

“I offended all that is good”.



- 4) The following screenshot is from one of the video fragments from court, where in order to refute to claims, Bishimbayev’s lawyer is reading off a note that Nukenova left in Bishimbayev’s notebook, in which the latter is promising the former of duties that she will fulfill: “*I, Saltanat Nukenova, promise to restore trust to Kuandyk [Bishimbayev], I promise to not be jealous, I promise to regularly visit the psychologist...*”. The post focuses on the judge’s reaction to said note, not comprehending how a spouse makes such “official” promises. Judge is in disbelief, thus showing said facial expression and asking in an ironic tone. The caption primes the audience and introduces doubt with the sarcastic quote “*В первый раз вижу такое*” (I am seeing this for the first time), highlighted in green, which implies surprise and disbelief, reinforcing the judge’s

reaction as the key takeaway. "Это жена пишет мужу такое?" (Is that a wife writing to her husband like that?) made by the judge.



#### **ZTB:**

- 1) One of the first posts regarding the case, a collection of screenshots of people (all women in the post) that started a campaign on domestic violence in Kazakhstan and their support towards Nukenova. ZTB utilizes highly provocative visuals for shock value; the thumbnail (women with bruised face paint) is meant to be eye-catching & emotionally triggering. The inclusion of a woman in lingerie with "bruises" is particularly provocative, introducing a blurred line between violence, victimhood, and spectacle.

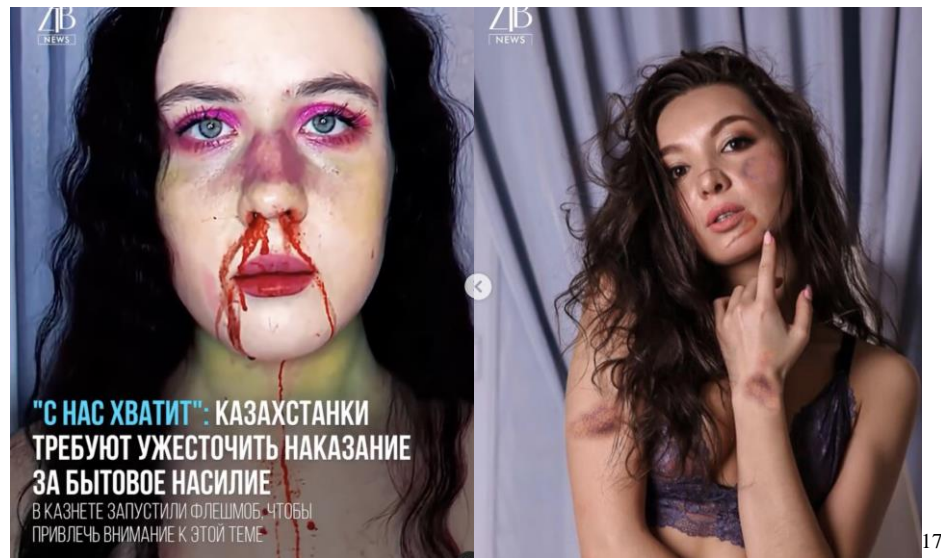
There is strategic use of highlighted text:

*"С нас хватит": Казахстанки требуют ужесточить наказание за бытовое насилие.* ("We've had enough": Kazakhstani women demand tougher penalties for domestic violence.)

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<sup>16</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5fXJ6qNfyb/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5fXJ6qNfyb/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Highlighting "с нас хватит" (we've had enough) in blue creates a cold, detached emphasis, rather than warm solidarity.



- 2) The following post involves a video of a computer screen showing a surveillance footage from all the angles of the court proceedings, which creates a detached perspective. The post also contains a fragment of a candid video of the court's hallway full of journalists that suggests institutional barriers rather than public outrage. The headline color coding signals importance without sensationalism: "*Убийство Салтанат Нукуеновой: В Астане начался суд над экс-министром...*" ("Murder of Saltanat Nukenova: Trial of ex-minister begins in Astana..."). "*Убийство Салтанат Нукуеновой*" (Saltanat Nukenova's murder) in blue visually prioritizes the crime but does not sensationalize it.

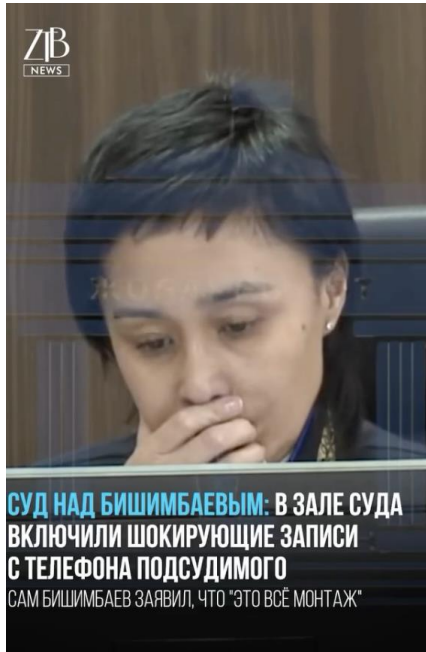


- 3) The following post involved a similar video to the previous post, but it was just the fragment of the video of the computer screen with the courtroom. Serious legal developments (caption) contrasted with a dull setting: "*Убийство Салтанат Нукеновой: Бишимбаев вину не признал.*" (Saltanat Nukenova's murder: Bishimbayev pleaded not guilty.) "Бишимбаев вину не признал" (Bishimbayev did not plead guilty) is in blue, subtly prioritizing his stance rather than the crime.

*Unfortunately, ZTB has deleted the post, so I cannot provide the visuals.*

- 4) The following post involves a video fragment of the courtroom, where the judge is watching the videos found on the accused telephone device from the day of the murder. It then shows the judge covering her mouth which reinforces the weight of the crime, including Bishimbayev speaking emphasizing his denial. The caption highlights the legal

battle rather than the crime's emotional impact: "Суд над Бишимбаевым" in blue highlighting the prioritization of the trial over the victim's suffering, while Bishimbaev's denial is the subheading, which keeps the focus on his legal stance.



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### **Batyr Jamal:**

- 1) The following post is a thread containing multiple visual elements. The thumbnail contains a video from court, specifically the fragment of the victim's defense pointing out that on the day of the murder Bishimbayev at a specific timestamp he was communicating (via text and call) with other women. The lawyer presenting evidence ensures the post is framed as part of the trial, not just social media speculation. The caption with the bold heading creates maximum impact:

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[https://www.instagram.com/reel/C6D5cLXo9x5/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFZA%3D%3D](https://www.instagram.com/reel/C6D5cLXo9x5/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFZA%3D%3D)

*"Свободна?"* (You free?) (italicized, large font) highlights the casual tone of his message, making it feel even more inappropriate.

"Бишимбаев писал другой женщине в день смерти Салтанат Нукуновой." (Bishimbayev texted another woman on the day of Saltanat Nukenova's death.) in bold which ensures that the audience focuses on the betrayal rather than just the text itself. The thread consists of the breakage of evidence – the highlight of the video’s transcription – into multiple slides which possibly creates a stronger emotional reaction, leading to higher audience retention.



2) The following post contains a picture of Ms. Nasyrbekova speaking in court.

According to the post: *“On April 23, blogger Gulnara Asymbekova was called to court as a witness. It was with her that Bishimbayev met in one of the VIP booths of Bau on November 9, 2023, while Saltanat Nurkenova was dying in the same restaurant.”*

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[https://www.instagram.com/p/C6GLo6llvjE/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D&img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/C6GLo6llvjE/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D&img_index=1)

The thumbnail contains a heading with a direct quote made by the witness: “*Ты пахнешь розами*” (You smell like roses) ensuring immediate audience intrigue.



### **The Village:**

- 1) The following post is the first post that *The Village* made on the case when it first emerged. Unlike *TengriNews*, the given news outlet explicitly mentions the reason for Bishimbayev's arrest. The thumbnail also contains an official photo of him from his previous government official duties. The thumbnail also contains credits to the picture, creating a sense of reliability.



- 2) The following post by *The Village* is also from the first days of the tragedy emerging. It contains a black and white photo of the victim, Saltanat Nukenova, focusing on the loss and accenting the tragedy. This post also contains credits to the picture, and in this case it being from the victim's FaceBook profile, which also creates emotional tension as the reader then has to be remembered of her death. The caption: *"Арестован директор ресторана Ваи."* (The director of the Bay restaurant has been arrested.) ensures immediate recognition of the post's focus. The italics in the post are used for emotional emphasis: *"Где произошло убийство Салтанат Нукеновой."* (Where the murder of Saltanat Nukenova took place.) This keeps the audience emotionally tethered to the core tragedy.

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<sup>22</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/p/CzdB58gMDGs/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CzdB58gMDGs/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)



## Discussion

This project's goal was to investigate the competing ideological narratives constructed by the local media around the Nukenova case, specifically what these differences reflected in terms of the outlets' alignment with or resistance to dominant power structures. Through CDA grounded in SFL, I looked at the four news outlets – TengriNews, ZTB, Batyr Jamal and The Village – revealing some sort of a *voice* – the distinct ideological positions that were in their choices of narration. The findings demonstrate that media framing is not neutral, proving that each outlet's strategies aligned with broader ideological elements:

**TengriNews** utilized external conjunctions ("if...then," "allegedly") quite frequently, and had passive constructions that framed the case in a legal procedure rather than a social issue. Overall, foregrounded Bishimbayev's statements, and the legal procedure, while backgrounding the systemic gender violence. This framing mirrors state-aligned media's tendency to avoid challenging dominant power structures, as discussed in Nussipov & Dragomir's (2019) work on

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<sup>23</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/p/CzkteiqISrZ/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CzkteiqISrZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

government-funded journalism in Kazakhstan. By omitting terms like "domestic violence," TengriNews' coverage implicitly upheld the status quo, treating the case as an isolated incident rather than a symptom of systemic misogyny.

**ZTB's** narration style focused on stringing dramatic details together by the use of additive conjunctions and using hyperbolic appraisal, like "shocking", which resulted in a higher engagement metric. ZTB's approach aligns with Blassnig et al.'s (2022) "audience logic," where engagement trumps depth. While not explicitly pro-state, its sensationalism risked reducing the case to spectacle, diverting attention from structural critique.

**Batyr Jamal's** framing involved foregrounding the systemic failures in this whole tragedy by incorporating the usage of temporal conjunctions, such as "then" and "after", that created a structured step-by-step process of the system. This exemplifies what Kudaibergenova (2020) calls "counter-hegemonic discourse" in Kazakhstani media. By centering Saltanat's humanity and linking the case to broader gender violence, it challenged both state narratives and cultural norms, as seen in Arystanbek's (2023) research on online misogyny.

**The Village's** linguistic choices ties journalism and activism together, reminding me of Fairclough's (2003) concept of "recontextualization," where media reframe events to critique power. Its coverage exposed gaps in state accountability, aligning with Maltseva's (2021) findings on Kazakhstani women's mobilization against systemic injustice.

## CONCLUSION

By analyzing the four local news outlets, it was evident that the same tragic event was transformed into four distinct narratives, each reflecting deeper ideological positions within Kazakhstan's media landscape. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional

Linguistics, we see how these outlets did not merely report news, but also left a trace of their *voice*. **TengriNews** created a procedural narrative, strictly focusing on legal facts, while avoiding terms like “domestic violence”. Its neutral stance reflect what *Van Dijk* indentify as elite-controlled discourse, reinforcing the dominant preferred narrative. **ZTB** took on a more sensational approach, by occasionally having dramatic language and casting systemic issues to the shadows, exemplifying what *Hamborg et al.* describes as commercial logic. **Batyr Jamal** presented a feminist counternarrative, linking the case explicitly to the patriarchal system, aligning with *Kudaibergenova’s* work on activist media in post-Soviet spaces. Lastly, **The Village** incorporated moral judgment into the reportage, with its usage of causal framing challenging structural negligence, what *Fairclough* terms "recontextualization" of events for social critique. These findings demonstrate that Kazakhstan's media spectrum isn't simply reporting events but is actively engaged in ideological work.

The state-aligned narrative (TengriNews) maintains what *Wodak* and *Van Dijk* call the "dominant discourse," while independent outlets (The Village, Batyr Jamal) create spaces for alternative narratives. The commercial approach (ZTB) reveals how market pressures can distort complex social issues into simplified dramas.

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