ABSTRACT

of the dissertation by Alisherova Aigerim Bakytzhankyzy entitled "Features of the Transformation of Student Youth's Political Culture during Political Reforms (A Case Study of Almaty)" submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the educational program "8D03104 – Political Science"

General Characteristics of the Dissertation. This doctoral dissertation is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the impact of political reforms implemented in Kazakhstan on the political culture of student youth. The main research problem is to identify how political changes of recent years have influenced students' political participation and political attitudes. The study examines the theoretical foundations of the concept of political culture, its structural characteristics, and typology. In addition, political reforms in Kazakhstan are analyzed, and their impact on the political consciousness, civic activity, and directions of political socialization of student youth is explored. The empirical research is conducted using the example of student youth in the city of Almaty, as this city represents a major center of socially, politically, and culturally active young people. Based on empirical data, the specific features of the political culture of Almaty students, as well as the processes of transformation of their political activity, are identified and described.

Relevance of the Research Topic. Firstly, the political reforms implemented in Kazakhstan in recent years have had a significant impact on the institutional and value foundations of society, facilitating the transition of political processes in the country to a qualitatively new level. On February 6, 2025, a meeting entitled "Results of Three Years of Political Reforms by K.K. Tokayev" was held at the national expert platform "KISI GPS: Gylym. Pikir. Sayasat" under the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, where experts discussed the effectiveness and outcomes of the ongoing reforms. It was noted that civil society is becoming not only a beneficiary but also an active participant in reforms, while the formation of new institutions such as the Constitutional Court and online petitions is regarded as a clear manifestation of qualitative changes in political culture. Experts emphasize the irreversible nature of political transformation in the country, while also highlighting that the active involvement of the academic community and the development of analytical capacity are crucial for assessing its real impact. In this context, the analysis of political culture transformation—especially political orientations and behavioral practices of youth—represents a highly relevant and scientifically significant research direction.

Secondly, youth represent not only the future but also the present of the state. Supporting the formation and development of youth political culture and

creating conditions for successful social integration constitute an important public policy objective. Students, as the most educated and active group of youth, are among the key social forces contributing to the formation of new political values. Within the higher education system, students are often regarded as significant political actors from whom a high level of political activity is expected [13]. According to the Bureau of National Statistics, youth aged 14–35 consist of 41.1% students, 11.5% school pupils, 6.8% NEET youth, with unemployment among them accounting for 3.3%. Thus, students represent the largest and most politically active segment of the youth population [121].

Thirdly, a comprehensive analysis of youth political culture in terms of political orientations, levels of institutional trust, and patterns of perception and evaluation of political information enables the development of recommendations and strategies aimed at improving the effectiveness of state youth policy.

Degree of Scientific Elaboration of the Topic. In contemporary global academic research, the phenomenon of youth political culture, including student youth, is considered a multidisciplinary research object at the intersection of political science, sociology, social psychology, communication theory, media studies, and cultural studies. Although issues related to political culture, youth political socialization, and digital political participation have been extensively studied in international, Russian/post-Soviet, and Kazakhstani academic literature, it has been identified that there is a lack of comprehensive studies specifically addressing the transformation of student youth political culture under political reforms in Kazakhstan, particularly using the case of the city of Almaty.

Research Hypothesis. Within the framework of political reforms adopted in Kazakhstan after the transition of power, the political culture of student youth has undergone transformation. This process is manifested in the strengthening of political consciousness, the growth of civic engagement, and a shift from traditional forms of political participation toward digital activism.

Based on the main hypothesis, the following **research questions** were formulated:

- How have political reforms implemented after the transition of power affected the political culture of student youth?
- Is there a relationship between the level of awareness of political reforms and students' political activity?
- What is the level of trust of student youth in authorities, political institutions, and reforms, and how does it influence their political activity?
- To what extent do traditional forms of political participation (e.g., voting in elections) differ from online forms of political participation (e.g., signing petitions, engaging in political discussions on social media)?

Object of the research – political culture of student youth.

Subject of the research – changes and specific features of the political culture of student youth in the city of Almaty under conditions of political reforms.

The purpose of the research is to identify changes and specific features of the political culture of student youth in Almaty under contemporary political reforms in Kazakhstan.

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

- to analyze the theoretical and conceptual foundations of political culture;
- to examine youth as subjects of political culture and identify their socio-cultural and value characteristics;
- to determine the specificity of Kazakhstan's political culture under political transformation;
- to analyze the content and significance of political reforms during the power transition period;
- to investigate the influence of social media on traditional and non-traditional forms of youth political participation;
- to analyze the transformation of the political culture of student youth in Almaty, including its directions, factors, and characteristics;
- to develop recommendations for enhancing the political culture of student youth.

Research Methods. The dissertation employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative sociological research methods. Data collection involved secondary analysis of youth-related statistical data, review of government documents, synthesis of sources and materials, historical analysis, content analysis, structural-functional analysis, bibliometric analysis, surveys of students and experts, as well as methods of systematization and generalization of findings and results.

Scientific Novelty of the Research:

(1) The dissertation proposes an original concept of "hybrid-digital political culture of student youth" (hybrid-digital political culture), within which students' political culture is conceptualized as a unified hybrid structure combining offline practices (traditional values, attitudes toward political institutions, elections, political parties) and online practices (social media, online petitions, the eOtinish service, and digital political activity).

(2) Based on data from the Scopus database, a bibliometric analysis (authors, journals, thematic clustering, keyword networks) was conducted, identifying key research trends in youth political culture, existing research gaps, and the position of the Kazakhstani context within the global academic landscape.

(3) For the first time, a comprehensive multi-level dynamic analysis of institutional political representation of youth in Kazakhstan was conducted. Using parliamentary and maslikhat elections of 2016, 2021, and 2023 as examples, the proportion of young candidates, the structure of the 30% quota, and the number of young deputies were compared.

(4) A structural shift in agents of political socialization and information—from traditional sources to social networks and digital platforms (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Telegram, etc.)—was empirically demonstrated.
(5) A statistically significant correlation was identified between the level of awareness of political reforms and various forms of political participation among student youth (interest in politics, participation in elections and rallies, signing online petitions, use of the eOtinish service).

Theoretical and Practical Significance. The research findings are valuable for scholars studying political culture, policymakers, civil society institutions, and other stakeholders seeking to expand youth participation in political processes. Insufficient study of political knowledge levels, value orientations, and forms of political participation among student youth constrains the development of comprehensive theoretical understanding in this field. The results provide a foundation for designing effective strategies and programs aimed at increasing youth civic engagement and responsibility.

Main Provisions Submitted for Defense:
(1) The dissertation proposes an authorial definition of political culture and the concept of hybrid-digital political culture. Political culture is interpreted as a complex socio-political phenomenon encompassing levels of understanding, evaluation, and practical interaction between individuals, society, and political relations, the depth and quality of political knowledge, and a set of value orientations and behavioral models.
(2) The evolutionary-transformational nature of political culture is substantiated, whereby the renewal of youth political views and behavior occurs through intergenerational integration of traditional values (community, order, stability) and new values (individual activity, legal consciousness, digital freedom).
(3) The research demonstrates that the transition of power and the political reforms of “New Kazakhstan,” despite establishing an institutional basis for movement from autocratic elements toward democratic institutions, encounter factors that hinder their deep internalization within youth consciousness.
(4) A comparative analysis of the 2021 and 2023 parliamentary elections shows an expansion of youth institutional representation, while simultaneously indicating its insufficiency.
(5) It is empirically proven that social media and digital platforms (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Telegram, etc.) have become the leading agents of political socialization of student youth.
(6) Correlation analysis reveals relationships between political reforms and traditional and digital forms of political participation among student youth. Pearson correlation conducted using IBM SPSS shows statistically significant, predominantly weak to moderate positive relationships between awareness of political reforms and various indicators of political behavior.

(7) A comprehensive set of educational and institutional recommendations aimed at improving youth political culture has been developed.

Approbation of Research Results. The research results have been tested and presented at various academic venues. Three articles based on the dissertation topic have been published in journals recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in the Field of Education and Science of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (List 2), as well as in the proceedings of four international scientific and practical conferences. An article prepared within the framework of the research was published in the journal Journal of Social Studies Education Research, indexed in the SCOPUS database (Q1; 2024 percentile – 75%; author's Hirsch index – 1).

Structure and Volume of the Dissertation. The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, and appendices. The total volume of the work is 161 pages and includes 30 figures, 27 tables, and 1 diagram.