



Speak Up: Effective Communication Strategies in Domestic Violence Crises in Kazakhstan.

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to highlight the importance of effective use of social media in domestic violence crises in Kazakhstan. This study utilized a case study approach. The analysis focused on two specific domestic violence cases involving Symbat Kulzhagarova and Saltanat Nukenova, which generated significant public attention, making them representative examples for this study. The first case revolves around Symbat Kulzhagarova, who has endured domestic violence by her husband, was sent to a mental hospital twice, and died after falling from a height from December 9 to 10, 2020. The second case was when former Minister of Economy and assistant to ex-President Nazarbayev Kuandyk Bishimbayev was detained in Kazakhstan on suspicion of murdering his common-law wife Saltanat Nukenova. This incident attracted unprecedented media attention and resonance created by the status of the official and the scale of his figure. The results of this study showed that a history of similar crises increased the reputational threat of the current crisis, even when the crisis arose from an accident rather than deliberate action. The study offers implications for practice and suggestions for future research.

Keywords

Domestic Violence; Crisis Communication, Social Media; Kazakhstan, Legislation.

Introduction

Domestic violence is a widespread and troubling problem that affects millions of people worldwide. According to a 2021 World Health Organization (WHO) study, approximately one in three women worldwide will experience physical and/or sexual violence, often perpetrated by an

intimate partner, in their lifetime (Devastatingly Pervasive. WHO, 2021). Every year, more than a million women in Kazakhstan experience physical and psychological violence. These alarming statistics highlight the urgent need to break the silence and empower victims through effective communication strategies. In a domestic violence crisis, communication is the lifeline connecting victims, service providers and appropriate authorities. This allows one to exchange critical information, coordinate services and provide timely assistance. Communication serves as a tool not only to respond to domestic violence crises but also to raise awareness and prevent such incidents. By effectively communicating the dangers and consequences of domestic violence, communities can be educated and empowered to address and prevent such situations.

Communication is a powerful tool to empower victims of domestic violence and break the silence that perpetuates their suffering (Alves & da Silva, 2023). By creating a safe environment and using technology, survivors can find support, access resources, and ultimately reclaim their lives. Social media has revolutionized the way crisis information is created and shared (Cheng, 2020). In this digital era, news about a crisis is no longer monopolized by the dominant media; instead, it can spread across social media, reaching a vast audience almost instantly. Many cases utilize social media to provide first-hand information immediately after a crisis, thereby democratizing the flow of information. Social networks serve as a virtual space that not only allows people to connect and exchange information but also caters to their emotional needs in times of crisis (Nolet, et.al. 2021).

According to the Social Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) model, people fully participate in the communication process (Cheng, 2020). In crises, they focus on searching for information, sharing, and expressing their point of view regarding subjects' actions relevant to decision-making. In this regard, online communication can either resolve, provoke, or aggravate crisis situations, turning the advantages of social media into disadvantages in emergencies. This mainly concerns the reliability of the published content and the ability to share it. The sensational nature of crisis situations makes them the subject of increased social media attention and discussions, often with negative consequences. Simultaneously, social media often acts as an accessible channel for citizens to communicate with authorities. Social networks also make it possible to better understand and analyze society's mood and even what problematic issues it pays special attention

to. In addition, networks are the most accessible and straightforward channels to convey and promote ideas to the masses.

Literature Review

The scope of literature review outlines various theoretical approaches to crisis communication management with the focus on impact of domestic violence on organization reputation. Domestic violence is a serious social issue that puts the lives of the most vulnerable society members in mortal danger (Dwyer, 2017). Analyzing domestic violence cases in this context is important for understanding how both organizations and individuals can manage sensitive situations. The authors view crisis communication as an essential element of situation management. Kathleen Fearn-Banks analyzed organizational, corporate, and individual crises cases, and a definition of crisis communication that best applies to domestic violence cases is “a serious event with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company or industry, and the public ...” (Fearn-Banks, 1996). The author underscored that no matter in which circumstances, a crisis can develop over time if not correctly maintained or be sudden and require immediate action to prevent further damage. On the other hand, Coombs focused on situational crisis communication theory in application to the organizations. An organization's reputation depends on its stakeholders and their assessment of its performance (Coombs, 2007). In this situation, the stakeholders are considered to be the victims, the supporters of the adoption of the law on domestic violence, and their physical and psychological needs should be key priority during various crises.

The crisis communication strategy covers ten categories. News frames were developed using the Neuman, Just frame categories and Crigler (1992), as well as the news values approach Brossard, Dunwoody, Dudo, Hillback, and Wijaya (2007). They are divided into five categories (Wigley, 2011). Choi and Lin (2009) identified the six basic emotions of the population during a crisis that vary from anger, fear, contempt to surprise, worry, and relief. The author found significant negative relationships between organizational reputation and anger and alert when testing situational crisis communication theory. These emotions play important role in shaping public perception, and influence how organization should plan their crisis response strategies to mitigate

reputational damage. Benoit focused on the theory of image restoration during corporate crisis situations, with particular emphasis on recognizing confrontation early on in order to respond to it in a timely manner (1997). Every crisis must be resolved through communications, determining the appropriate approach to solving the problem in front of the public. One such approach is organizational apologia. This strategy involves two methods that are critical to overcoming the crisis. Two elements included in organizational apologia are image restoration and image maintenance (Rowland & Jerome, 2004).

Another crisis communication model is the social-mediated model or SMCC model, it is relatively novel model and refers to how organizations use social media platforms to communicate with the general public and key stakeholders during crises. In comparison to other models, SMCC accounts for the unique characteristics of information dissemination and communication on the online platforms such as interactivity, speed of communication, and importance of feedback from the audience. This model also identifies three types of social media posts during a crisis: 1) influential social media creators who create information about the crisis; 2) social media followers who consume information about the crisis; 3) people who are not active in social networks that consume information about the crisis through offline word-of-mouth communication and/or traditional media (Liu, Austin, and Jin, 2011). The theory suggests that influential social media creators influence their followers by providing opinion leadership, satisfying followers' informational and emotional needs, and influencing media coverage of events by setting the agenda on crisis issues. However, the authors also found that in comparison to social media and word-of-mouth the audience would more readily accept defensive, supportive, or evasive crisis responses through traditional media outlets. Moreover, not only sources of crisis information but also its form can have serious impact on the audience.

Unfortunately, research on domestic violence and crisis communication in Kazakhstan remains limited. Despite the issue being discussed in the traditional media outlets and social media platforms, this study is the first attempt to analyzed intersection between domestic violence crisis communication and its effect on online audience in the unique Kazakhstani context. Furthermore, there is also lack of academic research on the topic of the role of social media platforms in

dissemination of information about domestic violence in the country, and how it can facilitate or hinder delivering help to the victims of domestic violence.

Methodology

The aim of this study was to emphasize the importance of effectively utilizing social media, particularly the role of influential bloggers, by understanding cultural nuances to engage with stakeholders in Kazakhstan during crises. The primary sources for this article were posts and comments from the social media platforms Facebook and Instagram, chosen due to their popularity in Kazakhstan. The analysis focused on two specific cases of domestic violence involving Symbat Kulzhagarova and Saltanat Nukenova, which sparked significant public resonance, making them representative examples for this study.

A qualitative content analysis method was employed to examine news reports related to these two crisis incidents. This approach is particularly suitable for the study's objectives, as it enables a comprehensive understanding of public perceptions and sentiments regarding cases of domestic violence (van Diepen & Wolf, 2021). Analyzing social media platforms also helps capture the emotions and reactions of the online audience in real time and explore how these reactions can lead to broader societal outcomes. Special attention was given to the use of language, visual materials, and cultural codes in communication.

The two cases involved the same types of crises, and in both cases, the husbands of the deceased considered themselves innocent. The first case revolves around Symbat Kulzhagarova, who has endured domestic violence by her husband, was sent to a mental hospital twice, and died after falling from a height from December 9 to 10, 2020. After the tragic death of Symbat Kulzhagarova, public activists created a petition on the Internet, "Stop violence against women in Kazakhstan," addressed to the President of Kazakhstan and Parliament. The petition demanded that the articles of "assault" and "causing minor bodily harm" must be transferred to the category of criminal misdemeanors.

The second incident involves the ex-Minister of the National Economy of Kazakhstan, Quandyq Bishimbaev, and his deceased wife, Saltanat Nukenova. It took place from November 8 to November 9, 2023, in the BAU restaurant located in the capital city of Kazakhstan, Astana, a quarrel occurred between the spouses, as a result of which a woman died from multiple injuries. A criminal case was opened against Bishimbayev for the murder of his wife. On November 26, 2023, an authorized rally against domestic violence took place in Almaty and an online petition was also launched to strengthen protection against domestic violence, which received more than 150 thousand signatures. The President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, supported the petition and promised that the opinion of the Kazakh people would be considered. The murder of Saltanat Nukenova became a kind of trigger for toughening punishment for domestic violence in Kazakhstan.

To collect data, the researchers conducted a keyword search on Google search engine, which returned the following data: “Symbat Kulzhagarova” (1720), “Saltanat Nukenova” (2,820,000), “Quandyq Bishimbaev” (4,390,000), “domestic violence in Kazakhstan” (64,700), “domestic violence in Kazakhstan” (73,300). A total of 35 articles and 6905 comments about Symbat Kulzhagarova were posted in 2020-2021, compared to 216 articles and 74246 comments on the case of Saltanat Nukenova in 2023-2024. Due to the large number of comments, only individual publications on the Aitbek page were considered Amangeldi @aitym on Instagram, brother of Saltanat Nukenova. In total, three broad categories were created for this content analysis: crisis communication strategy, news feeds, and public emotions.

Table 1. Categories of media content analysis

Crisis communication strategy	News feeds	Public emotions
1) the victim is used to remind the public that the accused party is also a victim of the crisis. 2) shifting the blame. 3) an accident is a statement that the crisis was an accident.	1) personalization frame, denoting “personal feelings and opinions about the crisis”. 2) the conflict frame refers to “the manifestation of opposing views, including rivalry, anger, or hostility between opposing parties”.	1) anger. 2) worry. 3) relief. 4) sympathy. 5) sympathy for the victim. 6) sympathy to the victim's family.

<p>4) good intentions are used to emphasize that initially, everything was fine. 5) support is used to inform the public about past and current achievements. 6) minimization is used to state that the crisis is actually not that bad. 7) expressions of concern for victims focus on concern for the victims. 8) corrective actions are used to take measures to prevent the recurrence of negative events. 9) modification is used to admit guilt and apologize. 10) the other was reserved for unique moments, etc., which differed from the above strategies.</p>	<p>3) problem frame means “the presence of a question, problem and task”. 4) the progress frame denoted “steps towards the goal of getting rid of obstacles/problems”. 5) a system of moral values centered on "a set of principles that help a person evaluate good and evil."</p>	
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The following steps were used to analyze the data:

1. thematic analysis (posts and comments were classified based on: social support: expressions of sympathy for the victims, offers of help; criticism of the system: discussions about the authorities’ inaction; calls to action: Collection of signatures, creation of petitions);
2. sentiment analysis (positive: support for the victims; negative: outrage and condemnation; neutral: informational messages);
3. cross-platform comparison, where Facebook has more analytical comments with argumentation and discussion, while Instagram focuses on visual elements (emotional photos, video messages).

The specified categories are directly related to the research objectives and provide an opportunity to understand the emotional tone of discussions, evaluate the effectiveness of digital communication, and identify successful interaction strategies that can be used to develop recommendations for improving communication on the topic of domestic violence.

Findings and Discussion

Domestic violence can happen to any person regardless of gender or age; however, the studies show that often, it disproportionately affects young females (Stanko, 2005). In the cases discussed in this article, Symbat Kulzhagarova was 29 years old and Saltanat Nukenova was 31 years old at the time of their untimely deaths. These two tragedies revived the debate in Kazakhstan about the need to toughen penalties for domestic violence. In particular, there is a need to restore the provisions of Articles 108 and 109 in the Criminal Code – “Intentional infliction of minor harm to health” and “Battery.” In 2017, these articles were decriminalized and moved from the Criminal Code to the Administrative Code of Kazakhstan.

Symbat Kulzhagarova was a native of Aktau, studied in London under the MBA program, and won the Miss Kazakhstan title in the UK in 2013. She was married for four years and had two children; however, there was no agreement in the family, and she made the decision to end the marriage. Her husband, Abai Abdiganiev, was against the divorce, as a result of which Symbat was forcibly placed in the City Mental Health Center, claiming that she was mentally ill, where she stayed for about a week. On September 30, 2020, her husband severely beat her, because of which she had to go to the hospital due to multiple large bruises throughout her body. For more than three months, Symbat Kulzhagarova kept a public diary on Instagram and wrote about how her husband systematically abused her and how the laws, police, and protective orders did not work.

Saltanat Nukenova, a native of Pavlodar, also studied in England and later made a career as a personal astrologer. Her future husband Quandyq Bishimbaev saw Saltanat’s photos on Instagram and ordered an astrology consultation. He began to persistently seek Saltanat’s attention: for six months, he tried to set up a romantic date, sent acquaintances, knew the places where she was vacationing, and pursued her. According to friends and relatives' testimony, the woman initially did not want to meet Bishimbayev. In the summer of 2022, Saltanat nevertheless agreed to a date. The relationship developed rapidly: in the fall of the same year, she married Quandyq Bishimbaev, but it was later revealed that the relationship was not officially registered. Soon, Saltanat began to

complain to her family and friends that her husband forbade her to work, limited her resources, suspected her of infidelity, and controlled her communication and movement. However, the worst offence was that the former politician regularly subjected his wife to physical violence.

The deaths of Symbat and Saltanat shocked Kazakh society because their cases were not the typical image that most people associate with domestic violence. The problem of violence against women is not limited to families living below the poverty line or in rural areas. And not for the first time, the public has wondered whether these tragedies might finally lead to a change in the system that should protect them rather than punish them.

The relationship between the two stories is that after the death of Symbat Kulzhagarova in February 2021, there was an open petition to the President of Kazakhstan on reforming criminal and administrative legislation on protection from domestic violence. At the time, it had been signed by just under 5.5 thousand people. Public interest in the case quickly decreased, and for 2.5 years, not a single signature appeared under the appeal. Everything changed after the murder of Saltanat Nukenova; the petition received more than 150 thousand votes but was declared illegitimate since petitions on unofficial resources have no legal force and are considered invalid in the country.

Despite this, the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev emphasized that “regardless of whether the said petition complies with the requirements of the law, the opinion of citizens presented in it will definitely be taken into account - there can be no doubt about it.”

Table 2. Timeline of Events

Case, important events		
<i>Symbat Kulzhagarova</i>	<i>Saltanat Nukenova</i>	<i>Legislation on domestic violence</i>
The conclusion of the medical commission dated October 21, 2020 confirms that Symbat Kulzhagarova was mentally healthy.	November 8, 2023 Quandyq Bishimbayev and Saltanat Nukenova were at one of the concerts in the capital. There was a quarrel between them.	On December 8, 2023, the President of Kazakhstan signed a decree on an action plan in the field of human rights and the rule of law. The action plan outlines “tightening criminal

		legislation in the area of domestic violence.”
October 31, 2020. Instagram post on Symbat Kulzhagarova’s account: “According to THEIR opinion, I was possessed by a demon or damaged/dua. And I want to be “inhabited” by a happy person, a happy mother.”	On November 9, 2023, Saltanat Nukenova died as a result of an incident in one of the capital’s restaurants. On the same day, former Minister of National Economy Quandyq Bishimbaev was detained on suspicion of murdering his wife.	January 31, 2024. Mazhilis (the lower house of the Parliament of Kazakhstan) deputies adopted a bill on ensuring women's rights and children's safety.
November 4, 2020. Instagram post on Symbat Kulzhagarova’s account: “I recently watched a movie. Mix of all genres. Melodrama: a married couple with two children Thriller: constant threats Action: heroine in the role of a punching bag Drama : betrayals of her mother What makes it historical are the articles in the media that you read. Horror: it was in a psychiatric hospital, where they stuffed them with strange injections. But the heroine of the main role still hopes for very Happy End ♡ Thanks to my heroes!!! 🙏 I’ll indicate the names in the subtitles after the trial 🙏 Ps. From comedy there is only hysterical laughter)”	On January 8, 2024, it was revealed that the investigation into the Quandyq Bishimbaev’s case was completed.	On February 21, 2024, at a plenary meeting, the Mazhilis adopted in the first reading a bill to ensure women’s rights and children’s safety, as well as amendments to the Code of Administrative Offenses.
November 26, 2020. Instagram post on Symbat Kulzhagarova’s account: “In practice and according to media reports, women who applied for a protective order, many were subjected to physical violence or killed by their ex-husbands. Do you also think that there is not enough justification?”	On February 26, 2024 the press service of the capital city court clarified that a criminal case against the suspect, Quandyq Bishimbaev entered the specialized interdistrict criminal court of Astana.	On February 28, 2024, deputies of the Mazhilis adopted a law on ensuring the rights of women and the safety of children in the second reading.
November 28, 2020. Instagram post on Symbat Kulzhagarova’s account:	On March 11, 2024, preliminary hearings began in Astana in the	March 13, 2024. approved a bill providing for changes and additions to some legislative

Recommendations for those who have experienced domestic violence. Describes own situation.	case of the murder of Saltanat Nukenova.	acts on the optimization of the Criminal, Criminal Procedure and Criminal Executive Codes.
December 5, 2020. Instagram post on Symbat Kulzhagarova's account: "... My only request is, do not deprive my children of support because of me."	On March 27, 2024, the main trial of Bishimbaev began. The court selected 12 jurors.	What is provided for in the bill to protect the rights and legitimate interests of women and children: life sentence for murder of a minor and pedophilia; criminal liability for causing minor harm to health with punishment in the form of a fine of up to 200 MCI (Minimum calculated indexes), or community service for up to 200 hours, or arrest for up to 50 days; for assault - a fine of up to 80 MCI, or community service for up to 80 hours, or arrest for up to 25 days; authorized bodies are given the opportunity to respond to media reports about facts of violence; criminal liability is introduced for incitement to suicide in the form of imprisonment for a term of 5 to 9 years and for the promotion of suicide in the form of a fine of 200 MCI.
December 10, 2020. Symbat Kulzhagarova fell out of an apartment window.	On March 28, 2024, public prosecutors spoke at the meeting.	
December 21, 2020. Symbat's father Borangali Kulzhagarov recorded a video in which he stated that his daughter was mentally healthy.	On March 29, 2024, at the meeting, a representative of the injured party, brother of Saltanat Nukenova, Aitbek Amangeldy, was interrogated, as well as other witnesses.	
	On April 1, 2024, the interrogation of the witness continued in court. After the break, the floor was given to the main defendant, Quandyq Bishimbaev, who spoke for several hours.	
	On April 3, 2024 in court, Bishimbaev spoke about the events of November 8 and 9, 2023, when the crime was committed, and footage of the beating was also shown.	
	On May 13, 2024, a court in Astana sentenced former Minister of National Economy of Kazakhstan Kuandyk Bishimbayev to 24 years in prison for torturing and murdering his common-law wife, Saltanat Nukenova.	

		additions to the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan on administrative offenses on ensuring the rights of women and child safety"
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It is noteworthy that the husbands of Symbat Kulzhagarova and Saltanat Nukenova did not admit their guilt. Abay Abdiganiev, Symbat Kulzhagarova’s husband stated: “I didn’t beat her. I didn’t raise my hands. This is a blatant, cruel deception. I lost my wife. I lost my family. No one looked at the situation objectively. Everyone on the one hand listened” (Darkeev, 14.12.2020).

Quandyq Bishimbaev, Saltanat Nukenova's common-law husband stated: “The essence of the charge is clear... I don’t admit guilt. I would like to say that I didn’t even have the opportunity to tell my story either during the pre-trial investigation, or anywhere else at all. Everything that was just read out by the prosecutor was, in many ways, fabrications, for which there is no confirmation and evidence. I say again, according to Article 110, such a crime has never been committed on my part, I do not admit guilt. According to the second count of the charge, part 2, paragraph 5 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, I did not commit the intentional murder of a person with particular cruelty” (Mamyrkhanova, 03.27.2024).

Bishimbaev’s case caused a public outcry and became the first domestic violence case in Kazakhstan to be tried with a jury and in an online format, which has only increased public outrage. The hashtag #forSaltanat appeared on social networks in support of the murdered woman. Bishimbayev is accused of victim blaming and manipulation of information. Comments under the publications of the brother of the murdered Aitbek Amangeldi @ aitym on Instagram can be divided into the following categories.

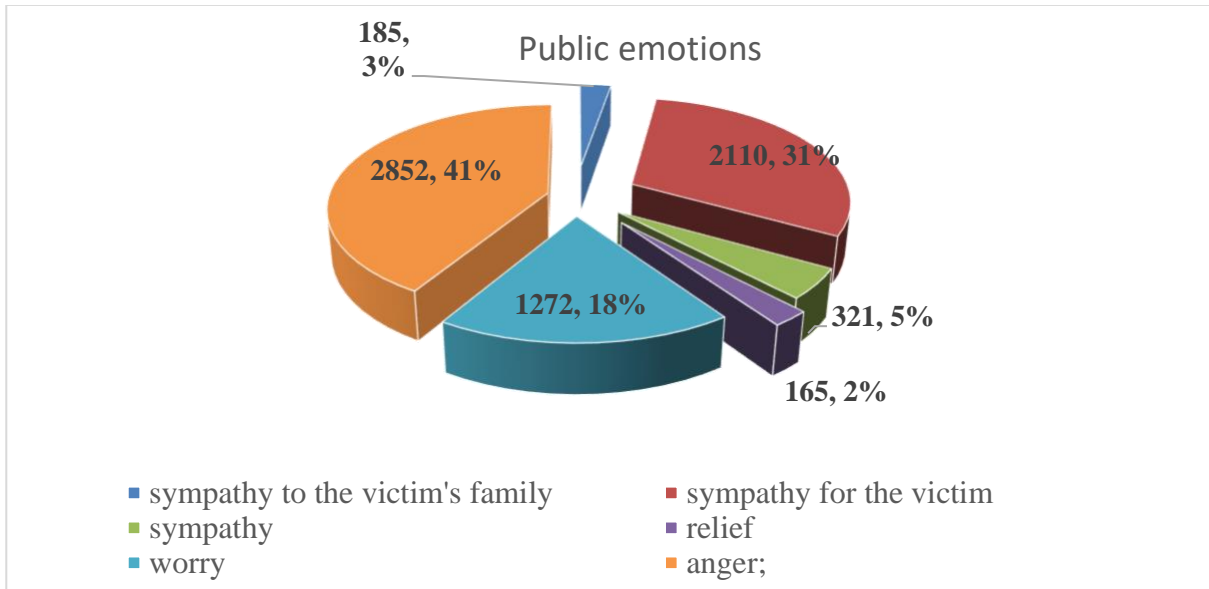


Diagram 1. Public emotions

An organization's reputation can be spoiled, in this case, the reputation of the authorities represented by the government, the presidential administration, and the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan, simply by reporting people’s opinions on the incident. The screenshots from a camera video showing Quandyq Bishimbaev beating Saltanat Nukenova shocked the public. Without domestic violence laws in place, the government as a whole was under threat as its reputation and influence among the public declined. One of the important factors in this particular case was the social status and government official posts formerly held by the defendant, accused of murdering a person with particular cruelty. Quandyq Bishimbaev was an assistant to the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2009-2010) and later – the Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2016). The incident made the public doubt the honesty and loyalty of the law enforcement agencies and the court, especially since Bishimbayev had already served time for a criminal offense. On March 14, 2018, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison, and on September 25, 2019, Bishimbayev was released on parole.

Maintaining an image is essential to maintain the reputation of the organization (country) through procedural steps. They must demonstrate their concern for the person involved (the President of Kazakhstan instructed the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to take special control of the case of the ex-Minister of National Economy Bishimbaev), strengthen the ideals of the

organization (adopting the bill “On Domestic Violence”), declare that in damage was not expected as a result of this act. Precautions should be taken to ensure that a similar situation never occurs again. Chairman of the Senate of Kazakhstan, Maulen Ashimbayev, stated that the bill toughening punishment for domestic violence and the high-profile trial in the case of Bishimbayev will make serious changes in our society.

The key to image restoration is recognizing confrontation and responding to it correctly and in a timely manner (Benoit, 1997). The organization (country) must respond to the situation within a certain period of time so as not to miss the opportunity to apologize for the damage caused. In this case, the Minister of Culture and Information, Aida Balayeva, spoke about the Bishimbaev’s case and the fight against domestic violence: “To my regret, people who, guided by selfish interests, contrary to all accepted universal norms and principles, broadcast lies and engage in manipulation of public consciousness, rightly receive widespread public censure, become not only “unshakable,” but also the real outcasts. Because society is not stupid” (Aida Balaeva ..., *tengrinews.kz*, 01/03/2024).

Unfortunately, awareness of domestic violence as a social problem does not come on its own. Awareness comes from actively and openly condemning domestic violence. In many cases, people suffering from it are discouraged on reporting it and even blamed to cause it in a first place. Victims often find themselves trapped in a cycle of violence and fear, leading to feelings of helplessness and isolation. Only effective communication can play a critical role in empowering survivors and helping them break out of silence.

Communication is a vital tool in the fight against domestic violence. This not only gives victims the opportunity to express their feelings, but also opens channels to seek help and support. By breaking the silence, survivors can share their experiences, fears and worries, ultimately finding comfort in knowing they are not alone. In addition to providing emotional support, effective communication also provides victims with resources and assistance. Knowing where to go for help helps survivors escape violent situations and find the support they need to rebuild their lives. The

power of communication lies in its ability to restore hope and provide victims with the necessary tools to return to normalcy.

The state's ability to protect women's human rights in situations of domestic violence largely depends on sufferer's willingness to report and on changes in the attitudes of perpetrators. In this regard it is important to note the human rights activist, scholar, lawyer, children's ombudsman of Almaty, Khalida Azhigulova's take on the issue: "Victims of domestic violence began to speak up first. It is always very difficult to be the first, and I sincerely admire those women who, despite victim blaming, spoke about being/were victims of domestic violence. It was the voices of these women that began to change our mentality: being beaten It's not a shame to be an abuser. Of course, this new mentality is still in the process of formation, but I'm glad that after a few years we began to hear active male voices - the voices of men who actively condemn the actions of abusers and take the side of victims of domestic violence. Civil activism is very important in eradicating social problems and especially domestic violence" (Lykova N., 2024).

The diffusion of human rights norms in society does not depend simply on their acceptance by the state, but rather on complex social processes of awareness, acceptance and rejection. News and the media play a role in shaping the relationship between human rights norms, the national laws that enact them, and the societies they affect. In addition to reflecting social attitudes, media portrayals of domestic violence play an important role in shaping public perception as well as social policy. This influence exists because the media helps define the understanding of reality. Violence is framed and then often influences the support and funding of shelters, the punishment of domestic violence perpetrators, the protection of survivors, and so on.

Kazakhstan, as a member of the United Nations, participates in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Kazakhstan, as a member of the UN, takes part in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. On June 16, 2024, the Law "On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Ensuring Women's Rights and Children's Safety" came into force. The main changes are that law enforcement agencies can

begin an investigation without an official statement from the victim, which allows for faster prosecution of the perpetrators. The law also toughened penalties for violence. Battery, minor bodily harm and torture are now considered criminal offenses. The possibility of reconciliation of the parties in these cases has been excluded, which increases the inevitability of punishment. Additional measures to protect minors and women have been introduced, including more severe sanctions for sexual violence and abuse. Criminal liability has been introduced for incitement and assistance in committing suicide, as well as for promoting suicide. Criminal liability has been introduced for sexual harassment of persons under 16 years of age. Punishments for kidnapping and illegal deprivation of liberty of a minor have been significantly tightened; for the first time, administrative liability has been introduced for harassment (bullying, cyberbullying) of a minor. An amendment has been made to the Labor Code stating that the employer is obliged to provide the employee with unpaid leave for the period of stay in organizations providing special social services to victims of domestic violence, but not more than 30 calendar days. In general, the law provides for amendments and additions to 15 legislative acts, including seven codes and eight laws.

In the media of Kazakhstan, the issue of domestic violence is discussed through several key discourses:

- 1 Protection of women's rights: The need to strengthen legal mechanisms to safeguard victims is frequently highlighted;
- 2 Criticism of the system: The media often criticizes law enforcement and the judiciary for their formal approach, low-quality investigations, and weak enforcement of protective orders. Cases where perpetrators evade punishment due to reconciliation or lack of evidence are frequently mentioned.
- 3 Stigmatization issues: Many publications address cultural and social barriers, such as pressure on women from families or society, which lead to the silence surrounding violence. This aspect is often viewed as one of the main reasons the issue remains unresolved.
- 4 Educational discourse: The media works to raise public awareness by publishing materials about victims' rights, available assistance, and the work of crisis centers.

- 5 Debate over reforms: Discussions focus on what has changed since the adoption of new laws, highlighting disagreements between reform advocates and conservative groups, who fear that new measures might undermine traditional family values.

The overall media discourse combines empathy for victims, demands for reforms, and efforts to overcome social stereotypes. However, it has yet to lead to significant shifts in public awareness or government policy.

Results

Mass media and social networks can play a key role in combating domestic violence by highlighting the problem of domestic violence; creating content that explains how to recognize violence and where to seek help; explaining legal aspects, including responsibility for violence, the rights of victims, the procedure for filing reports and receiving protection; providing an opportunity for anonymous discussion and receiving help without fear of condemnation; disseminating successful stories.

Effective communication is not only a tool for overcoming the consequences of domestic violence, but also a powerful means of its prevention. Open dialogue at all levels, from the family to government agencies, can change the perception of the problem and reduce its prevalence. Silence about this problem breeds impunity and suffering, while competent interaction can save lives.

Victims often withdraw into themselves due to fear, shame or lack of faith in help. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt communications for different groups: for children, for teenagers, for the elderly. And Kazakhstan's participation in global initiatives against domestic violence is important, since the use of successful cases from other countries helps to develop local approaches.

Effective communication is a bridge between victims, society and the state. The more people learn to speak and listen correctly about domestic violence, the faster the problem will lose its “invisibility”. This will not only help those who are already in crisis, but also prevent new cases

of violence.

Symbat Kulzhagarova and Saltanat Nukenova became the catalyst that pushed the state to include human rights standards in its legislation. Saltanat Nukenova’s case showed that Kazakhstan’s progress in protecting women from domestic violence has so far been largely superficial.

Technologies. Improved communication ensures comprehensive response, prevention, and awareness of domestic violence. The use of smartphones, mobile applications, and online platforms has revolutionized safety practices and empowered people experiencing domestic violence. Many apps offer GPS tracking functionality, allowing victims to share their location in real-time with trusted contacts. This feature is especially useful in situations where the victim’s safety is at risk, allowing for a quick response from law enforcement. Online platforms have become a 24/7 safe place for victims of domestic violence to seek support and resources and connect with others who have faced similar situations. Victims will be able to seek help at any time, eliminating barriers created by limited operating hours or geographic restrictions.

Journalists have the ability to negatively influence public perceptions of domestic violence because their words have the ability to “distort reality and therefore distort public opinion,” for example, by portraying a woman in an abusive situation as someone “deserving” of it. Conversely, media portrayals of domestic violence can positively influence the protection and services provided to victims of domestic violence by increasing public support for services that help them. The media can send a message to abusers that the law is there to protect women and that they should expect consequences for their violence.

Public debate in the media about the importance of the domestic violence law represents one of the strongest indicators of public acceptance of the international human rights standards adopted in this law. Of the 60 news stories, 40 touched on the importance of the law in one way or another. These affirmations of the value of the law, in many cases, go hand in hand with discussions about the continued prevalence of domestic violence. After all, if domestic violence did not exist, the law would have little social impact. The high rates of reported domestic violence only serve to

demonstrate the importance of the law in protecting and helping the many women experiencing domestic violence. It follows that rising levels of domestic violence would be a sign that Kazakh women have internalized the idea that domestic violence is not something they should endure but rather something they should report to the police.

Future Research Directions

The government should develop crisis communication programs for victims of domestic violence, crisis communication plans and response strategies that are appropriate to the type of crisis. Crisis centers in Kazakhstan can adopt effective communication strategies after the crisis to ensure rapid recovery.

This research has limitation. Crises can be divided into accidental and preventable, and such situations include responsibility for the crisis, crisis history, and previous reputation in the relationship (Coombs 2007). Future research should include accidental crisis types and examine the effects of crisis communication target matching strategies in combination with crisis history and previous reputation. In the new media era, crisis information can be communicated through multiple sources and channels. For example, social media influencers can be used to disseminate crisis information or relevant information can be published on official websites. Future research should examine optimal matching strategies for crisis communication along with factors such as sources, channels, and audiences of communication.

Conclusion

Overall, the results of this study show how social media platforms are profoundly changing the processes of understanding violence in modern Kazakhstani society. The article also illustrates how the personal stories of the victims of the abuse can be a catalyst for legislative changes. However, in order to be effective, they require heightened public attention and even outcry. As Symbat Kulzhagarova's case showed, without sensational media attention, initial public interest can quickly dwindle, even when the issues are relevant to the general public. The high profile of Saltanat Nukenova's case and the people involved in it were important factors that enabled the

case to stay relevant and bring notable societal changes.

When victims of violence do not feel protected by the law and sometimes face condemnation from society or even from their loved ones, communication with strangers who find themselves in the same situation becomes an indispensable way for many to receive psychological support. These developments highlight challenges and opportunities for researchers, educators, activists, and policymakers to better understand and combat domestic violence.

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