







“Institutional factors hindering the effective implementation of the Listening State concept in Kazakhstan”

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INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS HINDERING THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LISTENING STATE CONCEPT IN KAZAKHSTAN

Abstract

The Listening State concept adopted in Kazakhstan aims to increase public trust in government institutions by incorporating citizen input into the policymaking process. However, empirical evidence suggests a substantial gap between declared principles and practical implementation. This study aims to examine the institutional factors that hinder the effective implementation of the Listening State concept within the framework of public administration based on an analysis of local-level public opinion. In 2024, a sociological survey involving 550 voluntary participants was conducted in the city of Turkestan, Kazakhstan, using a questionnaire based on the key principles of the concept. Analysis revealed that 73% of respondents are interested in political matters, but only 45% actively participate in decision-making due to limited awareness of governmental activities. Significant correlations emerged between consensus orientation and accountability ($r = 0.65, p < 0.05$) and also between rule of law and transparency ($r = 0.66, p < 0.05$). However, an insignificant link was found between participation in decision-making and political events ($r = 0.02, p > 0.05$). Linear regression showed that demographic variables have limited influence on principles. Salary impacts consensus orientation (0.18), gender affects accountability (0.20) and transparency (0.22), occupation influences the rule of law (0.16), while gender and education only slightly influence familiarity with civil society (0.10). The study highlights the need for targeted awareness-raising, simplification of civic engagement, and improvement of institutional accountability and transparency to bridge the implementation gap. The evidence recommends a targeted approach to strengthen the Listening State concept through coordinated efforts by responsible institutions.

Keywords concept, democracy, principles, participation, transparency, accountability, awareness

JEL Classification H70, O10, K16, H41

INTRODUCTION

The concept of the Listening State, proposed by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on September 2, 2019, has become a key direction in the modernization of Kazakhstan's public administration system. Its primary objective is to establish a governance model that actively listens to and incorporates citizens' perspectives, ensures timely and effective responses to public inquiries, and fosters transparent and inclusive dialogue between the government and society. This initiative reflects a shift from an administrative-command model of governance to one based on interaction and partnership between the state and the population (Tokayev, 2019).

Despite the official recognition of this initiative in strategic documents, including the President's Addresses and legislative acts, signifi-

cant barriers arise during its practical implementation. Citizens continue to direct their appeals to the President due to the inaction and incompetence of public servants, highlighting existing issues such as the lack of transparency and ineffective management of public inquiries (Aitymbet, 2021). Effective governance in the transition to a new model requires public authorities to properly formulate tasks, clearly allocate responsibilities, make prompt decisions, and continuously evaluate outcomes (Le Grand, 1991).

The primary tool for assessing the effectiveness of the concept's implementation is determining how successfully its core principles are applied. This underscores the need to examine the specific factors that limit the full functioning of the Listening State model and the effective implementation of its core principles. In this context, public opinion plays a crucial role. Citizen engagement, trust in governmental institutions, and the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms vary significantly across different regions of Kazakhstan. Regional-level research provides critical insights into the extent to which local authorities establish genuine communication with the population. Ignoring the key issues in implementing the core principles of the concept may negatively impact the entire public administration system within the framework.

Over time, the governance system may undergo further changes. However, if the current policy is not adequately structured and implemented, it could have a detrimental effect on the long-term development of future governance systems in Kazakhstan.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Public governance is a system of institutions and bodies responsible for the administration of the state, the formulation and implementation of laws, as well as the development and execution of state policies in the interest of society and citizens. Well-organized governance contributes to increased productivity, improved service quality, and the satisfaction of citizens' needs (Thomas, 2000; Toksöz, 2008).

Each phase of Kazakhstan's sovereign development has required a tailored model of public administration, and the adoption of the Listening State concept marks a significant step in improving government-citizen relations (Bektibaev, 2022).

The concept is rooted in universal democratic governance principles, which are reflected in the Good Governance model. Countries such as Sweden, New Zealand, Canada, and Finland serve as exemplary models, consistently implementing effective mechanisms for public feedback, ensuring transparency in government data, and supporting civil society development. Their experiences show that sustainable, inclusive development is achievable only through genuine dialogue between the government and society, where citizens' interests are prioritized in the governance process (Sharipov, 2021; Khawaja, 2011).

The concepts of the Listening State and Good Governance demonstrate key connections between their principles. Participation emphasizes the right of citizens to influence public decisions through mechanisms such as public hearings, online consultations, and participatory budgeting (Addink, 2019). The rule of law ensures equality and protection of rights through a clear legal framework, promoting fairness and transparency and minimizing corruption (Demmers et al., 2004). Transparency involves clear and accessible information for the public, using digital tools to improve understanding and ensure openness in government actions (Welch, 2012). Consensus orientation emphasizes achieving public agreement on policy issues through inclusive dialogue, thereby ensuring balanced and widely accepted decisions (Downer, 2000). Accountability requires systems for citizens to monitor government actions and hold officials responsible, ensuring governance aligns with public interests (Chun & Cho, 2012; Baysbay, 2021).

Research exploring the role of feedback between the government and society in shaping political stability is critical (Moynihan & Soss, 2014; Dowding & Kimber, 1983). For instance, Michels (2012) emphasizes the need for institutions that facilitate direct citizen participation, create accessible channels for engagement, and establish feedback mechanisms regarding political decisions.

Previous studies have highlighted the challenges that many countries face in effectively implementing such concepts, including low political participation and limited public awareness (Brown & Marsden, 2013; Smith & Politowski, 2008).

Despite the official adoption of the concept, Kazakhstan also faces significant challenges in its implementation, including insufficient transparency, weak institutional accountability, and a critical aspect is the evaluation of how the principles of the Listening State are perceived by the population (Ilyasova, 2023; Hausmann et al., 2023).

To support the implementation of the Listening State concept, the President of Kazakhstan issued Decree No. 390 on August 27, 2020, approving the Concept of Civil Society Development in Kazakhstan (Legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2020b). This Decree establishes a strategic framework and policies to promote and strengthen civil society. However, effective citizen involvement in decision-making is only possible if government actions are transparent (Grimmelikhuisen, 2010; Halachmi & Greiling, 2013). In line with this, the Law On Access to Information was adopted on November 15, 2015 (Legislation of the Republic Kazakhstan, 2015). Despite the adoption of this law, Kazakhstan continues to face challenges related to limited transparency in government operations, where authorities often restrict access to information, preventing citizens from gaining a comprehensive understanding of public institutions' decisions (Nurgalimov, 2022; Khatiyev, 2023). In addition, legal illiteracy is widespread among the population, and there is a fear of openly expressing their opinions, especially on political issues, and demanding access to the actions of state bodies (Aizharykov, 2023).

Furthermore, Decree No. 522, dated February 26, 2021, titled On the Approval of the Concept for the Development of Public Administration in Kazakhstan until 2030, outlines mechanisms to ensure government accountability and promote public engagement (Legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021). The Decree presents key mechanisms for ensuring government accountability and promoting public engagement, including regular public reporting meetings, indi-

vidual consultations, the establishment of public councils, and consistent dissemination of information through official websites and social media platforms. However, public officials' accountability to citizens remains weak in Kazakhstan (Abayev, 2021; Baimukhaev, 2022). The lack of citizen capacity to actively monitor government actions and demand accountability from public institutions represents a significant barrier to the full implementation of the Listening State concept (Lindquist & Huse, 2017).

The challenge of consensus-oriented decision-making also persists in Kazakhstan. The Law of Kazakhstan dated January 1, 2017, titled On the Order of Consideration of Appeals of Individuals and Legal Entities (Legislation of the Republic Kazakhstan, 2017), stresses the importance of ensuring all parties, including various social groups, participate in decision-making. Yet, decisions are often made without considering all stakeholders' views. The undervaluation of public opinion and the rigidity of authorities in decision-making contribute to a low level of public trust (Schulenberg et al., 2017; Dalton, 2020).

The Law of Kazakhstan No. 333-VI, adopted on May 25, 2020, On the Procedure for Organizing and Holding Peaceful Assemblies, outlines principles such as non-violent nature, legality, ensuring state security, protection of public order, health, protection of rights and freedoms of other persons, voluntariness of participation, presumptions in favor of holding peaceful assemblies, and responsibility of the parties (Legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2020a). Despite legal norms that guarantee citizens' rights and freedoms, the rule of law faces challenges (Bremmer & Welt, 1996; Johnston, 2020). In practice, many government bodies often fail to operate within the framework of the law, and violations of citizens' rights and corruption remain significant issues (Rose-Ackerman, 2008). Over the past few decades, a wave of protests has emerged, each addressing various demands related to the socio-political dynamics in Kazakhstan (Mukhamediyev et al., 2024). Overall, protests have become a prominent feature of the political landscape, with the authorities responding to this phenomenon with a sense of calm and understanding (Schiek, 2022).

The year 2022 is etched in the history of modern Kazakhstan as Qandy Qantar (Bloody January). Discontent over rising gas prices quickly escalated into widespread anti-government protests across the nation, with many peaceful demonstrations turning into riots, which were met with brutal suppression (Abishev et al., 2024).

In early September 2015, protests erupted in several cities across Kazakhstan against the establishment of Chinese factories, with demonstrators demanding a halt to their construction. Around 500 residents of Zhanaozen (a city in the western region) marched to Central Square in response to reports about the planned construction of 55 Chinese factories in the country. The protests were driven by opposition to the sale of land to foreign entities and the influx of thousands of foreign workers into Kazakhstan (Lewis, 2016). These events were largely driven by significant socio-economic challenges and the ineffective performance of government agencies (Satpayev & Umbetaliyeva, 2015).

The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) assessed Kazakhstan's governance from 2019 to 2023 across six key dimensions. Over this period, voice and accountability remained low (14–18), while political stability and absence of violence/terrorism declined from 41 to 31. Government effectiveness stayed relatively stable (54–57), and the quality of legislation declined (60 to 51). The rule of law showed a minor decrease (from 34 to 32), while control of corruption experienced only a marginal improvement (from 44 to 45), indicating limited overall progress (World Bank, n.d.).

In addition, the question arises: How do citizens themselves assess the level of democracy in their country? To address this inquiry, sociologists from Gallup International conducted surveys in 59 countries in 2023, including Kazakhstan. According to the results of the latest polls, only 40% of respondents from the Republic of Kazakhstan consider the level of political freedom in their country to be sufficient, while 60% express the opposite view (Gallup International, 2023).

The findings demonstrate that citizen engagement in Kazakhstan's socio-political processes remains constrained. Persistent challenges, in-

cluding low institutional trust, limited public awareness, and weak feedback channels, continue to hinder the development of meaningful dialogue between the state and society. Although the Listening State concept has been officially adopted, its implementation is prevented by systemic issues, including insufficient transparency, lack of accountability, restricted participation, and incomplete enforcement of the rule of law. These structural barriers collectively impede the transition toward more responsive and inclusive governance.

In this context, public opinion plays a crucial role in the implementation of the Listening State concept, serving as the key mechanism through which the government can assess the effectiveness of its actions and identify critical governance issues.

Studying public opinion at the local level contributes to understanding how citizens perceive the extent to which their voices are heard and how their expectations align with governmental policies. It helps identify specific administrative barriers and challenges to information accessibility, enabling the assessment of citizens' attitudes toward reforms, levels of trust, and their readiness for dialogue with state institutions.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the institutional factors that hinder the effective implementation of the Listening State concept within the framework of public administration based on an analysis of local-level public opinion.

2. METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were derived from a sociological survey conducted among the residents of the city of Turkestan, Kazakhstan, between June and September 2024, strategically timed to reflect the public perception five years after the official announcement of the Listening State initiative in 2019.

Despite the city's relatively small population of 253,656 residents, it was selected due to its growing socio-political significance and its multinational demographic, offering a representative cross-section of public opinion relevant to the implementation of the Listening State concept.

Data were collected using both online (via Google Forms and distributed through WhatsApp) and offline (paper surveys in public spaces to promote inclusivity by reaching individuals without smartphone or Internet access) methods, with a total of 730 initial responses (Tubekova, 2024). After data cleaning and removing incomplete or invalid responses, 550 valid responses from the adult population were retained for analysis. To ensure a comprehensive and impartial assessment of public opinion, the analysis employed a voluntary participation model, with no restrictions based on age, gender, or social status, and the data were coded and analyzed using JASP software. The survey was conducted for the first time, and the data are used exclusively in this paper as they have not been published or analyzed elsewhere.

The anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were strictly maintained, and participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured that the results would only be used for academic purposes.

The study design and ethical procedures were developed in accordance with internationally recognized research standards. The informed consent procedure for respondents and data protection measures were reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University in Turkestan (AYU, 2024).

The questionnaire was based on the fundamental principles of the Listening State concept (participation, transparency, accountability, consensus orientation, the rule of law) and served as critical benchmarks for evaluating its practical implementation, with public opinion functioning as a pivotal evaluative tool. Additionally, to enhance the rigor and relevance of the survey, the questionnaire items were aligned with internationally recognized principles of Good Governance, promoted by global organizations such as the World Bank, which have significantly influenced governance reforms globally (World Bank, n.d.).

A structured questionnaire consisting of three sections was used to collect data:

- collection of personal information about respondents (five questions);

- measuring key variables related to the principles of the Listening State concept (four questions). A 5-point Likert scale was adopted;
- assessment of the quality of public participation in the political process (five questions). A closed-ended dichotomous questions form was adopted (between two options: "yes" or "no").

The survey questions were developed based on a comprehensive analysis of academic articles and dissertations that previously explored the Listening State concept (Abayev, 2021; Özdemir, 2013; Hashmi, 2020).

The data obtained from the survey revealed the individual characteristics of the participants (Appendix A). Overall, the demographic composition of the sample is well-distributed across key indicators such as gender, age, education, occupation, and income. The gender distribution was nearly equal, with 52% female and 48% male. In terms of age, 67% were between 26 and 45 years old, while the remaining participants were aged 18–25 (13%), 46–65 (12%), and 66 and above (8%). Regarding education, 67% had higher or postgraduate education (52% and 15%, respectively), while the remainder had incomplete higher education (13%), secondary specialized education (12%), or general secondary education (8%). The main occupational groups included employees of budget organizations (18%), individual entrepreneurs (17%), and government workers (14%), followed by students (13%), private sector employees (12%), public organization staff (10%), temporarily unemployed (8%), retirees (6%), and others (2%). In terms of income, the majority (69%) reported earning between 100,000 and 300,000 tenge (the national currency of Kazakhstan), while 17% earned 50,000–100,000 tenge, 9% earned 300,000–400,000 tenge, and 5% earned more than 400,000 tenge.

To conduct an in-depth analysis of the survey results, the following statistical methods were used. Descriptive statistics were used to represent the initial phase of data analysis. This method converts raw data into a clear and visual format, highlighting the fundamental characteristics of patterns and variables. Additionally, descriptive statistics identify whether variables are parametric

or nonparametric. Parametric variables adhere to the principles of normal distribution and are appropriate for analysis. In contrast, nonparametric variables do not conform to normal distribution and do not necessitate stringent conditions (Nimon, 2015).

The next method used was Pearson’s correlation analysis. Pearson’s correlation coefficient is a statistical measure that evaluates the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two or more variables. The coefficient can take values ranging from (–1) to (1), where:

- A correlation coefficient of ($r = 1$) indicates a perfect positive correlation;
- A correlation coefficient of ($r = -1$) indicates a perfect negative correlation;
- A correlation coefficient of ($r = 0$) indicates that there is no correlation (Choi et al., 2010).

The linear regression method was applied to examine linear dependencies and potential causal relationships between the variables. A key aspect of this approach is the interpretation of the p -value, which serves as an indicator of statistical significance. Values closer to (1) indicate a better model fit to the data (Wang & Tian, 2024). p -value $\leq \alpha$ (usually $\alpha = 0.05$) indicates a statistically significant relationship between the predictor and

the dependent variable. p -value $> \alpha$ ($\alpha = 0.05$) indicates the absence of a statistically significant relationship.

Based on the analysis results and in alignment with the study’s aim, this paper proposes a visual approach (Figures 1 and 2) that illustrates strategies for enhancing the implementation of the Listening State concept through the coordinated efforts of relevant institutions.

3. RESULTS

The results of the study provide an empirical assessment of public perceptions regarding the implementation of the Listening State concept in Kazakhstan. Each core principle (participation, transparency, rule of law, accountability, and consensus orientation) was evaluated using a set of targeted survey questions that measured how citizens perceive its realization in practice (Table 1).

Survey results reveal notable institutional constraints hindering the implementation of the Listening State concept in Kazakhstan. Although 67% of respondents agree that public officials are accountable, only 48% believe that government activities are transparent. Additionally, 44% agree that the concept contributes to building consensus, and merely 27% affirm the equal application of laws.

Table 1. Public perception of key principles of the Listening State concept

Questions based on the concept principles	Completely disagree	Disagree	No answer	Agree	Completely agree
Consensus orientation: The concept contributes to building consensus	66 (12%)	187 (34%)	55 (10%)	198 (36%)	44 (8%)
Accountability: Public officials regularly report to the public	44 (8%)	72 (13%)	66 (12%)	286 (52%)	83 (15%)
Rule of law: Laws are applied equally and protect the rights of citizens	66 (12%)	264 (48%)	72 (13%)	116 (21%)	33 (6%)
Transparency: Government activities are always accessible to the public	88 (16%)	154 (28%)	44 (8%)	198 (36%)	66 (12%)

Table 2. Public perception of the principle of participation

Survey questions	Yes	No
Do you regularly participate in decision-making and the development of state programs?	44 (8%)	506 (92%)
Do you regularly attend meetings with local government officials?	127 (23%)	426 (77%)
Are you a voting member of state-affiliated organizations (e.g., public councils)?	66 (12%)	484 (88%)
Would you like to participate in political events of state importance?	402 (73%)	148 (27%)
Are you familiar with civil society work?	116 (21%)	434 (79%)

The most critical weakness emerges in the area of public participation. Although 73% of respondents expressed willingness to engage in political processes, only 8–12% reported actual involvement in decision-making or civil society structures. This noticeable contrast suggests that institutional frameworks enabling participation are either ineffective or inaccessible.

Rather than reflecting individual attitudes alone, these perceptions point to systemic deficiencies in Kazakhstan’s administrative and legal infrastructure. The gap between civic readiness and practical access underscores the need to strengthen the participatory approach and legal trust to realize the Listening State as a functioning governance model.

To gain a more nuanced understanding of respondents’ views, the survey results were subjected to statistical analysis. This began with an examination of descriptive statistics (Table 3), where responses were expressed as percentages, reflecting the distribution across the sample. Mean values provided an aggregate measure of public perception, with higher means indicating more favorable assessments of the respective principles. Standard deviation captured the variability of responses, with larger deviations suggesting more divergent public opinions. Minimum and maximum scores, ranging from 1 to 5, illustrated the spectrum of evaluations, from highly negative to highly positive perceptions.

To further examine the statistical properties of the collected data, the Shapiro–Wilk test for normality was performed (Table 4).

Table 4. Shapiro–Wilk statistic

Variables	Shapiro-Wilk Statistic	p-value
Principle of consensus orientation	0.974	0.701
Principle of accountability	0.982	0.914
Principle of rule of law	0.975	0.752
Principle of transparency	0.963	0.543
Principle of participation: Involvement in decision-making and program development	0.931	0.320
Principle of participation: Attendance at personal meetings with local officials	0.989	0.990
Principle of participation: Membership in state-important organizations and voting rights	0.974	0.770
Willingness to participate in political events of state importance	0.980	0.890
Familiar with civil society work	0.981	0.906

The results show that all variables have *p*-values significantly greater than the threshold (*p*-value < 0.05), indicating that there is no statistically significant deviation from the normal distribution. Thus, the data for all variables follow a normal distribution, which allows the use of parametric methods in further statistical analysis. Proceeding to the next stage of the analysis, the Pearson correlation results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 presents the correlation coefficients between the various variables related to the principles of the Listening State. The correlation between participation in decision-making and the other variables ranges from (–0.02) to (0.03), indicating the absence of significant relationships with the other principles and the low integration of this aspect of participation into the broader principles of governance. Participation in meetings shows correlations in the range of (0.02) to

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variables	Valid (%)	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
Principle of consensus orientation	100%	2.88	1	5	1.26
Principle of accountability	100%	3.56	1	5	1.07
Principle of the rule of law	100%	2.52	1	5	1.27
Principle of transparency	100%	3.00	1	5	1.32
Principle of participation: Involvement in decision-making and program development	100%	0.08	1	2	0.27
Principle of participation: Attendance at personal meetings with local officials	100%	0.23	1	2	0.42
Principle of participation: Membership in state-important organizations and voting rights	100%	0.12	1	2	0.33
Willingness to participate in political events of state importance	100%	0.73	1	2	0.44
Familiar with civil society work	100%	0.21	1	2	0.41

Table 5. Pearson’s correlation analysis

Variables	Consensus orientation	Accountability	Rule of law	Transparency	Participation: Decision-making	Participation: Meetings	Participation: Political events	Willingness of participation	Familiar with civil society work
Consensus orientation	1.00	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Accountability	0.65	1.00	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Rule of law	0.52	0.60	1.00	–	–	–	–	–	–
Transparency	0.48	0.59	0.66	1.00	–	–	–	–	–
Participation: Decision-making	–0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03	1.00	–	–	–	–
Participation: Meetings	0.10	0.09	0.02	0.06	0.01	1.00	–	–	–
Participation: Political events	0.15	0.11	0.14	0.16	–0.01	0.18	1.00	–	–
Willingness of participation	0.08	0.04	0.10	0.12	0.00	0.12	0.14	1.00	–
Familiar with civil society work	0.12	0.10	0.08	0.10	0.01	0.08	0.11	0.09	1.00

(0.18) with the other variables, with the highest correlation observed with participation in political events (0.18), which still reflects a weak relationship. Participation in political events shows correlations with the other variables in the range of (0.08) to (0.16), with the strongest correlations observed with transparency (0.16) and rule of law (0.14). However, these values indicate a relatively weak influence of governance principles on political participation. The correlations between consensus orientation and accountability (0.65) and between rule of law and accountability (0.60) are moderate, indicating a lack of consistency in the perception of these principles. For example, the correlation between the rule of law and transparency is (0.66), indicating a relationship, but it is not strong enough to confirm a deep relationship between these principles.

In conclusion, the results suggest that key governance principles and aspects of participation, such as participation in decision-making and attendance at meetings, are not strongly correlated with each other. This suggests the need for further research to understand the reasons for the low integration of these aspects within the broader governance and participation system.

The next stage of the analysis is linear regression analysis, the results of which are presented in Table 6.

The analysis reveals that demographic factors, including gender, age, education, salary, and occupation, exert a moderate influence on the perception of governance and participation principles. Specifically, salary has the most significant effect on consensus orientation ($\alpha = 0.18$), while gender plays a prominent role in shaping accountability ($\alpha = 0.20$) and transparency ($\alpha = 0.22$). Occupation shows the strongest influence on the rule of law (α

$= 0.16$). Demographic factors have a minimal impact on participation in decision-making, meetings, and membership, with coefficients ranging from ($\alpha = 0.03$) to ($\alpha = 0.10$). The willingness to participate is also minimally affected, as indicated by the very low coefficients ($\alpha = 0.02$ to 0.03). Lastly, gender and education emerge as the most influential factors in familiarity with civil society work ($\alpha = 0.10$). Overall, while demographic factors show a relatively weak effect, gender, and salary have the most considerable influence across the various principles.

These findings suggest a fragmented implementation of the Listening State concept, where the declared principles are weakly reflected in actual civic experiences, and public interest does not translate into genuine engagement opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires the identification of targeted directions for enhancing state responsiveness.

Based on the results of the conducted analysis and in line with the research aim to examine institutional limitations of the concept implementation, a set of conceptual representations (Figures 1 and 2) has been developed as a possible solution to the identified problems, illustrating directions for improving governance practice.

The proposed approaches highlight the role of intelligent technologies in increasing public awareness of government initiatives, empowering civil society, and strengthening the Active Citizen framework. This is particularly important for enhancing engagement in smaller towns and rural communities where communication channels with government institutions are often limited.

Furthermore, this approach provides citizens with a better understanding of their rights and

Table 6. Linear regression analysis

Variables	Constanta	Gender	Age	Education	Salary	Occupation
Consensus orientation	2.55	0.24	0.10	0.12	0.18	0.15
Accountability	3.50	0.20	0.08	0.10	0.15	0.13
Rule of low	2.70	0.15	0.12	0.11	0.14	0.16
Transparency	3.00	0.22	0.09	0.14	0.16	0.12
Participation: Decision-making	1.12	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.07	0.08
Participation:Meetings	1.77	0.10	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.09
Participation:Membership	1.92	0.09	0.07	0.06	0.10	0.08
Willingness of participation	1.27	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.03
Familiar with civil society work	1.79	0.10	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.02

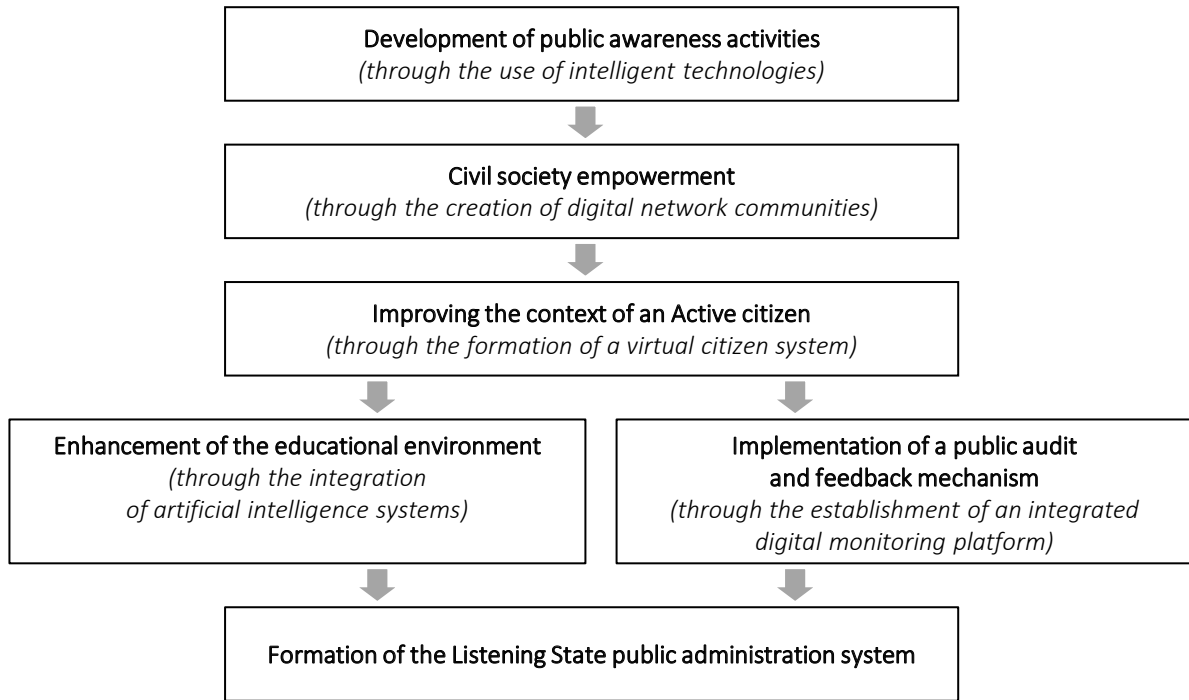


Figure 1. Strategic approaches to the formation of the Listening State public administration system

responsibilities, fostering active participation and monitoring of governance activities. The use of electronic technologies is crucial for its effective implementation.

Figure 2 outlines the potential stakeholders involved in the collaborative implementation of the proposed Listening State approaches. It identifies the roles of various government ministries, re-

gional authorities, analytical centers, civil society organizations, IT companies, and educational institutions.

Effective coordination among these actors is essential for ensuring coherence, promoting transparency, and supporting the integration of digital tools and inclusive communication practices in public governance.

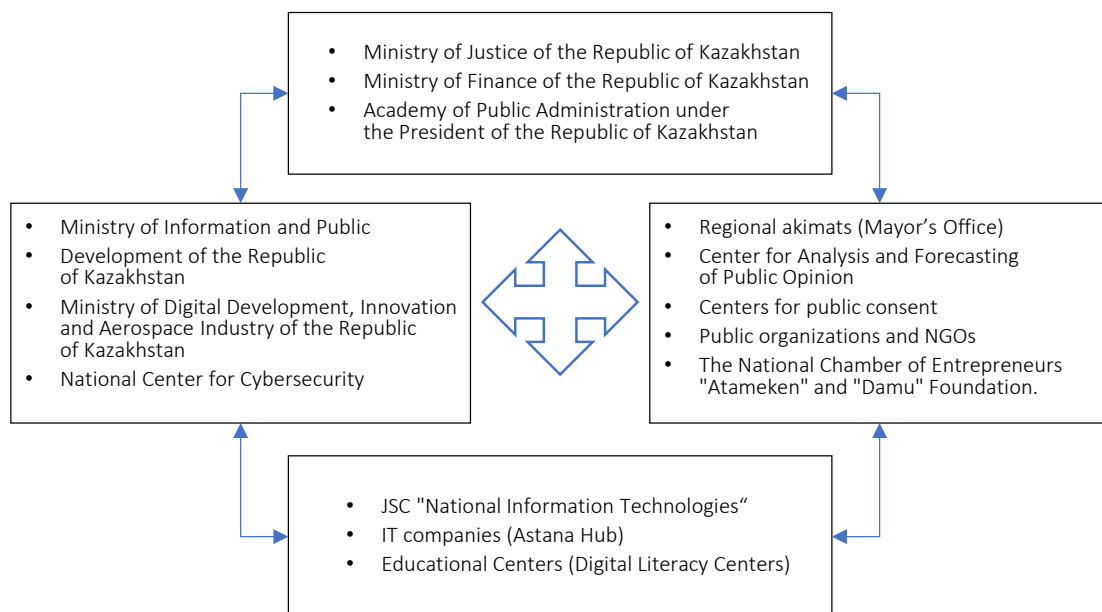


Figure 2. Responsible organizations for the co-realization of the concept of the Listening state

4. DISCUSSION

The results provide valuable insights into citizens' perceptions and evaluations of the key principles underlying the Listening State concept, which in turn enabled the identification of institutional barriers to implementing the concept. Only 46% of respondents believe that the concept contributes to fostering consensus-oriented governance, whereas 44% disagree and 10% were unable to respond. These findings are consistent with previous studies that documented a high level of public distrust toward local authorities and their initiatives (Bektibaev, 2022; Baysbay, 2021). This perception may be related to insufficient public engagement in decision-making processes and limited transparency in governance.

Regarding government accountability, 67% of respondents affirmed that local authorities are accountable to the public, while 33% expressed uncertainty. This result reflects ongoing challenges in ensuring accountability at the local level, which has been highlighted in prior research on transparency and accountability in public administration (Smith & Politowski, 2008; Brown & Marsden, 2013). Strengthening measures to enhance transparency and accountability is essential for restoring citizens' trust.

Concerns about the rule of law were also prominent: 60% of respondents disagreed that laws are applied equally to all citizens. This indicates serious issues with law enforcement, the protection of citizens' rights, and the presence of corruption and bureaucracy, as corroborated by earlier studies (Bremmer & Welt, 1996; Rose-Ackerman, 2008). The analysis points to the need for reforms and strengthening oversight mechanisms within the legal system.

Opinions on government transparency were nearly evenly split, with 48% agreeing that information is communicated openly and accessibly and 44% disagreeing. This underscores the necessity to improve communication and enhance openness (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2010; Halachmi & Greiling, 2013). Improving transparency could increase public trust and engagement in governance processes.

Citizen participation in local decision-making remains extremely limited: 92% of respondents reported no involvement in key decisions, despite

73% expressing a desire to participate in political activities. This confirms findings from other authors that, although there is public interest, actual opportunities for participation remain scarce (Welch, 2012; Lindquist & Huse, 2017). This highlights the importance of establishing effective mechanisms and digital solutions to enhance citizen engagement in public administration.

Furthermore, only 21% of respondents were aware of civil society activities, indicating a significant information gap and the need to raise public awareness about opportunities for participation in NGOs and other civic initiatives.

The analysis of demographic factors revealed that gender and education influence perceptions of accountability and transparency, while income level affects attitudes toward consensus-oriented governance. Correlation analysis revealed moderate relationships among the principles of consensus, accountability, rule of law, and transparency, with a robust correlation between transparency and the rule of law ($r = 0.66$), suggesting an interrelated perception of these principles. The weak correlation between citizen participation and other principles suggests a limited integration of public involvement in governance systems.

Overall, the findings indicate that although there is some public support for the Listening State concept, significant institutional and organizational barriers hinder the effective implementation of its core principles. In particular, insufficient transparency, limited citizen participation, and challenges related to the rule of law remain critical obstacles.

Although this study provides valuable insights into public perceptions of the Listening State concept at the local level, it is important to recognize certain limitations that may affect the broader applicability and generalizability of the results.

First, the data were collected exclusively from residents of the city of Turkestan, Kazakhstan. Although the city holds growing socio-political significance and represents a diverse population, its unique demographic and regional characteristics may not fully reflect the views of citizens from other parts of the country.

Second, the sampling process was based on voluntary participation and employed a combination of online and offline methods. While this approach helped reach a broad segment of the population, it may still carry an element of randomness, potentially introducing a self-selection bias, particularly among respondents with stronger opinions or higher levels of civic engagement.

Third, the sample size, though sufficient for statistical analysis (550 valid responses), remains relatively limited when considering the broader national context. Future studies involving larger and more geographically diverse samples would strengthen the reliability and applicability of the findings.

Lastly, as this survey was conducted for the first time, some limitations may arise from the initial design of the questionnaire, despite rigorous efforts to ensure its relevance and alignment with international governance standards. Further refinement and repeated application of the instrument would help validate its effectiveness over time.

Future research is recommended to extend the study to other regions of Kazakhstan with a comparative analysis to identify regional specificities in the implementation of the concept. Additionally, exploring longitudinal trends in public perception is crucial. Particular attention should be paid to assessing the effectiveness of civic institutions and participation mechanisms that ensure accountability and inclusiveness in governance. Such a comprehensive approach will deepen understanding of these processes and help define directions for improving state policy within the framework of the Listening State concept.

By addressing these areas, future initiatives can move beyond rhetorical commitments to the Listening State and foster a governance culture that genuinely reflects citizens' voices and needs.

Ultimately, addressing these systemic challenges requires a multi-level governance approach that fosters genuine collaboration between state institutions and civil society. Only through sustained political will and inclusive governance practices can the concept be fully realized in the Kazakhstani context.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the institutional factors that hinder the effective implementation of the Listening State concept within the framework of public administration based on an analysis of local-level public opinion.

The sociological survey conducted in the city of Turkestan, Kazakhstan, revealed a substantial gap between citizens' declared interest in political participation and their actual involvement in public decision-making processes. The findings reveal varying levels of public confidence in the realization of the core principles of the Listening State. Pearson's correlation analysis revealed moderate interdependence between principles such as accountability, consensus orientation, and rule of law, whereas participation appeared relatively isolated. This underlines a lack of systemic coherence in citizen engagement mechanisms.

Linear regression analysis revealed that demographic factors, such as gender, income, and occupation, exert a limited yet measurable influence on citizens' perceptions. Gender was moderately associated with perceived accountability and transparency, while income showed greater relevance for consensus orientation.

These findings suggest that although citizens express readiness to contribute to governance processes, institutional and systemic barriers limit their ability to do so. Therefore, the implementation of the Listening State concept remains partial and uneven. Strengthening legal trust, improving transparency, and enhancing inclusive participatory frameworks are necessary steps to translate civic willingness into meaningful engagement and to fulfill the potential of the Listening State as a viable governance model in Kazakhstan.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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APPENDIX A

Table A1. Descriptive statistics of the population

Characteristics	Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	319	52%
	Male	231	48%
Age	18–25	72	13%
	26–35	170	31%
	36–45	198	36%
	46–65	66	12%
	66 and above	44	8%
Level of Education	General secondary education	44	8%
	Secondary specialized education	66	12%
	Higher education	286	52%
	Incomplete higher education	72	13%
	Postgraduate education	82	15%
Occupation	Employee of a government organization	77	14%
	Employee of a budget organization	99	18%
	Employee of a private organization	66	12%
	Employee of a public organization	55	10%
	Individual entrepreneur	94	17%
	Temporarily unemployed	44	8%
	Student	71	13%
	Retired	33	6%
Other	11	2%	
Salary	Over 400,000 tenge	28	5%
	300,000–400,000 tenge	50	9%
	200,000–300,000 tenge	158	29%
	100,000–200,000 tenge	220	40%
	50,000–100,000 tenge	94	17%