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The Impact of Digitalization on the Axiological Dispositif of Contemporary Kazakhstan Society

The article investigates how digitalization alters the axiological dispositif in contemporary Kazakh society, how it restructures production, circulation, and sanctioning of values via digital infrastructure and platforms. Values themselves are analyzed through the lens of M. Foucault's ideas, in particular through the heuristic framework of his concept of dispositif, which allows values to be interpreted as a heterogeneous network of discourse, institutions, infrastructures, expertise, and control techniques. It is established that digitalization reconstructs this network through three operators: visibility, measurability, and speed. It is demonstrated that the digital environment increasingly links norms and values to procedural literacy and correct digital behavior. The key mechanism is datafication, which translates trust, reputation, and competence into metrics and ratings, as well as multilayered publicity (vertical, horizontal, algorithmic), which turns visibility into a moral resource. Separately, the platform morality, the hybridization of tradition and modernity, and the competition among different norms (family, market, religious) are considered. The findings include a new term, «platform citizen,» developed from the effect of digitalization on the axiological dispositif in Kazakh society, who lives within a regime of discipline and reputational vulnerability.

Keywords: digitalization, axiological dispositif, Michel Foucault, governmentality, datafication, algorithmic ranking, platform morality, visibility, reputation, Kazakhstan.

Introduction

Digitalization in Kazakhstan is frequently associated with accelerated service provision, enhanced administrative operations, increased transparency, and expanded access to educational resources, markets, and information. From a humanities viewpoint, digital transformation transcends mere technological upgrades, fundamentally altering societal perceptions of what constitutes appropriate, valuable, normal, or dangerous. Consequently, digitalization warrants consideration not solely as a process of value alteration driven by the internet, but as a transformation in the mechanisms by which digital infrastructures and platforms shape the generation, distribution, and validation of normative values. In this capacity, digitalization functions as a structural component of contemporary social existence, modifying the methodologies through which everyday life is governed. By strengthening the principles of datafication, algorithmic ranking, and platform-based publicity, digitalization deeply influences daily social practices. It broadens possibilities for surveillance and self-surveillance, accelerates moral sanctions — from reputational damage to the phenomenon of *cancel culture* — and translates trust into profiles and measurable statistics. Additionally, it sets new norms of *procedural virtue*, where being considered «proper» increasingly involves being legible to and compliant with digital systems.

The context in Kazakhstan amplifies the importance of these issues. On the one hand, society continues to rely heavily on traditional axiological foundations, including the family, collective reputation, respect for elders, cultural memory, and religiously informed norms of everyday life. On the other hand, the state's modernization efforts and market-driven approach favor values such as efficiency, competence, competitiveness, and ongoing self-improvement.

Digitalization redefines how tradition and modernity, along with collective norms and personal autonomy, are balanced. Consequently, the axiological field becomes simultaneously more governable — through interfaces, regulations, and metrics — but also more conflict-ridden due to virality, affective polarization, and reputational conflicts.

This article aims to outline how digitalization reshapes the value system of modern Kazakhstan society by highlighting the main actors involved in this change.

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The unique contribution of this study is its view of digital transformation as a particular mechanism for creating normative order. This approach shows how technological solutions develop into moral standards, with morality increasingly serving as a technology to regulate everyday life.

Methods

Methodologically, this study is grounded in Michel Foucault's concept of the *dispositif*, understood as a heterogeneous network of discourses, institutions, norms, forms of expertise, material infrastructures, and technologies of governance that collectively produce regimes of truth, normative orders, and modes of subjectivation [1].

The axiological *dispositif* is conceptualized as the set of mechanisms through which values become socially effective, that is, institutionalized, translated into social practices, legitimized, and transformed into criteria of social recognition.

Digitalization is interpreted as a transformation of the *dispositif*'s operating conditions through three principal operators: 1) visibility (the expansion of publicity and observability); 2) measurability (datafication and metric-based evaluation); 3) the speed of normative circulation (algorithmic dissemination and virality).

The analytical framework is built upon Foucault's triadic relationship of «power/knowledge/subjectivation,» within which the study examines how digital practices construct legitimate moral discourses and shape models of «normal» behavior.

The units of analysis are the principal nodes of the *dispositif* — education, the family, the labor market, religious networks, public services, and the media. Within these domains, the study identifies mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, boundaries of social acceptability, and modes of value legitimization.

Additionally, discourse analysis is employed to reconstruct dominant moral repertoires and identify competing normative grammars operating within contemporary Kazakhstan society [2].

Results

From the perspective of Foucault's concept of the *dispositif*, values are most appropriately understood as a network of heterogeneous mechanisms through which certain norms become self-evident, others remain contested, and still others are rendered unacceptable or prohibited.

The *dispositif* comprises:

- **discourses** (the languages through which society constructs and interprets itself);
- **institutions** (such as schools, the family, bureaucracy, the market, and others);
- **material infrastructures** (including architecture, media environments, and related material settings);
- **forms of expertise** (psychologists, religious authorities, analysts, legal professionals, and other experts);
- **technologies of measurement and control** (rankings, testing systems, performance metrics, and reporting mechanisms).

Accordingly, the **axiological dispositif** may be defined as the complex of practices and technologies through which values are produced, distributed, legitimized, and embodied in everyday social behavior.

Within this analytical framework, digitalization functions as a factor that fundamentally restructures the logic of the *dispositif* by transforming three key parameters: **visibility, measurability, and the speed of normative circulation**. Consequently, the impact of digitalization on the axiological *dispositif* of contemporary Kazakhstan society should be understood as a reorganization of the **power-knowledge regimes** through which values acquire social effectiveness [3].

Foucault distinguished between classical disciplinary power and its later form, which he conceptualized as a «**governmentality**» mode of governance operating through norms, statistics, security, and the regulation of processes rather than through the direct control of individuals alone [4]. Digitalization significantly reinforces this form of governmentality. The state, market actors, and digital platforms increasingly govern not through direct commands but through architectures of choice, data infrastructures, and predictive models. As a growing proportion of social interactions is transferred to digital environments, appropriate behavior is increasingly defined through compliance with procedural requirements — submitting applications on time, completing forms correctly, verifying one's identity, and providing the required data. This development gives rise to a new moral anthropology: a *good* citizen is one who can successfully navigate digital systems, whereas a *bad* citizen is one who repeatedly falls outside established procedures and protocols.

This transformation is particularly significant in Kazakhstan because of the state's historical role as the principal integrative force of social cohesion. In a multilingual society characterized by regional diversity, the administrative and infrastructural sphere has traditionally served as the «social glue» binding society together. Digitalization reinforces this function by transforming bureaucratic procedures into digital interfaces, interfaces into everyday habits, habits into social norms, and norms into values. This process produces a distinctly Foucauldian effect: governance increasingly speaks the language of ethics, while ethics becomes articulated through the language of governance. For example, *responsibility* is increasingly understood as the capacity to generate accurate and reliable digital traces. Rather than replacing traditional moral codes, digitalization adds a new layer of **procedural virtue** to the existing moral order.

One of the principal consequences of digitalization is **datafication**, which may be defined as the translation of qualitative phenomena — such as respect, trust, reputation, competence, piety, and citizenship — into quantitative data, including indicators, metrics, and rankings. From a Foucauldian perspective, this process reinforces **normalizing power**, whereby what is measurable becomes comparable, and what is comparable becomes hierarchical. Hierarchy, in turn, motivates individuals to attain higher social positions, while such motivation gradually and almost imperceptibly evolves into self-discipline and self-surveillance.

This transformation manifests itself at several levels.

1. Educational level. The value of *education* is increasingly expressed through measurable indicators, while knowledge itself is valued insofar as it can be rendered legible, assessed, and certified [5].

2. Labor market. Competencies are translated into digital profiles, résumé management systems, course rankings, recommendation algorithms, and digital traces of project-based activities. As a consequence, strategies of *self-investment* become increasingly widespread, whereby an effective individual is expected to continuously improve professional qualifications and demonstrate such development through digital credentials and online achievements [6].

3. Social reputation. Likes, views, followers, and online reviews have become a new currency of social recognition. Reputation is no longer confined to local communities but increasingly assumes a platform-based character, becoming potentially mass, permanent, and anonymous [7].

As a result, values such as **dignity, success, and respect** acquire measurable forms. This gives rise to a fundamental paradox: moral qualities are no longer validated through long-term interpersonal interaction but through rapidly interpretable digital indicators. Consequently, the very structure of trust is transformed. Increasingly, trust is placed not in the individual but in the individual's digital profile, and not in a person's biography but in its digital representation.

Foucault described the **Panopticon** as a model of power in which the mere possibility of observation produces discipline even in the absence of an actual observer [8]. Digitalization creates a considerably more complex configuration, where surveillance is exercised not only by institutions but also by other users, digital platforms, and algorithmic systems. This gives rise to a multilayered regime of visibility encompassing **vertical visibility** (state information systems, surveillance cameras, and digital identification), **horizontal visibility** (social media, messaging platforms, and local online communities), and **algorithmic visibility** (what digital systems prioritize, rank, recommend, or conceal).

The axiological implications of this transformation are profound: **visibility itself becomes a moral category**. Increasingly, *normality* means **appearing** to be morally appropriate rather than **being** morally appropriate. Individuals are expected to avoid suspicious behavior and minimize reputational risks. Within Kazakhstan society, where honor, public reputation, respect, and social approval have traditionally occupied a central place, digitalization reinforces long-established mechanisms of shame and recognition while transferring them into digital environments, where public disgrace may become instantaneous, large-scale, and viral.

As a consequence, the axiological balance shifts. The value of **privacy** increasingly yields to the values of **security, convenience, and social acceptability**. Individuals learn to live under conditions of anticipated observation, proactively editing their identities, speech, and public positions. Thus, the subject is not merely subjected to social norms but actively produces itself as a normative subject through digital technologies of self-regulation.

Furthermore, digitalization transforms not only governance and measurement but also the production of meaning itself. Whereas moral norms were traditionally established by institutions such as schools, families, and religious authorities, an increasing proportion of normative frameworks is now generated on digital platforms, where values compete for public attention. This process gives rise to a distinctive form of **platform morality**, characterized by emotionality, narrativity, personalization, and commercialization.

Emotionality implies that values function primarily through emotional responses, such as indignation, pride, shame, or empathy. **Narrativity** means that moral norms increasingly take the form of storytelling through individual cases, scandals, and public exposés. **Personalization** reflects the tendency for ethical norms to be embodied and communicated through identifiable individuals, including influencers, opinion leaders, and experts. **Commercialization**, in turn, signifies that virtue itself increasingly becomes an element of personal branding and, consequently, an economic asset.

Digital platforms therefore accelerate the **hybridization of tradition and modernity**. On the one hand, traditional values acquire new channels and forms of representation; on the other hand, they increasingly operate according to the communicative logic of digital platforms. Within the logic of the *dispositif*, this means that normative codes are reconfigured according to media technologies, while technology itself becomes the hidden foundation upon which morality is constructed.

In Kazakhstan, the family remains one of the central nodes of the **axiological dispositif**, transmitting norms of respect, duty, marriage, and parenthood across generations. Digitalization transforms family life in two principal directions. The first is the intensification of visibility and social control. Family norms receive reinforcement through networked publicity, whereby conceptions of «proper» family behavior are disseminated through social media posts, videos, and online discussions, while deviations may become subjects of public condemnation. The second direction is the expansion of individual autonomy and the emergence of alternative life trajectories. Digital environments provide access to alternative lifestyles, psychological discourses, educational opportunities, and professional networks, thereby expanding the space of individual choice. At the same time, this process intensifies competition among normative authorities: the family promotes one set of norms, digital platforms another, the labor market a third, and religious discourse yet another.

Religion constitutes another major axiological factor in Kazakhstan that is undergoing significant transformation under the influence of digitalization. Online environments make religious knowledge more accessible while simultaneously rendering it increasingly fragmented. Short-form videos, quotations, online consultations, individual mentors, and digital debates contribute to the emergence of what may be described as **micro-theology**, in which religious norms are formed within networked contexts characterized by competition among multiple religious authorities.

Digitalization also strengthens **pastoral power**. According to Foucault, pastoral power is a form of governance derived from the Christian pastoral tradition, in which authority is concerned with the salvation, well-being, and everyday life of each individual rather than merely ensuring obedience. It combines **individualization** — care for each person — with **totalization** — oversight of the community as a whole [9]. Under conditions of digitalization, pastoral power increasingly operates through remote and technologically mediated forms of guidance and supervision.

As conflicts among competing religious interpretations intensify, expert classification and regulatory mechanisms assume greater importance. Consequently, distinguishing «authentic» spirituality from «dangerous» religious movements increasingly becomes a matter of media governance and public policy.

Sacredness itself becomes increasingly mediated. Religious practices and sacred sites are incorporated into digital maps, photographic narratives, video reports, and bloggers' travel routes, thereby enhancing their public visibility and integrating them into the attention economy. As a result, spirituality may be strengthened as a marker of social identity while simultaneously becoming vulnerable to profanation and symbolic devaluation.

Overall, digitalization reshapes the contours of the **axiological dispositif** of Kazakhstan society through the reinforcement of **governmentality** and **datafication**, relocating values into regimes of digital publicity and thereby transforming morality into a technology of governance, while technology itself increasingly assumes the character of morality.

Discussion

Foucault suggested that a *dispositif* develops in response to a range of historical and social challenges. In Kazakhstan society, several key issues have shaped the current network of values.

1. The post-Soviet break and the search for new legitimacy. After the Soviet Union collapsed, values no longer relied on a single ideological base. Society faced competing discourses — national-cultural, market-driven, religious, technocratic, and liberal-legal — that sought to legitimize different perspectives. The *dispositif*'s role was to maintain social cohesion, balancing diversity without allowing it to fragment society.

2. Modernization as a political and administrative goal. In Kazakhstan, modernization is more than an economic initiative; it's a normative goal emphasizing discipline, competence, governance, measurability, and efficiency — focusing on education, professionalism, digitalization, and global competitiveness.

3. National identity as the foundation of social cohesion. In a multiethnic, multilingual context, national identity acts as a social glue. Shared culture, language, and history foster common values, turning a diverse population into a unified political and cultural community.

4. Religious revival and moral regulation. Religion has resurfaced as both a source of moral values and a potential source of social risks. While religiosity can foster social cohesion, extremist expressions can cause significant harm. In the current Kazakhstani context, religion plays a vital role within a broader network of shared values.

5. The ethics of success and justice. The market economy encourages a morality centered on success, stressing responsibility, entrepreneurship, and competition. Simultaneously, it heightens the demand for justice, including social protection, institutional integrity, and anti-corruption efforts. The societal framework sustains these competing values in a dynamic and often tense balance.

Primarily, this framework functions to normalize societal values. In Kazakhstan, several key value axes guide this normalization process:

1) The tradition–modernity axis. Tradition and modernity are frequently portrayed as mutually opposing forces. From the perspective of the *dispositif*, however, their institutional interdependence is of greater significance. Tradition provides the moral foundation of modernization by ensuring symbolic continuity, legitimacy, and cultural coherence. Modernity, in turn, prevents tradition from becoming a static cultural artifact by enabling the renewal of its forms without sacrificing its essential substance. This interaction gives rise to a hybrid normative model: individuals are expected to be modern without losing their cultural identity, and traditional without becoming socially obsolete.

2) The collective solidarity–individual responsibility axis. Neoliberal **governmentality**, in the Foucauldian sense, operates by encouraging individuals to assume responsibility for their own lives. In Kazakhstan, this orientation is reflected in the high social value attached to education, entrepreneurship, and career mobility. Simultaneously, however, powerful collectivist institutions — including the family, kinship networks, and regional communities — continue to shape everyday life. As a consequence, a dual normative expectation emerges: individuals are required to be independent and competitive while never becoming entirely autonomous. This tension is particularly evident in decisions concerning marriage, career choice, and public behavior. Within this context, the *dispositif* produces discipline through two complementary mechanisms: a **market mechanism** («achieve, succeed, prove yourself») and a **moral-kinship mechanism** («do not disgrace your family, do not betray collective expectations, observe established norms»).

3) The sacred–secular axis. Contemporary Kazakhstan society demonstrates a growing significance of both religious and quasi-religious forms of moral regulation, ranging from everyday practices of piety to the sacralization of historical memory and culturally significant places. From the perspective of the *dispositif*, the sacred performs three essential functions: **a)** it establishes normative standards of appropriate everyday conduct; **b)** it provides a shared moral language through which social values are articulated; and **c)** it distinguishes traditional forms of spirituality from radical religious interpretations. Consequently, the sacred becomes incorporated into a broader network of governance and regulation.

It is important to recognize that the internal contradictions of the *dispositif* constitute an essential structural feature rather than a deficiency. A *dispositif* is never fully harmonious; on the contrary, it derives its productive capacity from social tensions and continuously transforms them into new forms of regulation. Rather than eliminating conflicts, the *dispositif* structures the ways in which they are experienced, interpreted, and resolved within society.

Conclusion

Digitalization is altering the value systems in Kazakhstan, fundamentally changing how values are expressed, validated, debated, and legitimized. In the period preceding widespread digital adoption, moral standards were primarily maintained through established institutions and localized systems of reputation. The digital sphere has introduced a new power structure, organized around interfaces, metrics, and algorithms designed to capture user attention. Within this evolving paradigm, both ideology and technology are significant drivers. Elements that can be quantified, presented, disseminated, or recorded as digital data tend to acquire greater perceived reality, credibility, and normative authority.

This digitalization has resulted in substantial modifications to the axiological framework within Kazakhstan society.

One notable shift is the increased emphasis on measurability. Values are now frequently validated through quantifiable indicators, and abstract concepts such as dignity and success are often articulated in metric terms. Consequently, an individual's moral standing can be perceived as a dynamic, continuously updated metric.

Secondly, visibility has increased significantly, transforming morality into a more public display. This evolution positions values as subjects of attention management, which may intensify social anxiety and the risk of reputational damage.

Thirdly, the influence of platform-based normalization is growing. Norms are now generated, shared, and sustained as digital content, effectively reconstituting moral regulation into a techno-social system governed by digital platforms.

Fourth, digitalization speeds up the blending of tradition and modernity. Instead of disappearing, traditional values operate within the digital realm, driven by the logic of digital representation and competition for attention in the attention economy.

Fifth, digitalization introduces a new layer of social stratification. Digital skills become a moral indicator of normalcy, and social inequality takes on an axiological aspect, as access to digital technologies and skills increasingly influences social recognition, legitimacy, and respect.

The cumulative outcome of these transformations is the emergence of a distinctive social subject—the platform citizen. This individual is expected to be procedurally competent in order to function effectively within digital institutions, reputationally cautious to avoid becoming the target of viral public condemnation, visually compliant with prevailing standards of digital publicity, and committed to lifelong learning in response to the rapid obsolescence of knowledge and professional competencies. The platform citizen therefore exists within a dual regime characterized simultaneously by discipline and risk.

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**Қазіргі қазақстандық қоғамның аксиологиялық диспозитивіне
цифрландырудың ықпалы**

Мақалада цифрландырудың қазіргі қазақстандық қоғамның аксиологиялық диспозитивін қалай трансформациялайтыны, сондай-ақ оның цифрлық инфрақұрылымдар мен платформалар арқылы құндылықтарды өндіру, айналымға енгізу және санкциялау үдерістерін қалай қайта құратыны зерттеледі. Құндылықтардың өзі М. Фуконың идеялары тұрғысынан, атап айтқанда, оның «диспозитив» концептісінің эвристикалық шеңбері арқылы талданады. Бұл тәсіл құндылықтарды дискурстардың, институттардың, инфрақұрылымдардың, сараптамалық білімдердің және бақылау техникаларының гетерогенді желісі ретінде түсіндіруге мүмкіндік береді. Цифрландыру бұл желіні үш негізгі оператор — көру, өлшеу және жылдамдық арқылы қайта құратыны анықталды. Цифрлық орта нормалар мен құндылықтарды процедуралық сауаттылықпен және цифрлық ортадағы дұрыс тәртіппен барған сайын тығыз байланыстыратыны көрсетіледі. Бұл үдерістегі негізгі механизм — датафикация, яғни сенім, бедел және құзыреттілік ұғымдарын метрикалар мен рейтингтерге айналдыру. Сонымен қатар көпдеңгейлі жариялылық (вертикалды, горизонталды және алгоритмдік) көруді моральдық ресурсқа айналдырады. Зерттеуде платформалық мораль, дәстүр мен модерндіктің гибридтенуі, сондай-ақ әртүрлі нормалардың (отбасылық, нарықтық және діни) өзара бәсекелестігі жеке қарастырылады. Зерттеу нәтижесінде цифрландырудың қазақстандық қоғамның аксиологиялық диспозитивіне ықпалының нәтижесінде қалыптасып келе жатқан жаңа тұлғалық модель — «платформалық азамат» сипатталады. Ол тәртіпке бағыну және репутациялық осалдық режимінде өмір сүреді.

Кілт сөздер: цифрландыру, аксиологиялық диспозитив, Мишель Фуко, үкіметтілік, датафикация, алгоритмдік ранжирлеу, платформалық мораль, көру, бедел, Қазақстан.

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**Влияние цифровизации на аксиологический диспозитив современного
казахстанского общества**

В статье исследуется, как цифровизация трансформирует аксиологический диспозитив современного казахстанского общества, как она перенастраивает производство, циркуляцию и санкционирование ценностей через цифровые инфраструктуры и платформы. Сами ценности анализируются через призму идей М. Фуко, в частности, с помощью эвристической рамки его концепта диспозитива, который позволяет интерпретировать ценности как гетерогенную сеть дискурсов, институтов, инфраструктур, экспертиз и техник контроля. Устанавливается, что цифровизация перестраивает эту сеть по трём операторам: через видимость, измеримость и скорость. Демонстрируется, что цифровая среда всё более интенсивно связывает нормы и ценности с процедурной грамотностью и корректным цифровым поведением. Ключевым механизмом выступает датафикация, переводящая доверие, репутацию и компетентность в метрики и рейтинги, а также многослойная публичность (вертикальная, горизонтальная, алгоритмическая), превращающая видимость в моральный ресурс. Отдельно рассматриваются платформенная мораль, гибридизация традиции и современности, конкуренция различных норм (семейных, рыночных, религиозных). Итогом исследования становится описание новой фигуры «платформенного гражданина», возникающего в результате влияния цифровизации на аксиологический диспозитив казахстанского общества, живущего в режиме дисциплины и репутационной уязвимости.

Ключевые слова: цифровизация, аксиологический диспозитив, Мишель Фуко, правительственность, датафикация, алгоритмическое ранжирование, платформенная мораль, видимость, репутация, Казахстан.

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