

Assem Zhunis

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Research Interests

Finding meaningful patterns in data, solving challenging social problems (e.g., pandemics), understanding and optimizing human-machine group dynamics.

Keywords: HCI, computational social science, data science, statistical modeling.

Education

Ph.D. in Computer Science

2024 – Present

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST)

Hong Kong

Supervisor: Prof. Xiaojuan Ma • HKPFS recipient • Passed qualifying exam (speculative design in HCI, futures studies & AI), March 2026 — slides

M.S. in Computer Science

2022 – 2024

KAIST

Daejeon, South Korea

Supervisor: Prof. Meeyoung (Mia) Cha, IBS Data Science Group

B.S. in Computer Science

2017 – 2022

KAIST

Daejeon, South Korea

Selected coursework: Probabilistic Programming, Human-Computer Interaction, Human-AI Interaction, Social Computing, Computational Social Science, ML in NLP, Graph ML and Mining, Computer Vision, AI Ethics.

Teaching: TA for Programming with C++ (COMP2011) and Human-Computer Interaction (COMP4461), HKUST; Data Science Methodology (CS564) and Introduction to Machine Learning (CS376), KAIST.

Experience

Graduate Research Assistant

2024 – Present

HKUST HCI Group

Hong Kong

Human-machine group dynamics and AI for well-being.

Research Assistant

Jul 2020 – 2024

IBS Data Science Group, KAIST

Daejeon, South Korea

Generative AI, chatbots, human-AI interaction, sentiment analysis, and large-scale social data analysis.

Research Intern

Jul – Sep 2022

CYENS Center of Excellence (fAIre MSG team)

Nicosia, Cyprus

Mentors: Prof. Jahna Otterbacher & Dr. Styliani Kleanthous. Analyzed how leaders and countries are associated on social media during the war.

Web Developer

Jan – Feb 2020

Software Security Lab, KAIST

Daejeon, South Korea

Built UI prototypes for an educational security website (Razor Pages, .NET Core, SQLite, C#).

Publications

Full list: www.semka.fyi/publications

- **Assem Zhunis**, Ziqi Pan, Yuanhao Zhang, Xiaojuan Ma. Friend, Foe, or Bot? Exploring Intergroup Dynamics in Hybrid Human-Bot Teams. *CHI 2026*. **Best Paper Award**.
- Yubin Choi, **Assem Zhunis**, Wenchao Dong, Joseph Seering, Sangchul Park, Meeyoung Cha, Hyojin Chin. Privacy disclosure to large language models: A large-scale study on awareness, benefits, and

concerns in health contexts across three countries. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 2025. doi:10.1016/j.chbr.2025.100841

- Hyojin Chin, **Assem Zhunis**, Meeyoung Cha. Behaviors and Perceptions of Human-Chatbot Interactions Based on Top Active Users of a Commercial Social Chatbot. *Proc. ACM Hum. Comput. Interact. (CSCW)*, 2024. doi:10.1145/3687022
- Wenchao Dong, **Assem Zhunis**, Dongyoung Jeong, Hyojin Chin, Jiyoung Han, Meeyoung Cha. I Am Not Them: Persistent Outgroup Bias in Large Language Models Arising from Social Identity Persona Setting. *LREC 2026*.
- Sungkyu Park, **Assem Zhunis**, Marios Constantinides, Luca Maria Aiello, Daniel Quercia, Meeyoung Cha. Social dimensions impact individual sleep quantity and quality. *Scientific Reports*, 13, 9681, 2023. doi:10.1038/s41598-023-36762-5
- Hyojin Chin, Gabriel Lima, Mingi Shin, **Assem Zhunis**, Chiyoungh Cha, Junghoi Choi, Meeyoung Cha. User-Chatbot Conversations During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Study Based on Topic Modeling and Sentiment Analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 25, e40922, 2023. doi:10.2196/40922
- **Assem Zhunis**, Gabriel Lima, Hyounghshick Song, Jinyoung Han, Meeyoung Cha. Emotion Bubbles: Emotional Composition of Online Discourse Before and After the COVID-19 Outbreak. *The Web Conference (WWW)*, 2022. doi:10.1145/3485447.3512132
- **Assem Zhunis**, Tung-Duong Mai, Sundong Kim. Responses to COVID-19 with Probabilistic Programming. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, 2022. doi:10.3389/fpubh.2022.953472
- Gabriel Lima, **Assem Zhunis**, Lev Manovich, Meeyoung Cha. On the Social-Relational Moral Standing of AI: An Empirical Study Using AI-Generated Art. *Frontiers in Robotics and AI*, 8, 2021. doi:10.3389/frobt.2021.719944

Awards & Honors

- CHI 2026 Best Paper Award
- Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS), 2024
- 1st place, SIA track, JunctionX Seoul Hackathon, May 2021
- Excellence Award, KCS 2020 Conference, Feb 2021
- Bronze Medal, 49th International Chemistry Olympiad, Thailand, Jul 2017
- Silver Medal, 51st International Mendeleev Olympiad, Astana, May 2017
- Gold Medal, International Bekturov Olympiad, Pavlodar, Apr 2017
- Gold Medal, National Chemistry Olympiad, Pavlodar, Mar 2017

Skills

Programming: Python, R, C/C++, HTML/CSS/JS

Tools: SQL, Git, L^AT_EX, Flask, React, Google Cloud, Firebase

Languages: English, Russian, Kazakh