

# Is there a revival of patriarchal traditions in Kyrgyzstan?

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## Abstract

This article is devoted to factors responsible for the revival of discriminatory customs against women in Kyrgyzstan via several sociological methods and the in-depth interview as the leading research method. As results, the weakness of public administration, the lack of a positive ideology of change, ignorance of education problems, and the meeting moods among the rural and urban population, led to a surge in permissiveness among young people. In conclusion, Socialization plays a critical role in preserving gender inequality as a tool for reproducing and fixing the gender (social) roles of women and men.

**Key words:** Gender Inequality, Gender Stereotypes, Socialization.

## *Hay un avivamiento de tradiciones patriarcáticas en Kirguistán?*

## Resumen

Este artículo está dedicado a los factores responsables de la reactivación de las costumbres discriminatorias contra las mujeres en Kirguistán a través de varios métodos sociológicos y la entrevista en profundidad como método principal de investigación. Como resultado, la debilidad de la administración pública, la falta de una ideología positiva de cambio, la ignorancia de los problemas educativos y el estado de ánimo de las reuniones entre la población rural y urbana, llevaron a un aumento en la permisividad entre los jóvenes. En conclusión, la socialización desempeña un papel crítico en la preservación de la desigualdad de género como una herramienta para reproducir y arreglar los roles de género (sociales) de mujeres y hombres.

**Palabras clave:** Desigualdad De Género; Estereotipos de Género; Socialización.

## **1. Introduction**

A public concern about the growth of criminal violence within family relationships in Kyrgyzstan has been recently growing. The growth is sparked by the revival of some patriarchal traditions and customs that have survived in the culture, despite the stubborn struggle against them during the Soviet period. These traditions contribute to the spread of such phenomena as forcing an abducted woman, including underage girls, into a marriage, as well as polygamy. Why was the Soviet ideology propagandizing the equality of women and men in choosing a marriage partner and the freedom of marriage itself so quickly forgotten? On what basis did the ideology of discriminatory customs against women easily revive? These issues are now on the agenda of Kyrgyzstan as a country that has declared itself as a secular one following the line of democratic changes and respect for human rights, including the human rights of women.

In the early 90s, Kyrgyzstan began to rethink its political, economic and social institutions. Traditions and customs that one would think disappeared a long time ago suddenly began to arise on the back of national revival. Public traditions, for example, holding kurultai (Sometimes called a tribal council, when representatives of all the regions meet together) contributed to the unity of the country's peoples, thereby recharged the construction of the new statehood. However, some attitudes towards the private sphere of human relations have revived in culture against the background of general enthusiasm. As this sphere of relations was a closed-type one, many standards of behavior could exist and be preserved behind the scenes, but, at the same time, be considered as archaisms in public life, for example –cruel treatment of women in the family.

According to the UN experts, cruel treatment of women is often hidden not only in Central Asia, but also in many parts of the world (the Caucasus, the Middle East, etc.); it is denied and interpreted as acceptable cultural practices and traditions (Müller & Szabo, 2016). Violent acts, which would be considered as criminal ones under other circumstances, are legalized when they are committed against women and girls, most significantly within the private family sphere (Luneev, 1997). In this regard, studying the factors that would contribute to the minimization of traditions discriminating women seems to be important not only for the proper observance of their rights in modern, rather difficult Kyrgyz society, but also for other Muslim peoples of the world.

## **2. Literature Review**

It is commonly known that the Soviet government attached great importance to the emancipation of women in Central Asia. This is evidenced by the fact that in 1921 the Turkestan Commission of All-Russian Central Executive Committee issued a Decree on the Prohibition of Kalym and Polygamy, declaring that these customs were harmful vestiges of the patrimonial lifestyle, against which people should fight. The decree completely abolished the payment of kalym [price] for the bride and established the marriage age from 16 years (Kozhonaliev, 2000). Then, in 1922, the Criminal Code of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic enshrined a regulation

prohibiting such local vestiges as Kun, kalym, forced marriage and polygamy (Kenzhaliev & Dauletova, 1993).

The party bodies have set a national goal in order to increase the socio-political activity of women, their involvement in economic and cultural construction. The goal was to eliminate the so-called vestiges of patrimonial lifestyle that were holding back the cultural growth of women. Therefore, a special provision on the protection of women's rights was enshrined into the constitutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmen SSR and Uzbek SSR soon after the Central Asian republics were formed. This provision established that resistance to the actual emancipation of women (giving minors in marriage, kalym, organized resistance to women's involvement in agriculture, industrial production, education, public administration and socio-political life) shall be punishable by law.

Such crimes as be paid for the bride, forcing a woman into marriage, bigamy and polygamy, entering into a real marriage relationship with a person, who did not reach marriageable age, were prosecuted first by the Criminal Code of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic adopted in 1926. These regulations were then enshrined into the Criminal Codes of all Central Asian republics. The women's departments, established by the party bodies, considered court cases and appeals involving the family-marriage and domestic relations. As a result, 148 Kyrgyz people were brought up before the court in 1926 for accepting the kalym and for forced a woman into marriage.

According to Sopiaeva (1990), Razhabova (1996), the struggle against the vestiges of local customs continued in the Central Asian republics until the collapse of the Soviet Union. They claimed that the above discriminatory customs continued to exist in the sphere of family relationships. Violence in marriage was expressed also in causing women to commit suicide through self-immolation (Bainazarova, 1986). For example, 270 cases involving such a commitment were recorded in two years (1986-1987) in Uzbekistan. Bayramov wrote on this that the criminal law protecting the equality of women in marriage and family relations is insufficiently effective because it does not comply with the actual situation of women (Bayramov, 1989).

The Soviet government encouraged to write historical papers, describing the rightlessness of women living in the Middle Age Central Asia and under the tsarist autocracy. There were also popular works devoted to national successes in women's emancipation, achieved after the Russian Revolution of 1917 (Astanova, 1977). These works did not illuminate that some of the holdbacks of the patriarchal clan system preserved, since such a news did not fit the overall bright picture of the complete victory of socialism in the country. Naturally, there was not enough ethnographic and historical research. There were only standalone works highlighting that population often treated the violations of the above regulations, most significantly in cases of bride kidnapping, as a tradition. Therefore, no one expected an appeal to the law enforcement bodies (Argynbaev, 1975). It is true that ala-kachuu tradition (bride kidnapping) manifested in three forms. The first one implied that a bride agreed to marry a man, but her parents did not. As the bride was successfully kidnapped, young marrieds asked forgiveness from the bride's parents, who usually forgave them. The second type was an imitation of kidnapping, when young marrieds and their parents agreed with the ceremony, but wished to avoid high expenditures that would apply. Only the third type was a real kidnapping without the girl's consent. People went in for it on a rare occasion because it could cause a conflict between families (Abramzon, 1990).

The Soviet authorities believed that the reasons behind the preservation of these traditions were the lack of ideological work and the weakness of educational measures. They suggested combating this phenomenon by establishing new, socialist wedding rituals and by fostering intolerance in the

younger generation towards such traditions. The post-Soviet period was characterized by a surge of scientific interest in this problem not only in Kyrgyzstan, but also in the whole of Central Asia (Chowdhry, 2017; Asanbayeva, 2002).

Summing up the above, we have to admit that discriminatory customs remain because traditional culture keeps gender subordination of inside the family environment based on gender inequality. In this regard, we believe that it is necessary to consider the circumstances that contribute to the preservation of gender inequality, despite the democratic transformations that are actively going on in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, the purpose of this research is to analyze the current factors that stand behind gender inequality in Muslim families maintaining discriminatory traditions.

This goal can be achieved through the following objectives:

Analyzing mechanisms that support gender inequality in Kyrgyzstan;

Analyzing the current state of gender roles in the major institutions of socialization in Kyrgyzstan.

### **3. Methodology**

We applied several sociological methods of collecting information (triangulation) at one time to collect more accurate, complete and reliable empirical material. The in-depth interview was the leading research method. Methods of documentary research and gender analysis were applied as additional methods. In-depth interview: we designed a standard 40-item questionnaire consisting of open-ended, close-ended and semi-structured questions; 3.260 people were interviewed. Regions were selected for the research with regard to the North-South divide. Territorial multi-stage sampling was implemented by in-depth interviews conducted in Batken and Osh Regions in 2014-2015, and in Naryn and Chuy Regions in 2016-2017. Sampling parameters: place of residence (city/village), region, age, educational background, nationality, marital status, parental status, social status and religion. The last parameter was introduced because discriminatory practices are often associated with Islam. Documentary research: following sources were applied in the research:

Empirical data of sociological research undergo a secondary analysis;

Scientific and journalistic literature undergo theoretical analysis;

Official statistics;

National, alternative and analytical reports;

Most commonly read print media.

Gender analysis: was carried out using the G. Therborn's method based on the process of identifying the gender inequality mechanisms, such as exclusion from society (at extremes, certain social groups can be marginalized) domination (at extremes, this mechanism is manifested as polarization by social status); hierarchy in relations, which can be expressed in their segmentation.

Statistical data processing and analysis: basic descriptive data were processed with SPSS Statistics using quantitative and qualitative analysis. Sociological information undergone a multidimensional analysis to reveal the relationship between different variables. The resulted quantitative indicators were interpreted in accordance with the research objectives. Material for qualitative analysis and its further interpretation involved the:

Answers to open-ended interview questions;

Unstructured interviews with respondents;

Articles and other printed media materials.

Since the sample size is low (not all regions of Kyrgyzstan were covered), quantitative indicators cannot ensure the representativeness of the research. They point to some general trends. The qualitative analysis requires the quantitative data to be considered in line with all collected material. Research hypothesis: In the 21st century, patriarchal traditions revive in Kyrgyzstan because of gender inequality, supported by gender stereotypes existing in the culture of the peoples living in Kyrgyzstan, and brought about by the major institutions of socialization. Research target: urban and rural population of the two southern regions of Kyrgyzstan, where the dominant ethnic group (Kyrgyz people) lives side by side with large Uzbek and Tajik Diasporas, as well as the population of the two northern regions, where the Kazakh, Dungan and Uygur populations live.

The respondents were divided by:

Place of residence: 60% of the respondents lived in rural areas, 40% –in regional cities;

Age: 26-35 years– 28%; 36-45 years– 40%; over 46 years – 32%;

educational background: incomplete secondary education – 9%, general secondary education – 36%, secondary vocational education – 25%, incomplete higher education – 13%; higher education – 17%;

ethnicity: 43% – Kyrgyz people, 23% – Uzbeks, 17% – Kazakhs, 10% – Tajiks and other groups, 7% – Dungan people and Uygurs;

Sex: women – 54%, men – 46%;

Marital status: married – 87%, belong to a nuclear family – 13%;

Social status: farmers – 62%, employees – 30%, workers – 8%.

Religion: 100% – Muslims.

#### **4. Results**

The term gender or social sex is well-known as a concept characterizing the social vision of a man and a woman (Ferrant & Kolev, 2016). According to gender-based ideas, there are certain differences between women and men that are determined by nature, but there is no natural or biological basis for inequality. However, there is a situation, when men and women performing the same social functions have different levels of access to the resources and benefits provided by this society. As for the historical context the women's situation in Kyrgyzstan, the mechanism of exclusion from society was applied to them in the middle Ages. Many adat (Customary law of certain Moslem peoples) rules established in tribal times (blood vengeance, bride kidnapping, kalym paying, levirate, sororate) indicate that women's status was generally much lower than the man's status, besides, she was limited to rights. She could be kidnapped and/or purchased for kalym. Thus, she became a property of men.

Women from the nomadic tribes did not wear a veil and communicated freely with men. Nevertheless, this was a forced situation, conditioned by their travelling lifestyle – nomads were constantly moving with their herds in search of good pastures. At the same time, all the hard household work lied with women, in particular – yurt installation/de-installation, fireplace and stock pen construction, cooking under all weather conditions, etc. Such work coupled with frequent childbirth, child- and eldercare led to premature aging in women and early death. Nevertheless, woman was considered as a half man in a nomadic society, as indicated by the adat rules of that time, establishing a fine for killing a woman equal to half the fine for killing a man. Her testimony

in court was valid only if older male relatives or her husband confirmed them. In this regard, it is appropriate to quote the statement of the English researcher J. Baker: ... in traditional Kazakh society, patriarchy had two forms, namely: the unchallenged supremacy of elders over the younger generation and men over women ... woman's life at home was almost like pet's life. They were physically and morally humiliated (Dabzhanova & Suzhykov, 1990).

Eliminating anyone from somewhere, you make him or her submissive to you, in other words – the mechanism of domination is in power. Domination is always a vertical power relationship, including the relationship between two sexes. If we look through the gender lens at the way of life in Kyrgyzstan that was in the past centuries, it becomes clear that the dominant position of men permeated all social relations. For example, Kyrgyz customary law analysis revealed that the holder of property rights was always a man; women did not have these rights. They were in the custody of their husbands, fathers or brothers. Since women lacked any means or resources and even the possibility of getting them legally, they were powerless not only in the family, but also in public life. As a result, men had power, property and capital, which allowed them to control the behavior of women engaged in housekeeping, childbearing and raising. Thus, patriarchal relations in Kyrgyz society were built on men's domination and women's subordination.

The process of involving women in social production began in Kyrgyzstan much later than in Europe or America. The Soviet government began pursuing a policy of violent and non-violent emancipation of women after the Revolution of 1917. Agitation among women for stopping wearing veils, educational measures taken to eliminate their illiteracy, and small business opened for women have generally a favorable effect on the growth of women's self-awareness. Nevertheless, women were hired for low-paid jobs because of the lack of sufficient educational background or specialization. Later, new branches appeared in the course of the first five-year plans where skilled labor was required, for example – the garment industry or the textile industry. At the same time, these sectors were not the priority against the backdrop of developing metallurgical, machine tool, manufacturing industries, etc. Therefore, these industries had very low salaries. Such labor segmentation made these sectors, as well as the spheres of service and social work, the most feminized. Thus, mechanisms of gender inequality were still in power leading to a certain hierarchy in the labor relations.

This assumption is confirmed by official statistics showing that although the number of Soviet women participating in production reached almost 50% by the beginning of the 1990s, women worked mainly in lower-paying industries. For example, 82% of women worked in public health and social services, 71% – in catering industry. Moreover, women lagged behind men in wages by 30-35%. In the Soviet era, women's emancipation was not without barriers alike those known in the literature as the Glass Ceiling Phenomenon. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, invisible gender boundaries led to the situation, when a woman working at a senior management level (for example, as a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, minister, Plant Superintendent, etc.) was a quite rare thing to see. Although emancipation was politically and ideologically encouraged, traditional standards of moral behavior continued to exist in the private sphere (housekeeping and family), imposing certain restrictions on women. The Soviet authorities failed to break in domestic relations the pillar that has been shaped for centuries.

Based on the facts that gender inequality is shaped through socialization, we find it interesting to analyze why the process of socialization in modern Kyrgyzstan continues to promote the preservation of traditional standards of behavior towards women. Not the least role here is played by the gender-linked behavioral patterns and character traits that correspond to the concepts of

masculinity and femininity that exist in every culture and are learnt through the basic institutions of socialization (family, education system, media, etc.).

Family is the most important formal institution of socialization. Therefore, we first analyzed the status of gender roles in modern family. We found out that most families participated in sociological surveys (81%) settled with a husband as an answer to the question: Who makes decisions in your family? In families that live together with the husband's parents, his father participates in the decision-making process. Many female respondents pointed to the fact that the husband's mother also has a voice in the family, but their own mothers can give advices only occasionally while the husband may accept it or may not (Batken Region). Besides, rural women complained that they could not even name their child (Osh Region). Mothers raising adult sons in nuclear families said that they did not make decisions without consulting with their son or male relatives.

The respondents, regardless of their place of residence, nationality and social status, explained why the right to make a decision belongs to her husband by the fact that the husband is a master and usually owns all the family property (house or apartment, land, car, etc.). The respondents also indicated that the husband is the one who holds the family money. Part of respondents (25%), including women, said that it has been that way in their families for a long time and their parents taught them in such a way, because aksakals (Aksakal is an elder, an authoritative and respected person) apparently know better (Naryn Region). The survey showed that in the overwhelming majority of cases, householders (84% of families) are husbands or their fathers. The mother was indicated as the owner only in the nuclear families. At this point, we should note that the number of nuclear families, where children live with their father, is near zero. Frankly, only two such families participated in the research. In the city, a wife or a daughter may own an apartment or land, but such a practice is rather an exception than a rule. A somewhat different picture is observed when it comes to owning a business – 38% of business owners are women, including wives, mothers or adult daughters. The largest number of such families was recorded in the north of the Chuy Region. At the same time, these women-respondents admit that their husbands hold the income from the business.

Only 34% of respondents answered how are boys and girls fostered in the family? That the way children are educated is the same for both. Most (62%) of respondents believe that boys need a special approach, not the one is applied to girls. At the same time, a significant role in upbringing a daughter is assigned primarily to mothers or senior women in the family – grandmothers, aunts, but not to fathers. Therefore, women of the family must have an impeccable reputation (Batken Region). In the opinion of 58% of respondents, prohibiting certain things is a right thing to do when upbringing girls. For example, they do not leave the house late, do not bring their boys home, and they are not allowed to go back to the house without permission, to stand in the presence of the elders, to talk loudly or laugh, etc. Most of such prohibitions do not apply to boys. In particular, they can come home late; they can spend the night with friends, leave without permission, etc. In other words, they live a freer life.

The overwhelming majority of respondents settled on a son as an answer to the question: Who will manage the family and get the family property in the future? The boy was specified both in full and in nuclear families living in urban and rural areas; 10% of families without sons believe that a daughter or agnatic nephews could retain the family management. At the same time, 8% note that the daughter can inherit the property, if the son-in-law is a hard-working, normal guy (Chuy Region). Thus, the daughter should be next to any male relative in any case. Approximately 15% of

families found it difficult to answer. They explained their difficulties by the fact that the family has both sons and daughters, but the boys look weaker than the girls do. However, the property (land, livestock, business) cannot be given to the weak (Osh Region). Thus, there is a possibility of daughters taking charge of the family.

Almost all the respondents (92%), regardless of nationality and place of residence, unanimously responded to why is this role assigned to the son? that in Muslim families, boys are the bearers of the family name. In our society, sons are always there for their parents – they will support us late in life, as we now support our parents (Naryn Region). In our close families, all parents live with their children (Batken Region). Even if parents live alone, we as sons are obliged to help them, and when one of them dies, we will take care over the father or mother, who will remain (Naryn Region). As it turned out, there is an unspoken rule, which practically all respondents adhere to – when a young man marries, he cannot move to his wife's house, since this is a condemnation not only for his family, but also for the generation (Chuy Region).

Considering this issue in the context of female participation in helping their parents over, many respondents note (57%) that girls may participate depending on what will her marriage be. According to our traditions, a single mother of a girl can live with her family, if her husband does not object (Batken Region). Single fathers historically tend to live alone (Chuy Region). Probably, this is because earlier on, it was not accepted for a man-aksakal to live in the son-in-law's family; such practices are still condemned (Naryn Region). In other words, gender stereotypes are in power when it comes to this matter. According to 72% of respondents, there is a wide-spread opinion that girls are temporary members of the family, they are in for marriage and for leaving to another home, as evident from such saying as Daughter is a Cantel Cut from One Piece (Osh Region). Therefore, the main task that almost all rural and urban parents present the girl with is to marry successfully. At this point, rural respondents suggest starting to collect a good layette beginning from childhood, and keeping an eye on girl's reputation. Over 50% of respondents believe that the girl herself should acquire a whole range of specific qualities, in particular – she should learn to be patient and obedient, she should be able to keep the house, receive guests, respect seniors, forgive offenses and learn well. Thus, certain rules and prohibitions for girls are preserved, and the family, preparing girls for marriage, teaches them first how to do the household chores.

The research revealed that boys are supported not only morally, but also materially, for example – if the rural family is of a well-to-do kind of families with children of both sexes, then the expensive items such as a computer or a bicycle will be purchased for the son at first (Osh Region). The boy is also often motivated to gain additional knowledge, for example – computer skills, car driving skills, etc. As for urban families, this factor is no longer in power – girls can count for such gifts, but at the same time, they should earn them with their behavior, success in school, etc. (Osh city). The same is applied to advanced training – the bulk of rural parents (47%) recommend acquiring knowledge that is more girlish, for example – sewing skills, knitting skills, etc., because this type of knowledge is more likely to come in handy in the real world (Osh Region). Urban families target girls to computer competence and foreign languages, assuming that they will attend advanced classes. Thus, girls should comply with certain conditions that are not necessary for boys.

Based upon the answers given by parents (82%) to what is essential in good family management? the future heritor (regardless of gender) should be given the opportunity to get an education and acquire a fine profession, as well as supported by powerful relatives. As for sons, their education in vocational and higher educational establishments is more important for a certain part of parents (44%) than the education of daughters. Although, approximately equal number of urban (36%) and



rural (33%) parents believe that educated girl is a more valuable marriage partner, so the family should strive to create such an environment for girls so they could get educated (Osh and Tokmok cities). Respondents, regardless of their nationality and place of residence, answered to ‘do you have any special holidays for boys in your family?’ as follows. The holidays list included the day when a male child was born – besikke salu (81 %), male initiation – sunnot toi circumcision (85%), as well as the Bon Cutting holiday organized for a one-year-old child – tushoo kesuu, symbolizing the parting request to stand firmly on one’s feet (74%).

There are no special holidays for girls. In fact, 53% of respondents indicate that gender-linked holidays for girls – besikke salu and tushoo kesuu – are not always celebrated even in the family. Only 11% of respondents (Uzbeks and Tajiks) populations remembered that there used to be a braiding festival, but it was always a small purely family ritual (Batken Region). Answering to ‘how are the relationships with men (women) being built in your family?’ less than half of the respondents (43%) indicated that they are based mainly on respect. At this point, the most respectful are the husband’s father and mother. About 30% of respondents believe that patience is a key to family life – one must endure no matter what in order to raise children (Chuy Region); 18% of respondents pointed to negligence, while 12% of these 18% said that their life went wrong from the very beginning because of the ala-kachuu [bride kidnapping] tradition (Naryn Region).

A significant part of elder respondents answered to ‘how do you get married?’ indicating that they were in a love marriage. As for the middle and young aged respondents, we recorded both love marriages (43%), contractual marriages (34%) and forced marriages (18%). Nearly one third of respondents indicated the existence of forced marriages among relatives (29%). At the same time, a significant part of respondents (69%), most significantly the elders live in an officially registered marriage; 19% of respondents preferred to step into a religious marriage. Civil marriages are extremely rare (nearly 5%). We received the following answers to what kind of marriage would you prefer for your children to be in? 67% of respondents answered that they want them to register, since such a marriage has certain legal consequences. Unfortunately, a religious marriage has no consequences. Therefore, the best solution is to combine both marriages – religious and registered marriages (Osh Region). In general, the majority of respondents would like their children to be in a love marriage, but with the permission of their parents.

Always curious are the answers to the question how do you feel about marriages that are unequal by age, economic and/or social status? Based on these answers, we can conclude that society is generally fine with marriages when the bride’s age, economic and social status is lower than her groom’s age, economic and social status. The opposite situation is frowned upon: 56% of respondents believe that this will put the husband down in family life. When it comes to the social status, many respondents (62%) are sure that one must look for an equal (Osh Region), while 21% of respondents believe that social status does not really matter, if the young marrieds love and respect each other (Chuy Region).

It turned out that wedding rituals are not the only rituals that are carried out in a different way by families with different names. Funeral rituals are also the case. In particular, current marriage strategies are significantly affected by the revival of clan relationships. For example, a poll carried out among settled Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik people living in the south of Kyrgyzstan showed that parents openly encourage stepping into a contractual marriage with anyone from their community or clan. Respondents from these ethnic groups (24%) indicate that obtaining the consents of young marrieds and considering the parental preferences in the marriage partners is an essential tradition that allows meeting the interests of a family and a clan (Batken Region). Up north representatives of

the Dungan and Uyghur population adhere to the policy of contractual marriages within the community. At this point, they try to marry off their boys as earlier as possible, for example – when they reach 18 (Chuy Region). Kyrgyz and Kazakh people allow marrying a representative of other nationality or clan.

In Kyrgyz and Kazakh families, young people have a certain freedom of choice, which is juiced, however, by archaic attitudes and a patriarchal worldview that often leads to bride kidnapping for marriage. This is evidenced by the fact that a significant share of mostly young male parents (39%) living in urban and rural families do not consider the bride kidnapping tradition as violence against women that is discriminative and criminally punishable. In their opinion, this is a normal national tradition, which often implies the girl's consent and the imitation of kidnapping. Moreover, 18% of Kyrgyz and Kazakh male respondents even used to imitate kidnapping when they married.

The question 'If an unknown man will kidnap your daughter for marriage against her will, will you take her back home or not?' was answered as follows: 15% of Kyrgyz and Kazakh respondents said that they will take them back on condition that the girl is against the marriage. At the same time, 30% of rural respondents believe that a girl should stay in a new family even if she is against marriage. They explain this by saying that the girl's return home will be condemned among her relatives and neighbors, she will not be able to marry again, and the reputation of her sisters will also suffer (Naryn Region), that she will still have to leave her parents until everything blows over anyway (Chuy Region). A small part of respondents, most significantly the city dwellers (6%), expressed the opinion that the girl should decide herself.

At the same time, answers to the opposite question – How would you react if your son brings a girl to your house against her will? – were as follows: 36% of Kyrgyz and Kazakh respondents replied that they would take this positively, since it is a done deal, everyone seems to already know about this, so we cannot offend the girl and send her back (Batken Region). At the same time, 10% of respondents consider it possible for a girl to return home if she is against, since her parents can initiate criminal proceedings against the groom (Naryn Region). Only 8% of respondents believe that young marrieds should figure their further life on their own (Chuy Region).

The research also revealed that another discriminatory custom – polygamy – is becoming popular in Kyrgyzstan. Some respondents from down south (18%) answered the 'How you feel about polygamy?' with that they are fine with it, since polygamy has always been in their culture. In the Chuy Region, people are more skeptical about the polygamy issues. Many male respondents believe that only a rich man can afford a few wives, since wives should be kept separately (21%). Others (20%) believe that there is no particular or vital need for ordinary men to have more than one wife – it is no longer an indicator of status, which a man wishes to demonstrate. Men and women gave different answers to the question 'Should we end polygamy?' The majority of male respondents believe that people live as best as they can, and if they can afford two or three wives, let them do it because there are enough poor women today (Osh Region). As for female respondents, they two different attitudes – 29% of women condemn it, while 15% - support it. Arguments for the first attitude are the humiliation the first wife ends up with, the unclear legal status of other wives, their uncertain status in a marriage, and the negative educational role of such examples. In the second case, polygamy allows single women to give birth to a child or to receive protection or economic assistance. In other words, polygamy positively affects their social well-being. The majority of respondents had no idea that polygamy and bigamy are punishable by law.

We have asked a question 'Are there differences between the funeral rituals carried out for women and men?' and found out that there are differences in respect for a dead person. This respect sparks

the process of butchering animals for women and men in different amounts during and after the funeral. At this point, opinions are dispersed due to the established traditions of these rituals among nomads and settled peoples. Thus, the majority of Kyrgyz and Kazakh respondents (48%) believe that a horse should be hammered for any man; and a few horses – if he is a respected aksakal (Naryn Region). A much-respected woman may be sent-off with a horse killed for her, but a cow will do. In fact, one or two small ruminants are usually killed, in particular – rams (Chuy Region). Uzbeks and Tajiks living in the Batken Region believe that small ruminants should be slaughtered for funerals, but in the amount greater for men than for women. In general, these ritual practices greatly depend on the reputation of the family name (famous, little known, etc.). The more famous the family name is, the better is the farewell. The fact that men retain the advantage even after death indicates the stability of archaic traditions in a modern environment and that the funeral rituals are prone to differentiation by gender as well.

Let us consider how the education system, most significantly the pre-school establishments, affects the process of socialization in Kyrgyzstan. In the kindergartens of Naryn and Batken Regions, we did not find significant differences in the way the children were educated. Boys and girls attended the same music classes and sports events, they read the same books and watched the same cartoons. However, children were choosing different toys to play with. Besides, the games were very different in the kindergartens depending on sex. The boys were playing cars, assault rifles and constructors. The preferred physical games (for example – combats) even when they played computer games. The girls were playing dolls, mother-daughters and other quiet games. Thus, the gender-neutral preschool environment does not foster the possibility of equal partner relations in children through games.

At school, children learn that historically (Antiquity, the middle Ages, etc.) only a few women took part in public life that they came into the light just recently. In Kyrgyzstan, one can find references on the pages of modern history textbooks to women, who participated in the national industrialization during the first Soviet five-year plans, who fought heroically during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, who were famous scientists, artists, etc.

At the university, for example, law students learn that women were excluded from citizenship in the ancient states (for example, Athens), that even the great defender of democracy J. Rousseau claimed that women are not capable of being citizens from birth (18th century). Therefore, a man meant only a male person in all legal systems of the world. This led to male domination in public and private spheres of human relationships. According to the State Educational Standards for Humanitarian Specialties, Kyrgyz programs of higher education do not contain courses on gender theory, gender and women's studies, and gender equality. This generally leads to the reproduction of established gender stereotypes about the role of both sexes in the worldview of the younger generation. It should be noted that girls predominate in the education sector of Kyrgyzstan. Thus, gender statistics revealed that the share of boys was higher among the graduates (50.8%) only in secondary school in 2014. The share of girls graduating from secondary school, secondary vocational establishments and from the high school was 52.6%, 58.6% and 54.4%, respectively.

As for the employment, the share of women in the economically active population of the Republic has been 40-41% over the past five years. A significant amount of women are engaged in health care and social services (83.3%), in educational services (78.6%), in hotel and restaurant business (64.1%) and in other kinds of services (45.0%), where they work mainly by hire. Men dominate in building and construction sector (94.8%), in transport-related activities (94.0%), in the electric power industry (86.1%), in mining (84.3%), as well as in administrative activities, public

administration and finance. At the same time, the share of women working at a senior management level is, for example, only 2.2% in the transport sector, 7.9% – in the electric-power industry, 9.3% – in the mining sector, and 9.8% – in public administration. Thus, there is a gender asymmetry in the deployment of posts in almost all the sectors of employment. In other words, men are the ones, who predominantly hold leading positions, while women hold mostly the executive positions.

Mass media system, most significantly the motion picture and television if we consider by impact, is a strong agent of socialization. The analysis of new films that have been broadcasted on TV and in theaters in 2013-2015 shows that the gender stereotypes, laid down in Soviet times, continue to exist even today, but in a modified form. This is a stereotype of an unhappy female leader, a stereotype of a woman being off to the side of the main hero – a man. There is also a stereotype of female weakness, which will make the woman successful if she shows it.

The content analysis of the most popular periodicals for 2015 (Slovo Kyrfyzstana [The Word of Kyrgyzstan] Newspaper, Obshchestvennyy Reyting [Public Rating] Newspaper, Vecherniy Bishkek [Bishkek at Night] Newspaper, Delo No. ... [Case No. ...] Newspaper) showed that 78% of the names mentioned in them are the male names. Since the first three editions write mainly about the events taking place in political and economic life of the country, this analysis allows recognizing that men predominate in these spheres. The exception is provided by the Case No. Newspaper, where female names were mentioned 1.5 times more often. In our opinion, these statistics as explained by the paper's criminal orientation. Women are mentioned here as criminals, but more often as victims.

It should be noted that some media have been obsessively popularized the idea of an Islamic basis for traditional gender relations in Kyrgyz society over the past 5-10 years. For example, girls should be encouraged to wear hijab, since this is an indicator of their moral purity. Polygyny is a salvation from prostitution; therefore polygamy should not be prosecuted by law, etc.

As the research shows, gender stereotypes are still in informal power within the family, education system, labor relations and media in Kyrgyzstan. They imply a significant imprint on the process of socialization, reproducing gender inequality in the family and in the society. This, in turn, lays grounds for archaic lifestyle contributing to the revival of traditions that discriminate against women (bride kidnapping, contractual marriages, wearing hijab, polygyny), which not only prejudice the rights of women, but also impose restriction on their desire to realize their life paradigm.

## **5. Discussion**

We agree that the Soviet state tried to resolve the gender equality issues in its own way, not only de jure, but also de facto, for example, by widening the range of social roles of women, as well as by enforcing the protectionist policies for working women (Baskakova, 1998). Nevertheless, Soviet methods for gender modernization of social relations did not allow overcoming the gender differentiation of the social roles of women, especially in the family. This contributed to the preservation of certain traditional behavior in society (Khamzaeva, 2007). The most severe behavioral forms, such as the tradition of bride kidnapping, were subjected to political repressions, propaganda and criminal prosecution. This significantly reduced the number of real cases and led to the practice of imitating the kidnapping. There were almost eliminated polygyny, kaluym and other discriminative customs. In the post-Soviet period, their revival began within the family and

marriage institutions. Since these institutions have always been not only institutions of socialization, but also the institutions of control, the cultural paradigm of patriarchal family has begun to acquire stability once again. This is evidenced by our research on the distribution of male and female roles in Muslim families. The unequal partner relationships still rule, while the head of the family and the property/business owner is traditionally a man.

The system of family education is also focused on the priority support for men through certain holidays, through lifting certain bans, through expanding the range of educational services, as well as by standing up for forced marriages and polygamy, and by carrying out spectacular burial rituals and funerals. Marriages, when the groom's age, economic and social status is lower than the status of the bride, are recognized as undesirable marriages discriminating against men. This fact is confirmed by the research conducted by Ibraeva on the unequal marriages. In patriarchal societies, marriage is as an exchange of certain values. Therefore, if the values are not equal (for example, in case of a marriage, when man's status is lower), men may pay significant *kalym*, hold a rich wedding or give expensive gifts to the bride's relatives to balance the exchange. If a man cannot equalize the exchange values with the resources of a chosen girl, he goes for kidnapping. In this case, the lack of exchange values is compensated by the spoiled reputation of the girl. As an example of material values used for exchange, we can cite the studies conducted by Bourdieu in Algeria, where the kinship can be calculated among the Kabyle tribes both through marriage and through land deals (Bourdieu, 2001).

The family expects from the women to keep a lot of rules and prohibitions. Family education is aimed mainly at marriage, so the girl's education is aligned for this purpose – she has to acquire various household skills. Even in the case of forced marriage, the family supports the girl on a rare occasion – the family tries to maintain a neutral status quo more often than not. Polyandry is not condemned, on the contrary, they are provided with economic assistance. However, there are no family holidays for girls, common children's holidays are organized for girls on a rare occasion, while the funeral and memorial rituals are quiet. Marrying a girl with a lower status is a welcome practice for almost all the Muslim ethnoses living in Kyrgyzstan, as they are cost-efficient. If the exchange values are not equal, the girl's parents and relatives can even give a rich layette, including movable and immovable property. Such facts, when the bride is given an apartment or a car, have been recorded more frequently.

This model of unequal partnership is supported to some extent by other institutions of socialization through a number of gender stereotypes. Thus, a significant part of the Muslim population considers the above customs to be primordially national without seeing discrimination against women in them. Although these customs are not supported at the state level, the above allows them to preserve and reproduce from generation to generation. The above is supported by a research conducted in 2000-2002 on the problems of violence against women. This research revealed that 57% of 770 rural schoolchildren believed that bride kidnapping is a normal Kyrgyz tradition, since they did not differentiate the abductions. Surveys, carried out by R. Kleinbach in Kyrgyzstan in 2003-2007, show that two-thirds of female respondents abducted for marriage two-thirds were abducted without their consent. At the same time, every fifth woman, who was abducted without consent, did not know her abductor (Kleinbach and Salimjanova, 2007). In our opinion, the disadvantage of this research of his is that the survey was carried out only in one village. On the other hand, the research, conducted by Larina and Naumova in Kazakhstan, indicates that in most cases, brides are kidnapped there for efficient reasons after they accept the partner (Larina & Naumova, 2015).

Other studies also indicate that Muslim families return to old marriage strategies, for example, some of the young Muslim women are now ready to marry under the parental agreement in order to keep the family interests (Ibrayeva, 2006). As for polygyny, even women warrant it by material interests (Suleimenkyzy, 2002). In our opinion, there is another criminological aspect associated with the revival of discriminatory traditions. According to the criminal statistics for the past 10 years, bride kidnapping (punishable-by-law type) reached its highs at the time of the unstable situation in the country (2006-2007) that arose after the so-called Tulip Revolution. The weakness of public administration, the lack of a positive ideology of change, ignorance of education problems, and the meeting moods among the rural and urban population, led to a surge in permissiveness among young people. This gave rise to an irresponsible attitude toward many social issues, including marriage strategies.

## **6. Conclusions**

There are discriminatory practices against women reviving among the Muslim ethnoses in the socio-cultural space of Kyrgyzstan. The reason standing behind their power is the gender inequality running in society. The gender inequality is supported by cultural traditions, gender stereotypes and mores. Socialization plays a critical role in preserving gender inequality as a tool for reproducing and fixing the gender (social) roles of women and men. In Kyrgyzstan, the system of socialization aims at reproducing traditional subordination. Any revolution, including the color one, sparks legitimacy of discriminatory practices and strengthens the circumstances leading to gender inequality by engendering irresponsibility and by destroying the ideology.

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