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## Crimes and violence against women in Kyrgyzstan and their aetiology\*

### Przestępczość i przemoc wobec kobiet w Kirgistanie i ich etiologia

**Abstract:** This paper presents crime and violence against women in contemporary Kyrgyzstan from a criminological point of view. Its purpose is to show the scope and background of these phenomena. It discusses the difficult situation of women resulting from discriminatory and criminal practices on the part of men, such as the kidnapping of women for marriage, early marriage, polygamy and domestic violence. The peculiarities, manifestations and causes of these practices are indicated. It is shown that their extent is closely related to the patriarchal family model that exists to this day in Kyrgyzstan.

**Keywords:** violence against women, bride kidnapping, polygamy, early marriage, Kyrgyzstan

**Abstrakt:** Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia w ujęciu kryminologicznym przestępczość i przemoc wobec kobiet we współczesnym Kirgistanie. Jego celem jest ukazanie zakresu tych zjawisk oraz podłoża ich występowania. W artykule omówiono trudną sytuację kobiet, będącą następstwem dyskryminujących je i przestępczych praktyk ze strony mężczyzn, takich jak: uprowadzenia kobiet w celu zawarcia małżeństwa, wczesne małżeństwa, poligamia, przemoc w rodzinie. Wskazano ich specyfikę, przejawy oraz przyczyny występowania. Udowodniono, że ich zakres jest ściśle związany z występującym, również we współczesnym Kirgistanie, patriarchalnym modelem rodziny.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przemoc wobec kobiet, porwanie narzeczonej, poligamia, wczesne zawieranie małżeństw, Kirgistan

## Introduction

This paper was prompted by the world ranking of the Women, Peace, and Security Index 2023/24 (2023), which indicates that in 2023 Kyrgyzstan was again named the most dangerous country in Central Asia for women (due to the frequency of violence against women). It ranked 95th out of 177 countries, behind its neighbours. Statistics show particularly high levels of violence and crime against women in Kyrgyzstan. Research shows that about 35% of women over the age of 15 experience it from their partner/husband at home and in the family (Čynybaeva, Aşyrbaeva n.d.). It should be noted that the problem is fostered by the position of women in the society and the family, and the accompanying stereotypes. These phenomena are not new in Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, however, the economic changes and development of a patriarchal society (perpetuating the leading role of the male and the traditional subordination of women in the family) in recent decades have exacerbated the scale and scope of these negative behaviours against women (Ilibezova, Makembaeva, Tûlekova 2018: 6).

The purpose of this paper is to show the extent and background of violence and crime against women in Kyrgyzstan. It should be noted that these phenomena come in various forms: domestic violence (physical, psychological and economic), sexual violence, early marriage, kidnapping of women for marriage, polygamy, trafficking in women, forced prostitution and workplace harassment (Žumabaj uulu 2021: 1). It points out that one of the most common forms of violence in Kyrgyzstan is domestic violence, which is closely related to other types of violence (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 168). Due to the limited framework of this paper, only selected manifestations of violence in Kyrgyzstan are discussed.

The method used in this paper was an analysis of criminological literature and other scientific sources obtained during a study visit to the library of the Kyrgyz National University in Bishkek in May 2025. The author sought to show the phenomena from the perspective of the Kyrgyz public. Therefore, Kyrgyz literature was primarily used. Foreign studies were also used as a guide to confirm these phenomena. This study contributes to the in-depth analyses that are planned in this area.

The following research hypothesis was formulated for the analysis: "Violence and crime against women in Kyrgyzstan most often occur within the family and originate from the patriarchal family model". The thesis was based on an analysis of a wide range of Kyrgyz data sources. The familial and gender-related bases of these negative phenomena are very often pointed out. The literature emphasises that there are gender inequalities in modern Kyrgyz society, including in the family, which creates the basis for a progressively more archaic way of life of the society and contributes to the resurgence of discriminatory behaviour against women, which constitutes violence and crimes penalized in the Criminal Code (e.g. the forced abduction of girls for marriage or polygamy) (Tugel'baeva, Hamzaeva, Hamzaeva 2018: 12).

## 1. The state of knowledge about crime and violence against women in Kyrgyzstan

It must be pointed out that these phenomena have historical roots, going back to the nomadic period in the history of Kyrgyzstan. For centuries, the traditional Kyrgyz family has been a core human value, and has been seen as patriarchal and polygamous (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 170). In the traditional patriarchal Kyrgyz society, women had far fewer rights than men. From their birth, women were subordinated to their fathers as the heads of the family. Then, through marriage, they were subject to their husband's authority, as a result of which they often were deprived of many rights, they were discriminated against and they became the victims of crime and violence (Ešmuradova 2017: 183).

The problem of negative behaviour toward women also existed in Tsarist Russia, of which Kyrgyzstan became a part, and later in the Soviet Union. In the USSR, domestic violence – especially against women – was seen as a relic of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois life. It was believed that “progressive Soviet citizens were not involved in it in any way” (Smirnova 2022: 583). Therefore, the authorities did not treat it as a serious social problem and did not support its victims (Semenoff 1997: 3–4). In contrast, they considered bride abduction, polygamy and early marriage to be relics of local customs. They believed that these problems were the result of inadequate “ideological work and weaknesses of educational measures”. For example, bride abduction was countered through criminal and political means as well as propaganda, which had the effect of limiting the scale of the problem (Tugel'baeva, Hamzaeva, Hamzaeva 2018: 8–9). Another factor was the declining role of the opinions of elderly people, who had enjoyed authority in the society but represented the “old way of life” (Naumova 2016: 76–77).

In sovereign Kyrgyzstan, a multipolar influence on the institution of the family began to be exerted by both the Western and Islamic civilisations (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 168–169). The former has faced more difficulty in gaining importance in the public awareness, since it is associated with the crisis of the family and promotion of gender equality. The latter civilisation has shaped Kyrgyz society more easily. Therefore, traditional family culture today is often mixed with Islamic orthodoxy, leading to a stable but closed family, in which discriminatory practices against women are common (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 170). Religious institutions often ignore this problem, as long as it fits within certain “limits of decency” (Larionov 2021). It is therefore believed that since the beginning of the socioeconomic change, a patriarchal renaissance has been increasingly developing in Kyrgyzstan. As a result, traditional values prevail in Kyrgyz society, which allow women to be treated primarily as housewives and mothers, responsible for raising children (Piga, Novovič, Mogilevskij 2016: 55). In the patriarchal family model, it is the man who plays the leading role and takes the key decisions. Over the years of sovereign Kyrgyzstan, traditions and customs that were latent in Soviet times – such as bride kidnapping, early marriages, polygamy and violence – have been revived (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 170).

The incidence of crime and violence against women is confirmed by a number of studies by scholars, human rights activists and pro-women organisations, both Kyrgyz and foreign. It should also be pointed out that these problems exist in other Central Asian countries, as pointed out by researchers (Werner 2009; Becker, Mirkasimov, Steiner 2016; Childress et al. 2023; Gottfredson, Nielsen 2024; Akisheva 2025).

## 2. The situation of women in Kyrgyzstan

It should be noted that from 1991, i.e. from Kyrgyzstan's declaration of independence, to the present day, the country's parliament has ratified more than 30 international human rights documents and passed four laws dealing with violence against women (Kadyrkulova, Kasymova 2020: 73). The current 2021 Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic (Konstituciâ 2021) contains a provision, Article 24(1), which is aimed at ensuring the protection of the rights and freedoms of all persons within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction. It prohibits discrimination based on gender, race, language, disability, ethnicity, religion, age, political or other opinion, education, ancestry, property or other status or other circumstances. Article 24(2) guarantees equality for all "before the law and courts". It states that in Kyrgyzstan "men and women have equal rights and freedoms, and equal opportunities to exercise them" (Article 24(3)). Article provides for families to be formed on the basis of a voluntary union between a man and a woman who have reached the legal age of marriage. No marriage is allowed without the mutual consent of these persons. Spouses have equal rights and responsibilities in marriage and the family. Thus, Kyrgyzstan's highest legal act provides for and guarantees the same rights for men and women.

The equality of spouses in the family is guaranteed by Article 3 of the 2003 Family Code (Semejnyj Kodeks Kyrgyzskoj 2003). Guided by this principle, the Family Code also establishes joint decisions on family matters and relationship-building based on mutual respect and assistance. It considers discrimination between spouses on the basis of gender to be unacceptable. Article 14 of the Family Code states that 18 years is the legal age for marriage. On the other hand, the 2008 Act on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, in its Article 1, defines the term "gender discrimination". Article 5 prohibits gender discrimination in any sphere of activity against persons of different genders (Zakon Kyrgyzskoj Respubliki 2008). Relations between spouses are also regulated to some extent by the 2021 Criminal Code (CC) (Ugolovnyj Kodeks Kyrgyzskoj 2021) and the 2017 Act on Protection from Domestic Violence.

However, in practice the law is not always followed. Women in Kyrgyzstan face difficulties in getting employed (women's labour force participation is almost

1.5 times lower than that of men) and obtaining decent wages for work (there is gender disparity and women are employed in lower-paid sectors), and they are underrepresented in leadership positions (Piga, Novovič, Mogilevskij 2016: 11). Their participation in the political life of the country is very limited, since (according to the principles of Islam) women are not treated as leaders (Muratbaeva, Tobokelov 2023: 275–276). They are victims of domestic violence, early marriage and bride kidnapping (Piga, Novovič, Mogilevskij 2016: 11). In addition, based on many traditions and customs, women are subject to the right of men to control their behaviour, reproductive functions and economic status, and to punish them through psychological and physical violence. Claims of gender equality are undermined by the traditional values cultivated by Kyrgyz society (Musina, Sarsenova 2020: 76). Therefore, the actual situation of some women is difficult.

When analysing the situation of women in modern Kyrgyzstan, it is necessary to refer to history and recall that men have held the leading position in the traditional Kyrgyz family (Žandolotova 2015: 306). In the nation's culture, it has always been considered that the man is the breadwinner of the family and the woman is the guardian of the household. Consequently, the man was the head of the family and the woman had to obey him absolutely and accept his decisions (Osmonalieva 2024: 138). The change in the country's socioeconomic situation since the early 1990s has led to changes in the relations between men and women. The status of men as breadwinners has changed significantly due to the increased participation of women in the workforce, which has resulted in a gradual shift towards women also gaining this status, while continuing to treat marriage and family as an enduring value, regardless of place of residence, social status or level of education (Žandolotova 2015: 306–307).

Therefore, according to one survey, almost half of men believe that “relationships between men and women should be built on the basis of equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for self-fulfilment” (Žandolotova 2015: 307). It may therefore seem that the situation is improving significantly, but this is not true. Article 9 of the 2021 Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic (Konstituciâ 2021) states that Kyrgyzstan is a secular state. However, the majority of its citizens profess Islam, which does not recognise gender equality. The religion legitimises the husband's authority over his wife. It stipulates that a disobedient woman should be “educated” through admonition and beating. An example of the contemporary attitude towards women was presented in 2022 by one imam, who compared the rising price of meat with the length of a woman's skirt and called on men to “put an end to this disgrace” (Efimova 2022: 84–85).

Contemporary research indicates that an unequal partnership model still prevails in all Muslim families. It is based on the fact that a man is traditionally the head of the family and the owner of and heir to property. Men are supported by a system of family education that ensures their privileged position by setting certain holidays for them (e.g. on the occasion of the birth of a son or the act of male initiation [circumcision]) and lifting of certain prohibitions (e.g. returning

home late or getting due rest). Men's privileged situation is manifested in access to education, support for forced marriage and positive perceptions of polygamy (Tugel'baeva, Hamzaeva, Hamzaeva 2018: 10).

While this Islamic orthodoxy found in the traditional family culture leads to stability in the functioning of the family, it closes it off and alienates it from society, exposing it to discriminatory practices against women (gender stereotyping in the formation of familial and marital relationships and the spread of illicit forms of marriage through bride kidnapping, for example). It should be noted that these situations did not just occur in the past, but are continued today in independent Kyrgyzstan. This is because these traditions and customs, which were hidden or conditional during Soviet times, have been reborn in the country (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 170).

As mentioned above, the traditional Kyrgyz family is patriarchal. It is also most often large, following "the idea of the family as the core value of human existence." Particularly in rural areas of the country, a large number of children means a large number of workers for subsistence farming (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 170). By giving birth to many children, a woman contributes not only to the family line, but also to the development of the farm.

Unfortunately, as contemporary researchers note, many women accept the current situation – having been raised in the spirit of patriarchal traditions and reverence and respect for men based solely on this biological fact. They accept being the breadwinner while simultaneously surrendering leadership in the family to their husbands. This approach does not contradict national traditions and maintains the father's authority in the family (Žandolotova 2015: 308). Thus, it is not the law, but the traditions, customs and religion that determine the weak position of women in Kyrgyzstan.

### **3. Bride kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan and its aetiology**

It should be stated that crime and violence in many marriages often begin with a family being established in an unusual way, i.e. with the kidnapping of a bride (with or without her consent) and forced marriage (Denisenko n.d.: 7). The majority of Kyrgyz people are Muslim, and Islamic law (Sharia) prohibits marriage without the consent of both parties (Klejnbaħ, Salimžanova 2011: 90). In Islam, a man cannot force a woman to marry a person she does not love; even a father cannot do this to his daughter. It is assumed that a woman should marry "solely of her own will and desire" (Ajtmatamat kyzy 2017: 74). In addition, the free and full consent of those entering into marriage is required by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, both of which have been ratified by the Kyrgyz Republic (Klejnbaħ, Salimžanova 2011: 90).



Nevertheless, the tradition of bride kidnapping, referred to as *ala kachuu* (grab and run), goes back to ancient, nomadic Kyrgyz society, which was based on customary law (Romanenko, Terent'eva 2022: 254). This phenomenon has changed since the beginning of the 20th century. The number of bride kidnapping cases began to rise, with agreed kidnappings increasingly being replaced by non-consensual ones. Such behaviour began to be considered a tradition permitted by Kyrgyz customary law (Klejnbaĥ, Salimžanova 2011: 90). Most likely, the decrease stems from the 2013 amendment to Article 155 of the Penal Code, which provides for harsher penalties for kidnapping women, and the subsequent Criminal Codes adopted in 2017 and 2021. However, no official statistics on this crime are available. The kidnapping of women for the purpose of marriage was practically absent from public statistics before 2019 (Protivodejstvie nasiliŭ 2021: 64). According to selective information from various sources, 197 cases of kidnapping were reported in 2017 (V Kyrgyzstane 2018). In 2018, the Ministry of the Interior reported that the police had received 895 reports of kidnapping for the purpose of marriage in the previous five years, but 727 of them were discontinued (Džumašova 2023). In 2020, the police registered 210 such crimes (V 2020 godu 2021); in 2021 there were more than 500 cases according to the National Security Council of the Kyrgyz Republic, with 400 cases being discontinued (Džumašova 2023). In 2022, 28 cases were initiated, of which 18 were referred to a court (Pekin+30 2024: 59–60). In four months of 2023 alone, there were 25 cases of kidnapping of girls, and 6 in the first half of 2024 (V Kyrgyzstane 2024).

Nowadays, there are three versions of bride abduction/kidnapping/theft: with the consent of the woman; with the consent of the families of both parties, in a planned manner to reduce the costs of a wedding and wedding party; and without the bride's consent, with her relatives objecting (Kadyrova, Zajyrbekova 2023: 131). In the first version, the woman agrees to be kidnapped for marriage. In the second version, the ritual takes place with the consent of both parties, meaning that the couple agree and initiate the kidnapping. In this way, they avoid the traditional long marriage process (Šaršenova 2011: 150).

In the third version, however, a completely unknown woman is kidnapped and taken to the home of a potential husband (Šaršenova 2011: 150). This man often first looks for and observes a woman at various events, such as weddings, student events, etc., and then he and his friends seek information about her in order to guarantee a successful kidnapping. Sometimes it occurs spontaneously, without prior reconnaissance. Sometimes it results from alcohol abuse or the provocation of his acquaintances. In some cases, however, it is on the initiative of relatives who are involved in the search for a woman (Kadyrova, Zajyrbekova 2023: 131).

Most often, the man lures the woman from her house with cunning. Sometimes, he catches her on the street and pushes her into a car with some friends (Naumova 2016: 76). Her loved ones may then pursue the kidnapper. If they catch him, they can beat him severely (Šaršenova 2011: 150). If the woman's family does not interfere, the man drives her to the home of his parents or the relatives who

prepared him for the “wedding”. The woman is not happy with the situation, so she defends herself, resists and refuses to get out of the car and enter the house. She is then forcibly dragged out of the car and inside the house (Naumova 2016: 76). At home, the man and his sisters or other relatives begin to persuade her to obey, explaining that this behaviour is natural in their family (“We also married like this”) (Šaršenova 2011: 151). In this way, they put pressure on the kidnapped woman and organise a wedding table to finally convince her of the inevitability of being married to her kidnapper (Šaršenova 2015: 222). They inform her of her future husband’s qualities (Karabaeva 2015: 195), seeking her consent to the marriage (Naumova 2016: 76). As a sign of consent, the man’s relatives try to make her put on a headscarf (Šaršenova 2011: 76). If she disagrees, they threaten her. If threats are ineffective, the man and his friends may beat or rape her, after which the “impure” woman will certainly not refuse to become his wife (Karabaeva 2015: 76).

After obtaining the woman’s consent, the man’s relatives notify her parents, who then visit the kidnapper’s house. If their daughter does not want to stay there, they can take her (Naumova 2016: 76). However, the woman’s parents often do not take her back for fear of infamy, the disapproval of elders and condemnation from relatives and neighbours (Žamankulova 2021: 87). Meanwhile, the man’s relatives urge her to stay, threatening her with embarrassment, while also offering her gifts (Naumova 2016: 76). Thus, they apply psychological pressure, which is also related to the fact that if a woman stays overnight at a man’s house, she will be considered disgraced. This forces her to agree to marry her kidnapper (Šaršenova 2011: 150). In such a situation, many parents urge their daughter to stay with her kidnapper. After the woman and her parents give their consent, the man’s family, especially in southern Kyrgyzstan, holds a Muslim wedding for relatives and local residents. The marriage can then be officially registered. Sometimes a marriage is not formalised by either a religious ceremony or a civil registry office (Naumova 2016: 76).

Researchers point out that women are kidnapped for marriage almost twice as often in rural areas as in urban areas (Women, Peace 2023: 7–8). The vast majority of the kidnappers and a significant proportion of the kidnapped women come from rural areas “with strong patriarchal foundations”, in which public opinion plays an important role and causes a fear of condemnation by fellow residents and loved ones if the women fail to comply with the community’s demands or violate generally accepted norms. These norms, in turn, impose an obligation to start a family and have children, which they identify as the main purpose of human life and a key social value. In a traditional society, “an unmarried man and an unmarried woman are considered inferior and a disgrace to the family” (Naumova 2016: 79).

The main motives for kidnapping a woman are the man’s fear of rejection and desire to avoid paying a dowry to the bride’s family, which can range from KGS 10 to more than KGS 100,000 (Kyrgyzstani som; in 2025, EUR 1 was worth KGS 100.79), depending on the area, the social status of the bride’s family, the external characteristics of the woman and her level of education. If the amount is expensive for the young man, he makes arrangements with his friends and kidnaps



the woman (Karabaeva 2015: 195). Another motive for kidnapping is the man's need for a woman to run his house (Naumova 2016: 76). It is the man's mother who is particularly interested in this, wanting to transfer much of the household chores to her daughter-in-law (Šaršenova 2015: 222). Another reason for kidnapping a woman can also be the man's age (Naumova 2016: 76) or a physical or mental illness that makes it difficult or impossible for him to find a woman who would marry him voluntarily (Kadyrova, Zajyrbekova 2023: 131). A man's decision to kidnap a woman may also be influenced by the way his parents were married, as well as his relatives' views on the subject, thanks to which he may consider kidnapping "normal" and "acceptable" (Šaršenova 2015: 222).

The United Nations Population Fund recognises that the highest frequency of bride kidnapping occurs in Kyrgyzstan (Piga, Novovič, Mogilevskij 2016: 151). In the 2000s, according to international organisations, 14,000–16,000 girls were kidnapped every year in the country; the Women's Aid Center estimates about 12,000 cases, of which about 2,000 are raped. According to other sources, between 10,000 and 25,000 brides are kidnapped. In half of the cases, the woman does not know the kidnapper (Karabaeva 2015: 195). It is estimated that more than 20% of marriages in Kyrgyzstan are entered into as a result of kidnapping of a woman (with or without her consent), and that the share of forced marriages is 6% (Women, Peace 2023: 7–8). According to other data, 35%–45% of marriages nationwide are the result of women being kidnapped, while in rural areas this value rises to about 60%. Every day, 43 women are kidnapped as brides (Piga, Novovič, Mogilevskij 2016: 51). These figures and percentages were obtained from interviews and consultations with researchers – employees of various national (and local) governmental and non-governmental organisations – and from analyses of official statistics.

Due to the lack of complete data in this area, selective but quite telling data must be relied on. According to the Ministry of the Interior, during a five-year period (2014–2018) the police received 895 reports of kidnapping of women; 168 cases were opened as a result, and the remaining reports were withdrawn. Thus, in 627 cases, the families of kidnapped women were either paid off or the women were forced to accept the marriage (Turdubaeva 2022: 209).

Some kidnappings have a dramatic course or effects. For example, in May 2018, an unknown man tried to force 19-year-old Bakytzhan Turdaleva to get into his car, which he failed to do. He was detained by police officers and taken to a police station. After leaving the police station, the man fatally stabbed the girl in her apartment and then attempted suicide. In April 2021, 36-year-old Zamirbek Tenizbayev kidnapped 26-year-old Aizada Kanatbekova. As a result of an argument between them, the man first killed the girl and then committed suicide (Ortikov 2024: 265).

It should be noted that the kidnapping of women has been considered a crime in Kyrgyzstan since 1994. Kidnapping was first criminalised by the amendment to the 1960 Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic (Romanenko, Terent'eva 2022: 254). It was also recognised as a crime in the 1997 Penal Code.

Under Article 172 of the 2021 CC, kidnapping a person for the purpose of marriage is punishable by a fine of between 1,000 and 2,000 calculation indices or a prison sentence of between 5 and 7 years. Kidnapping a child for this purpose is punishable by a fine of between 1,000 and 2,000 calculation indices or a prison sentence of between 7 and 10 years. The calculation index is a monetary rate used to determine social benefits, compensation, economic sanctions, administrative penalties and fines, as well as other economic indicators unrelated to wages (in 2025, it is equal to KGS 100, and KGS 1 = EUR 0.0098). Despite the criminalisation of this behaviour, it is condoned by society and the perpetrators often go unpunished. This results in a sense of impunity for perpetrators and furthers the practice. Aid in avoiding liability is often provided by cooperating relatives, friends and law enforcement officials. As a result of such aid, only a few offenders have been convicted of kidnapping a woman since Kyrgyzstan gained independence (Karabaeva 2015: 196). This approach stems from the fact that part of Kyrgyz society treats the practice as a positive manifestation of the national cultural identity, while others cite the need for labour on farms and in households (to be provided by young daughters-in-law and children). Only a few scholars treat it as an example of systematic misogynistic patriarchy, referred to as “everyday terrorism” (Kim 2018: 14). They are supported by contemporary ethnographers, who describe the kidnapping of women as a negative phenomenon that has nothing to do with Kyrgyz tradition and folk wisdom (Žamankulova 2021: 87).

Women in such arranged marriages and families suffer from their financial dependence, the defects of the alimony system and their inability to support their children on their own (Osmonova 2018: 337). They live in forced marriages due to a lack of support from their families, who do not respect a woman’s right to choose her own husband, and out of fear of the future. In addition, a woman who is a victim of violence and who has run away from her husband has no way of finding a new one. Thus, she lives with the belief that once she flees, her family will not accept her due to their fear of being judged badly by society (the infamy will affect the whole family) (Kadyrova, Zajrbekova 2023: 132). Consequently, the fear of violating tradition and losing reputation puts women in a very difficult situation (Kadyrova, Zajrbekova 2023: 132). The violence against them, including the sexual violence that follows kidnapping, is often characteristic of rape and torture (Kim 2018: 9). This and other forms of violence negatively affect the family as a whole, but especially women (who often commit suicide) (Kadyrova, Zajrbekova 2023: 132). It can therefore be concluded that the tradition of bride kidnapping is a kind of barometer, an indicator of men’s attitudes toward Kyrgyz women (Osmonova 2018: 337).

The aetiology of bride abduction involves several aspects. One of them is social stratification. Poor men are, in a way, forced to steal their brides. They know that well-off parents will never allow their daughters to marry a non-wealthy man. By abducting a bride, they are not required to pay a dowry for her, which greatly reduces the cost of marriage (Sydykova 2014: 16).

Another aspect includes the belief of some Kyrgyz people that bride abduction is a folk tradition (Klejnbaĥ, Salimġanova 2011: 90) and a “tribute to tradition” (Sydykova 2014: 16). In practice, however, it constitutes discrimination against women. This is because by abducting his future wife, a man denies her right to choose her husband, considering himself a worthy partner and asserting his will. For a man, bride abduction is a demonstration of his own superiority, a “manly” act in line with national traditions (Šaršenova 2015: 222). Thus, the dominance of men in the family and the society underlies the abductors’ conduct, and they establish superiority over women through their behaviour. Unfortunately, women consider submission to their will as the norm (Naumova 2016: 80). The negative interpretation of some cultural and social traditions restricts a woman’s right to decide about her own life (Ajtykulova 2022: 527).

Bride abduction is also a manifestation of the society’s limited awareness of the law (Sydykova 2014: 17). This is particularly evident in the south of the country, in rural areas, which are inhabited by a population that is less educated and more likely to uphold old customs and preserve archaic social customs, i.e. patriarchal relations in the family and tribal ties in the community (Naumova 2016: 78–79). Thus, the incidence of abductions depends on the region and the specific characteristics of its population.

Bride abduction is also related to the financial situation of the abductor’s family, as the woman is viewed as an essential additional worker in her husband’s household (Sydykova 2014: 17).

The incidence of kidnappings is also fostered by inadequate practices of law enforcement agencies. Sometimes their officers treat this act very lightly and take no action. This results in the underreporting of these crimes and impunity for their perpetrators (Osmonalieva 2024: 138). Even if the authorities take action and the case goes to court, especially in rural areas, the perpetrator is most often not punished. This is because in Kyrgyzstan’s pluralistic legal system, far from the state legal system, many villages are effectively governed by councils of elders and *aksakal* courts based on customary law. They certainly do not side with the abducted women (Ajtykulova 2022: 526).

#### **4. The phenomenon and aetiology of early marriage in Kyrgyzstan**

Another practice, which is often associated with the kidnapping of women, is early marriage (child marriage). It should be pointed out that in Kyrgyzstan one of the conditions for marriage is to be 18 years of age. The law allows persons who have reached the age of 17 to marry, provided that they have obtained the appropriate permission from the state authority charged with child protection. However,

in practice, only a few receive such permission (Ajtmatov 2017: 74). Article 174 of the 2021 Criminal Code criminalises forcing a person to marry (it is punishable by 3 to 5 years of imprisonment), and Article 175 criminalises violating marriage age legislation during religious ceremonies (punishable by 3 to 5 years of imprisonment). Throughout the world, marriages involving minors are considered a gross violation of children's rights (Makembaeva 2016: 207).

It is estimated that in Kyrgyzstan about 12% of girls marry before the age of 18 (Kušubakova 2020: 73). After 2010, an increase in early marriages was observed. Some parents marry off their daughters in the ninth grade (Sûžet "Ala kačuu" 2021), or even the eighth grade. They do so mainly for economic reasons (e.g. the need to pay off a loan), essentially selling their daughters. In doing so, they believe that the best thing for a girl is to get married (Ajtmatova, Ėdilova 2022: 217). They also do so out of fear that she will move to the city after leaving school and become "spoilt", making it impossible for her to marry later. Therefore, it is primarily the parents who are interested in early marriage, and they hide the fact (Sûžet "Ala kačuu" 2021). Such marriages are most common in southern Kyrgyzstan and in some villages in the north of the country (Ajtmatov 2017: 74).

Entering into an early marriage often leads to an early pregnancy and risks the girl's death from complications related to childbirth (Kušubakova 2020: 73). According to annual statistical reports, since 2006 there has been a steady increase in the birth rate among girls aged 15–17. While in 2006 it was 4.4 babies per 1,000 women of this age, in 2011 it was 7.2 babies, which suggests that these girls are in "de facto marital relations" (Altybaeva 2014: 152). Giving birth to children and running a household entail a number of responsibilities (Sûžet "Ala kačuu" 2021). This reduces their chances of getting an education or vocation, as they must leave school early (Kušubakova 2020: 73), resulting in their economic dependence on their husband (Sûžet "Ala kačuu" 2021). This deepens their social isolation, which makes it easier for them to become a victim of domestic violence (Kušubakova 2020: 73). Thus, for such minors, marriage carries risks associated with reproduction, health, mental, physical and social development, educational limitations and violence (Makembaeva 2016: 207).

The determinants of early marriage are the "deeply rooted patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes towards girls and women" (Makembaeva 2016: 207) discussed above, the low legal awareness of the society (Ajtmatov 2017: 74), the poverty and low social status of girls and the low self-esteem and resulting fear of contact with law enforcement agencies (Karabaeva 2015: 196).

Other researchers argue that the reasons for early marriage include the aforementioned ethnocultural traditions (pseudo-tradition) (Altybaeva 2014: 152), medical indications (based on folk superstitions) and the daughters' premature physical maturity and resulting fear for their safety. Other aetiological factors include early pregnancy, poor academic performance and exclusion from attending school. They are also linked to the illness of the girls' parents, as well as their fear that their daughter will remain unmarried (Kim 2018: 9). According to Aizhanyl

Ajtykulova, the reason for early marriage is the “high and growing levels of inequality and significant imbalance between the regions” (Ajtykulova 2022: 527). This means that it occurs in poorer parts of the country.

## 5. Polygamy in Kyrgyzstan and its aetiology

It should be recalled that polygamy among the peoples of Central Asia has occurred for many centuries (Osmonova 2019: 107–108). Although monogamous marriage was the main form of marriage under Kyrgyz customary law, polygamy was also prevalent among the wealthy members of the society. Marriage and family relations among Kyrgyz people were regulated by the norms of customary law (*adat*) and Sharia (Tegizbekova 2010: 87).

During Soviet rule polygamy was banned as a form of marriage (Tegizbekova 2012: 202), but was nevertheless practiced in secret. At the time, it was one of several crimes considered relics of local customs (Sydykova 2014: 58). With the collapse of the USSR and the destruction of communist ideology and morality, polygamy underwent a rapid resurgence across the region (Osmonova 2019: 107). After Kyrgyzstan gained independence, cases of polygamy became common (Tegizbekova 2012: 197). Currently, only monogamous marriages are considered legal in the country. Criminal law prohibits polygamy, criminalising the act (Tegizbekova 2012: 202). Article 176 of the CC criminalises bigamy and polygamy, which are punishable by community service of 100 to 300 hours or correctional work for 1 to 3 years, or a fine of 500 to 1,000 calculation indices.

In July 2008, Kyrgyzstan’s justice minister proposed legalising polygamy. He pointed out that the ban violates the rights of children born in marriages by second and third wives. It should be clarified that successive marriages are not performed in a government office, but only in a mosque (Bibikov 2020: 54), i.e. according to Muslim traditions. Such marriages are not legally valid and do not establish the legal situation of the women and children concerned, as a result of which they often cannot defend their interests in cases concerning the division of property, enforcement of alimony or establishment of paternity (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 170). The minister’s proposal did not result in a change in the law (Bibikov 2020: 54).

On the other hand, in the autumn of 2017, the Kyrgyz parliament began discussions on legalising polygamy. It analysed the social disputes over the permissible number of wives for a Muslim, as well as for a Kyrgyz. It pointed to the arguments of Muslim clergy which advocated for the introduction of polygamy as a norm, as well as the need to protect the rights of children, women and men. The discussions did not lead to changes in the law (Osmonova 2019: 108).

Many researchers have pointed to similar arguments regarding the protection of the rights of women and children who are already in this type of marriage.



They noted its widespread perpetuation in the public consciousness (Tegizbekova 2012: 203) and stressed that society accepts polygamy under the current difficult economic conditions (Bibikov 2020: 54).

Supporters of polygamy in Kyrgyzstan reasoned that it would solve the problem of there being more women than men in the country. It would allow single women to become second or third wives. They argued that men by nature instinctively strive to have several women, which would be legalised through polygamy. The proponents of polygamy cited religion, which allows a man to marry up to four women (Žunušova 2013: 219). They justified polygamy (especially some men and some Islamic clergymen) with Islam, even though in reality it is not compatible with the Quran and Sharia (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 170). They encouraged men to take a second wife if their first wife was in poor health or infertile, or if they lacked hope that the first wife would give birth to a boy (Bibikov 2020: 55). They suggested finding a wife on their own if their parents had arranged their marriage and there were no feelings between the spouses (Tegizbekova 2012: 201). These views and arguments, as well as the widespread prevalence of polygamy and the permissive attitude to it in Kyrgyzstan, suggest that discrimination against women is seen as a natural norm of life in the country (Osmonova 2018: 338).

Polygamy in Kyrgyzstan is unique in that it contains both Islamic and traditional elements, as well as elements that are frequently associated with the low socioeconomic status of women (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 170). This creates conflicts with the secular part of society, especially with NGOs promoting women's rights. On the one hand, the state feels the strong pressure from the Islamic part of society to legalise polygamy; on the other hand, it sees the phenomenon as contradictory to the secular nature of the state's constitutional system (Osmonova 2019: 107–108).

Studies show that polygamous marriages are on the rise in modern Kyrgyzstan. Polygamy is practiced in both urban and rural areas, by both wealthy and not-so-wealthy men. Having a second wife adds prestige and increases their standing in society, and they continue to be married to their first wife, who retains her status as a married woman and the right to her husband's inheritance. Usually the wives do not live together, and the man provides them with separate homes (Osmonova 2019: 109). However, not all husbands with two or more wives are responsible; they do not always take care of all their wives and children, including after divorce, which is contrary to the requirements of Sharia and Muslim ethics (Turdubaeva 2022: 207). It can be concluded that polygamy exacerbates the crisis of the institution of the family in Kyrgyzstan (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 170).

It must also be said, unfortunately, that polygamy in Kyrgyzstan today is also sometimes forced by the situation. Men who have gone abroad in search of work sometimes stop sending money to the families they leave behind, forcing their wives to seek livelihoods on their own. They frequently opt for the status of a second wife then. Of course, as mentioned above, a second marriage consecrated in a mosque is not legally valid (no right to alimony or inheritance) (Bibikov 2020: 55).



As a result of polygamy, women often become additional workers on farms run by rich men, which is one form of exploitation of female labour (Tegizbekova 2012: 200–201). Therefore, while marrying a new wife may simply satisfy a rich man's whim, for a woman it is often the result of both poor social circumstances and a lack of prospects for finding a husband and starting a family based on love (Bibikov 2020: 55).

Research on polygamy conducted in the countries of Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan, has identified the reasons for the revival of the phenomenon: the occurrence of long-standing political, socioeconomic and spiritual crises that have made women economically dependent on wealthy men; the progressive Islamisation of the country, leading to the legalisation of polygamy with the support of mainly male representatives of the economic and political elite; the gender imbalance in the society, associated with mass internal and external migration, which promotes the acceptance of polygamous families; and men's desire to increase their prestige by having two or more wives (Osmonova 2019: 111).

Against the backdrop of the aforementioned aetiological factors, it is important to note the issues associated with the biological and physical sphere of a wife's life. Infertility (Sydykova 2014: 58), ageing, loss of attractiveness and weight gain due to childbirth causes "her husband's lack of satisfaction with her" (Žunušova 2013: 219), which leads him to look for another wife. Polygamy is also fostered by the need for labour in a rich husband's household, which can be done by a young, capable woman (Sydykova 2014: 61). This demonstrates the objectification of women. Unfortunately, through polygamy, they too are often forced to pursue their material interests (Tugel'baeva, Hamzaeva, Hamzaeva 2018: 12). Due to financial dependence on their husbands, if the husbands fail to pay alimony, they are unable to support the family on their own and many women assume the humiliating position of being a second or third ("younger" or "older") wife (Žandolotova 2015: 305–306). Polygamy is also fostered by the presence of a tendency in Kyrgyzstan to adopt a more archaic way of life in the country, which is particularly manifested in the resurgence of certain customs that discriminate against women (Tugel'baeva 2018: 47).

## **6. Domestic violence against women in Kyrgyzstan and its aetiology**

At the outset of the analysis in this area, it should be stated that the phenomenon of domestic violence in Kyrgyzstan has been recognised and defined. The 2017 Act on Protection against Domestic Violence defines the term as "intentional acts of a physical, mental or economic nature, or the threat thereof, stalking or neglect committed by one family member/a person equal to him or her against another

family member/a person equal to him or her” (para. 10). The Act also defines the various manifestations of the phenomenon: physical (para. 13), psychological (para. 9) and economic (para. 15) violence.

According to research conducted in Kyrgyzstan, women are most often affected by psychological violence, followed by physical violence and sexual violence (Ryžkov 2013: 208). They are also subjected to economic violence. They are often humiliated by family members and relatives (Kadyrkulova, Kasymova 2020: 72). They are subjected to brutal physical violence, even fatal violence, by their husbands and partners. In such situations, the woman’s death is a direct consequence of domestic violence. For this reason, “the family home of Kyrgyz women is considered the most dangerous place”. Men most often justify their behaviour by “the provocative behaviour of their wives” (Efimova 2022: 84). Other manifestations of this violence against women include the killing of girls through abortion and infanticide. This is done on the basis of gender, as the family prefers boys (Piga, Novovič, Mogilevskij 2016: 51). Sons are considered the future breadwinners of the family, so the birth of boys is in the family’s economic interests (Muratbaeva, Tobokelov 2023: 275).

In addition, the vast majority (73.5%) of women experiencing violence are economically dependent on their abusers, be it a husband or other family member (Piga, Novovič, Mogilevskij 2016: 51). Some women are banned from working and studying, which results in limited opportunities for economic independence (Kadyrkulova, Ačylova 2008: 168). This attitude towards and treatment of women stems from traditions that objectify women and see them as economically dependent on their husbands (Muratbaeva 2023: 170). This results in a lower position for women and a difficult material situation in the family.

Domestic violence against women in Kyrgyzstan is widespread. However, it is incredibly difficult to determine its scale. According to the available data, in 2011, for example, 13% of women experienced domestic violence (Muratbaeva 2023: 170). In 2012, 25% of married women aged 15–49 were victims of physical or sexual violence by their husband or partner. Some of them (7%) were pregnant at the time (Women, Peace 2023: 7–8). According to recent research, 25% of women in Kyrgyzstan have been victims of domestic violence in various ways. One in four married women has been a victim of physical violence, while 18% of women have experienced sexual and emotional violence (Efimova 2022: 84). According to some data, as many as 83% of women in Kyrgyzstan experience violence from their husbands or partners (Ryžkov 2013: 208). Other data indicate that women, i.e. wives, daughters, sisters and mothers, account for 95% of the victims of domestic violence (Makembaeva 2019: 167), or as much as 98% according to 2020 data (Žumabaj uulu 2021: 1).

Unfortunately, the numbers of reported crimes and requests for help from women are negligible. The reluctance to report such incidents and the lack of punishment for the perpetrators is evidenced by the following data: in 2021, 7,840 cases of domestic violence were registered, of which only 10% went to court; 7,132 cases were terminated (63% due to lack of evidence, 21% due to lack of a statement

from the victim, 13% due to reconciliation of the parties and 3% due to a statute of limitations or amnesty law) (Efimova 2022: 83). Thus, the response of state authorities discourages people from reporting such crimes to law enforcement agencies.

In addition, to avoid their children being raised by their father, women often do not report crimes and violence and do not assert their rights, thus sacrificing their own safety (Efimova 2022: 84). They often find themselves pressurised by relatives who demand that they protect their family and its good name at all costs and force them to not report the violence they have suffered. The victims fear social stigma and are afraid to report violence due to their economic dependence, vulnerability and isolation (e.g. those living in unregistered marriages), and out of fear of retaliation from family members (Žumabaj uulu 2021: 1). Only about 30% of domestic violence cases are reported to the police (Makembaeva 2019: 167), and this figure may be even lower (less than 20%) (Protivodejstvie nasiliû 2021). This is mainly influenced by the mentality of Kyrgyz society, its traditions, the educational level of the population, the legal protection available and the region concerned (Mamatazizova, Mamatazizova 2021: 478–479).

According to research, 98% of domestic violence cases are perpetrated by the husband or former husband (Efimova 2022: 84). On the other hand, data from the Judicial Department of the Kyrgyz Republic point to husbands and partners (77% of cases), followed by sons (19%) and fathers (4%). These findings suggest that domestic violence is a gender-based problem (Žumabaj uulu 2021: 1). Most perpetrators have a general secondary education (89%–90%), and much less frequently a secondary vocational education (3%–4%) or higher education (3%–4%). Most of them are unemployed (85%–90%) (Tugel'baeva 2018: 47). The perpetrators of violence are often under the influence of alcohol. In this state, they primarily commit physical violence (inflicting bodily injury, beating or torture) (75% of cases), psychological violence (humiliation, insults or deprivation of liberty) (15% of cases), other types of violence (i.e. rape or sexual assault) or economic violence (discrimination and denial of the right to own property) (10% of cases) (Žumabaj uulu 2021: 1).

Violence very often affects women living in rural areas, where these customs are rigorously observed today, according to which certain prohibitions are imposed on women by their husband and his relatives. The daughter-in-law is at the bottom of the family hierarchy, which entails her doing all the housework, as well as being required to help at all events of her husband's relatives (weddings and funerals). In case of conflicts in the family, a woman should not inform anyone about it, much less complain about her husband or his relatives. Women living in remote areas away from cities are often cut off from the world, deprived of means of communication, i.e. telephones, computers and the internet. This makes it impossible to report violence to the authorities. This problem was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. The isolation in people's homes and the resulting economic difficulties (obtaining loans for sowing and farming expenses) negatively affected their quality of life (Mamatazizova, Mamatazizova 2021: 479).

Older women, often suffering from various chronic illnesses that require constant care and medication, are also victims of domestic violence. Due to low pensions, they become financially dependent on their family members and easily become victims of psychological abuse. Another category of domestic violence victims are women from the one hundred ethnic minorities living in Kyrgyzstan. Most of them live in closed communities, acting as housewives taking care of a large number of children, without participating in public life. They are subjected to discrimination and violence that is justified by tradition and religion (Mamatazizova, Mamatazizova 2021: 479).

Women with disabilities and/or disabled children are similarly disadvantaged. Most of them are dependent on other family members and, as a result, constantly experience psychological violence. They are blamed for giving birth to a disabled child, as in Kyrgyz families it is believed that the child's health depends solely on the mother (Mamatazizova, Mamatazizova 2021: 479–480).

The above facts demonstrate that the victims of violence are most often those least socially protected (i.e. materially, physically and psychologically) from other members of their families (housewives, pensioners and the disabled). Such people's dependence can easily be exploited through violence (Iskenderova 2010: 81).

It should be noted that violence also occurs in so-called good families – those free from substance abuse, composed of intelligent and educated members and wealthy. Thus, domestic violence has no intellectual or economic boundaries (Ajtbaeva 2020: 146).

Given all this information, unfortunately, one must also conclude that the majority of Kyrgyz society tolerates violence against women, thus affirming the husband's right to "educate his wife". About 30% of women and about 50% of men believe that wife-beating is acceptable in some cases. Women may support this belief, especially in cases where a woman does not take care of her children, leaves the house without informing her husband, shows defiance to him, refuses to have sexual intercourse with him or cooks poorly (Women, Peace 2023: 7–8).

This is despite domestic violence having been criminalised. Article 177 of the Criminal Code punishes such behaviour with correctional work for 2 months to 1 year, community service for 40 to 100 hours or imprisonment for up to 5 years. Nevertheless, victims very often do not report violence, primarily because of the stigma associated with doing so. This discourages and deters women who suffer from violence (Piga, Novovič, Mogilevskij 2016: 51). Thus, despite the legal framework created to ensure the rights of women and girls in Kyrgyzstan, they are still largely unprotected from domestic violence (Kušubakova 2020: 73). This is certainly facilitated by the application of the law and the approach of law enforcement agencies in this regard (similar to the crimes discussed above).

The determinants of domestic violence are primarily cultural in nature. Social, economic, institutional and legal factors also play a significant role. It should be concluded that the cultural traditions and customs of Kyrgyz society, including religious traditions, give women a lower status compared to men, which leads to aggressive behaviour against women (Musina, Sarsenova 2020: 76).

A special role in this regard is played by the family, which regulates and controls adherence to socially accepted relationships and behaviour based on patriarchal culture. "It is patriarchal culture, through its various sources, that preserves violence against women as a system of subordination and terror, replicating its 'virus' from generation to generation" (Ajtbaeva 2020). Therefore, violence against women in Kyrgyzstan is based on patriarchal customs and traditions involving certain social relations, cultural norms, value trends and gender stereotypes, the dependency status of women in the family and the customary attitude that domestic violence is an individual problem (Kadyrkulova, Kasymova 2020: 72).

Domestic violence is a tool to maintain control and domination over women, especially Muslim women, and to perpetuate a patriarchal society in which men control women and women are expected to be submissive (Turbubaeva n.d.). Therefore, cultural attitudes determine gender inequality (Osmonalieva 2024: 137), and the perpetuation of patriarchal attitudes towards women (Efimova 2022: 84) underpins the use of violence against women in the family. They support economic gender inequality at the level of the state and social institutions. The social causes of the behaviour discussed herein are alcohol or drug abuse (Askat uulu 2019: 119), increased migration, limited education (Efimova 2022: 84), declining educational level across the population (Žumabaj uulu 2021: 1) and a spiritual and cultural decline in the society (Askat uulu 2019: 119). Other problems include disagreements over childrearing, childlessness and the inability of one spouse to resist the interference of relatives (Efimova 2022: 84). Furthermore, many misconceptions about domestic violence persist in Kyrgyzstan. Terms such as abuse, coercion and exploitation are more commonly used to describe the phenomenon. The victims of violence do not consider it violence, perceiving it as the norm (Abdymomunova, Sabirova 2015: 1144).

Domestic violence is also determined by socioeconomic problems (Žumabaj uulu 2021: 1), including socioeconomic instability and unemployment (Askat uulu 2019: 119), the society's socioeconomic crisis and a general decline in living standards (Efimova 2022: 84). The problem is the lack of effective legislation and mechanisms to protect the victims (Osmonalieva 2024: 137–138), as well as the culture of silence and not recognising the problem that prevails in Kyrgyz society. Due to the lack of support, many victims do not report acts of violence, fearing the perpetrator's retribution and the society's stigmatisation (Čynybaeva, Ašyrbaeva n.d.). Unreported cases of domestic violence are also due to the lack of professionalism among law enforcement officers (Saâkova 2011: 52) and the resulting failure to prosecute the perpetrators (Muratbaeva 2023: 170). On the other hand, the low level of professionalism of the judicial authorities (Saâkova 2011: 52) results in courts considering only a fraction of the reported cases and accusing most perpetrators of only "disturbing the peace" and not of domestic violence (Piga, Novovič, Mogilevskij 2016: 50).

This makes it difficult to analyse the impact of criminal law on the state of the crimes in question. Their long-standing practice, which is full of contradictions

and shortcomings, has resulted in a lack of systematic monitoring by the state and evaluation of the legislation's impact on the processes associated with the protection and rights of female victims (Pekin+30 2024: 27).

## Conclusion

The analysis conducted for this paper allows us to confirm the hypothesis: Violence and crime against women in Kyrgyzstan most often occur within the family and originate in the patriarchal family model. It was established that the family is hardly a safe place for a Kyrgyz woman to live. Her situation, made difficult due to her gender, begins when she is married off as a minor (or teenager), or kidnapped without consent by a man she usually does not know or accept. Staying in a polygamous marriage (with all its consequences) is also difficult, and being subjected to violence from her husband or mother-in-law is damaging to both the woman and her children. The analysis leads us to agree with the researchers' opinion that in modern Kyrgyzstan the use of physical force in interpersonal relations is widely accepted. Cases of violence and crime against women are often concealed, reflecting an old social mindset. Protecting family or clan status is more important than legal principles.

All of the behaviours discussed herein, i.e. crimes, abuse and pathologies, are the result of a familial dynamic characterised by the domination of the husband and his close relatives. A ruthlessly patriarchal family model, often based on tradition and ancient customs, even prevents a woman from deciding about her life, relegates her to the margins of family life and exposes her to acts of verbal and psychological aggression, leading in turn to her discrimination and victimisation. This leads to the conclusion that the modern upbringing of girls – which is focussed on teaching them to obey many rules, orders and prohibitions, and on the belief that they will play a subordinate role in marriage and the future family – will continue to foster a deterioration in terms of violence and crime against women.

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