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**“Constructive Dialogues
on Religion and Democracy”
project – Second Compilation of
Researches**



Bishkek - 2020

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Bishkek, 2020

This second researches compilation contains six reports conducted by young researchers as part of the “Constructive dialogues on religion and democracy” project funded by European Union and implemented by International Alert in the Kyrgyz Republic. The researches were conducted by young researchers who went through a series of trainings in 2018 and 2019.

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Foreword

Dear Reader,

This is the second compilation of the research reports conducted by junior researchers within the framework of the EU-funded project “Constructive dialogues on religion and democracy” implemented in Kyrgyzstan by International Alert in partnership with the Lyman Foundation for Spiritual Culture Development under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic. The first compilation included 4 pieces of research by young researchers conducted and published in 2018.

The project “Constructive dialogues on religion and democracy” aims to support open public discourse and communication about the freedom of religion and belief, the role of religion in people’s life, the interrelation between state and religious institutions, and state policies on religion. One of the project’s main tasks is to build the capacity of junior researchers to conduct research on sensitive issues related to religion, the role of religion in a democratic and secular society, and create a pool of more experienced analysts.

The research conducted in 2017-18 was presented to the expert community and national stakeholders at different levels, starting from youth discussion clubs and ending with roundtable discussions with Members of Parliament and other representatives of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. The research reports were reviewed and discussed, recommendations were given, and then condensed into policy briefs. Stakeholders iterated the importance of this process, and requests were made to build the analytical capacity of junior researchers to create evidence-based data.

Similar to the first round, the second round was advertised through mass and social media, with 33 applications from all over the country. 10 applicants were selected and trained in research and policy brief structure and different types of methodology. Six topics for the second round were identified and approved by the project’s expert consultative working group, including:

1. The Influence of Kyrgyzstan’s Media Strategies on Preventing the Spread of the Ideology of Violent Extremism;
2. Are there any Problems in the Interaction of Young People with Different Religious Beliefs in the Kyrgyz Republic?
3. The Role of Non-profit Organisations in Promotion of Countering Terrorism and Extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic;
4. Ways and Causes of Radicalisation among Women in Kyrgyzstan;
5. The Role of Islam in the Politics of Kyrgyzstan;
6. The Degree of Intersectional Discrimination against Religious Girls and Women in Osh.

The Influence of Kyrgyzstan’s Media Strategies on Preventing the Spread of the Ideology of Violent Extremism. This study reflects the results of research conducted over a period of 6 months (from March 2019 to August 2019). It involves analysis of existing media strategies in the state bodies Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the State Commission on Religious Affairs (SCRA), the State Committee on National Security (SCNS), and three NGOs and civic activists. Both state

bodies and NGOs have articulated action plans and specific media tools to prevent the spread of extremist ideology; the majority of religious associations in Kyrgyzstan rely on public relations structures (press services, press secretaries, communication departments, external relations departments, etc.). Through the use of these channels, they try to help audiences identify extremist propaganda, and both prevent and avoid its consequences. The analysis of these strategies suggests that preventative measures require additional analysis.

Are there any Problems in the Interaction of Young People with Different Religious Beliefs in the Kyrgyz Republic? There are both positive and negative interactions between young people of different confessions in the Kyrgyz Republic, with Protestants facing the most discrimination at the local level, particularly over burials. The report describes different perceptions among young men and women and identifies where conflicts over religious belief exist. The study offers recommendations to policy makers on how to resolve these conflicts.

The Role of Non-profit Organisations in Promotion of Countering Terrorism and Extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic. The potential and role of non-profit organisations (NPOs), primarily at the local level, in countering terrorism and extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic has not been adequately assessed. While some NPOs are more active in projects at the national level on improving legislation, document examination, public education and awareness there needs to be better to ensure coordination of state and municipal bodies and NPOs on preventing terrorism and extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Ways and Causes of Radicalisation among Women from banned religious groups in Kyrgyzstan. This research looks into Kyrgyz women who are affiliated with banned religious groups. This involved a comprehensive analysis of Kyrgyz publications on radicalisation among women over the past five years. In-depth interviews with women registered with law-enforcement bodies over membership of radical groups were used, following a conflict-sensitive methodology. The research has identified the following paths to radicalisation for women: neighborhood and community, kinship, joint religious education, religious broadsheets in the home, online contacts on the internet, and presence in ‘correctional’ facilities. Other attributing factors include: low religious literacy and a distorted perception of religious dogma; lack of awareness of rights and freedoms; feelings of injustice and discrimination; distrust and conflict with the state and political system; attitudes along ethnic and kinship lines to members of banned religious groups; local-level persecution among communities.

The Role of Islam in the Politics of Kyrgyzstan. The purpose of this research is to determine the influence of Islam on political processes. This involved analysis of various publications, video materials, electronic and print media, religious trends, and legal acts. The study revealed that Islam is being used as a tool to achieve political goals; for example, politicisation of religion occurs at the start of large campaigns, such as elections, in order to draw the attention of the religiously observant electorate to gain votes or political weight.

The Degree of Intersectional Discrimination against Religious Girls and Women in Osh. This research examines discrimination in the city of Osh on: (1) equal rights of women and girls

practising Islam (WGPI) in society, (2) their access to various services, and (3) established opinions, public expectations, and relationship problems regarding WGPI. The research uses mixed research methods to obtain primary data from both qualitative and quantitative sources: a survey of 200 respondents, focus groups and expert interviews. Discrimination against WGPI is an increasingly important issue for residents of Osh, and indeed Kyrgyzstan as a whole. Further study is required to identify and act on the root causes of rights violations and discrimination, as without action there could be implications for how citizens' freedoms and the rule of law are perceived.

On behalf of International Alert, let me to express our gratitude to the junior researchers and all those who provided direct or indirect support to their training and capacity building. Special thanks go to the trainers Dr. Zharkyn Shadymanova (also a Russian-language editor), Dr. Aida Alymbaeva, and Dr. Rita Ismailova; to expert mentors Dr. Aikokul Maksutova, Sheradil Baktygulov, Dr. Iskender Bainazarov, Dr. Nurgul Esenamanova, Dr. Mametbek Myrzabaev, and Inga Sikorskaya; to a Kyrgyz-language editor Jannat Majitova, translators Temir Momunov (English) and Mirgul Ismailova (Kyrgyz); to members of the project's Expert Advisory Working Group who came up with the research topics and subsequently discussed the reports' findings.

Finally, this would not have been possible without the efforts of colleagues from International Alert. Heartfelt thanks go to Stuart Moir, Senior Programme Design and Assessment Officer – Eurasia based in our head office in London, and Bishkek-based colleagues Rasul Momunaliev, project manager, Aiperi Tursunaliyeva, communications consultant, Zhazgul Zhanybekova, senior finance and admin officer, Aziz Emilbek uulu, admin and logistics assistant, Abdykar Sultanov, admin and finance clerk, and Iskander Marlen, programme development assistant.

Yours faithfully,

Shakirat Toktosunova

Representative of International Alert in the Kyrgyz Republic and

Project Director

1. Ways and Causes of Religious Radicalisation among Women in Kyrgyzstan

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Annotation

This research is an attempt to study the ways and causes of involving Kyrgyz women in banned religious groups. To study this problem, a comprehensive analysis of the publications of domestic research on radicalisation among women in Kyrgyzstan over the past five years has been conducted. Qualitative methodology was used in the course of the research: an in-depth expert interview and interviews with women who are registered with law enforcement bodies as members of radical groups. Also, representatives of the State Penitentiary Service, employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Service on Countering Extremism and Illegal Migration, and experts working in the religious sphere have been interviewed.

The research findings showed that there are different ways and causes of radicalisation among women.

Main ways of radicalisation are: neighborhood, kinship relationship, joint religious education, online contacts in the Internet space and joint being at correction facilities.

The causes of radicalisation among women are the following:

- low religious literacy and misconception of religious dogma;
- lack of awareness of their rights and freedoms;
- sense of unfairness and discrimination;
- distrust and sometimes conflict with the existing state and political system.

Based on the results and conclusions of the research, recommendations have been developed for state bodies, religious organisations and civil society representatives.

Glossary

Allahu Alem–the Most High knows better

Amir (Sharif)–religious leader, teacher

Astagfirullah–ask for the Most High’s forgiveness

Awrah–meaning to cover, prohibition

Ayah– Surahs in the Quran

Bayat–oath of admission to the religious organisation Hizb Ut-Tahrir

Bidat–innovation in religion, is considered a sin

SCNS–State Committee for National Security

Giybat–gossip against anyone, is compared to eating dead person’s meat

SPS–State Penitentiary Service

MIAD–Main Internal Affairs Directorate

Dawah–call for religion

ISIS– Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (banned in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic)

Ilimduu–better knowing the norms of religion

Yakyn Inkar–religious organisation banned in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic

Mashfara– meeting with discussion of issues in the Tablighi Jamaat religious group

MIA–Ministry of Internal Affairs

OSU–Osh State University

REOer–convicted of religious and extremist clauses

EIMCS– Extremism and Illegal Migration Countering Service

Sisters–female co-religionists

Tablighi Jamaat –religious group

Taalim – religious education

Hujra–types of homeschooling of religion

Haqq–real truth

Hadith–words of Prophet Mohammed (s.a.s)

Hijab–religious clothing of Muslim women

Hizb Ut-Tahrir –religious organisation banned in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic

Ozubuzdukulor –indication of one’s own supporters in religion

Introduction

The experts of the Global Terrorism Index 2017 measure the level of terrorist activity within a country based on four main indicators:

1. Number of terrorist incidents;
2. Death toll;
3. Number of victims;
4. Level of material damage.

In addition, when compiling the Index, a number of other factors are analysed that may be indirectly related to terrorist activity¹. 160 countries are included in this list. Kyrgyzstan got 112th place in 2014, but then ranked 86th in 2015 and 79th in 2017 respectively. The higher the place in the index, the more countries are exposed to terrorist activity. For example, the top five countries include Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria as most affected by terrorism, given the number of attacks, the number of deaths and injuries and the degree of property damage.

Terrorist attacks in Kyrgyzstan are not frequent, but they are gradually increasing (suicide bombing at the Chinese Embassy², killing of a policeman,³ attack on a religious figure,⁴ an explosion at the Sports Palace named after K. Kozhomkul on November 30, 2010, gunfight of terrorists with special forces of the State Committee for National Security in the region of HPP-5 in the Lebedinovka village on July 16, 2015, the prevented terrorist attack in Bishkek in front of the MIAD building, the escape of 9 prisoners accused of religious extremism and terrorism in October 2015.⁵

According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the number of women prevailed over that of men in 2017. The proportion of women in the total population was 50.4%⁶.

¹<https://gtmarket.ru/ratings/global-terrorism-index/info> глобальный индекс терроризма: 03/02/2019

²<https://ru.sputnik.kg/trend/explosion-in-chinese-embassy-in-bishkek-20160830> Explosion in the Chinese Embassy in Bishkek: 03/02/2019

³<https://ru.sputnik.kg/society/20171028/1036043941/ubityj-v-bishkeke-milicioner-stal-zhertvoj-igil.html> A Policeman Killed in Bishkek Became a Victim of ISIS: 03/03/2019

⁴<https://www.catoday.org/centrasia/v-bishkeke-soversheno-napadenie-na-kadyra-malikova> Kadyr Malikov Was Attacked in Bishkek: 03/03/2019

⁵<https://stanradar.com/news/full/26528-ocherednye-terroristy-v-kirgizii-cto-proizoshlo-pered-dnem-nezavisimosti.html?page=219> What Happened before Independence Day: 03/04/2019

⁶National Statistical Committee www.stat.kg

Table 1. Gender Characteristics of the Kyrgyz Republic

Kyrgyz Republic	Both Sexes	Men	Women
Number	6140,2	3042,5	3097,7
%	100 %	49,6%	% 50,4

A woman has an important and responsible role in society. For example, parenting and being a housewife which consequently is the foundation of the family, and therefore of society. But recently, the role of women in modern society is no longer limited to fulfilling household duties, caring for children, their upbringing and serving the spouse. Some women see their mission not only in preserving family values, but also to serve higher goals, and thus they strive to keep up with the achievements and successes of men including in their interest in religion.

As a result of the increased religious activity of the population, which can be seen by an increased number of missionaries, opening mosques, madrassas, religious charity foundations and religious centers, women along with men are actively involved in the religious life of society⁷.

Teachers of women's madrassas say that adult women come to study with girls to receive religious knowledge. The number of young female students entering the theology faculties of our country is increasing. In addition, female students travel abroad to receive religious education. In confirmation of the above, one can cite the words of the Deputy Dean of the Theology Faculty of Osh State University Ferhat Gokce, who noted that the number of applicants-girls entering the Theology Faculty has increased. For example, in 2018, 30 guys and 60 girls submitted documents for admission to the Theology Faculty.

⁷ Results of the Sociological Research “The Effect of Religious Factor on the Socio-Political Situation in the Kyrgyz Republic” <http://religion.gov.kg>; 03/05/2019

This situation is complicated by the fact that due to the lack of official religious centers or religious educational institutions for women, “Hujras” (homeschooling of religion) are active. To control the quantity and quality of classes held by state bodies presents certain difficulties.

Some women in Kyrgyzstan join banned religious movements and are actively involved in extremist groups for various reasons. Mass media is increasingly covering the participation of women in radical groups. State bodies and non-governmental organisations are concerned about the increase in the number of women charged with a criminal offence. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, if 10 years ago the proportion of women in committing extremist crimes was 1.1%, then in 2016 this indicator increased to 25%⁸.

Representatives of the SPS, EIMCS note that the data analysis of persons involved in the offenses with a religious context showed active complicity of women. So far, men are the organisers, but there is involvement of women in incitement, aiding and fulfilling other obligations in commitment of the crime.

In addition, recently, we can observe the active participation of women in the discussion and outreach work in the Internet space on religious topics. For example, in social networks, women participate in discrediting the actions of law enforcement officers who conduct operative-search activities.⁹

The number of women traveling to the Middle East has increased. According to the law enforcement bodies - 863 citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic participated in combat operations in Syria on the side of ISIS for the period from 2010 to June 2016, of which 188 were female.¹⁰

On the other hand, there is still a risk of increased radicalisation among women due to existing socio-economic problems in society.

⁸Overview: Kyrgyzstan’s Security Threats: Terrorism and Extremism <http://www.ca-portal.ru/article:24078>: 03/07/2019

⁹https://www.gezitter.org/society/52466_militsiya_djalal-abada_vystupivshie_s_obrascheniem_jenschinyi_yavlyayutsya_chlenami_organizatsii_hizb_ut-tahrir/: 03/07/2019

¹⁰Radicalization of Women in Kyrgyzstan Based on Religion 03/09/2019

https://cabar.asia/ru/radikalizatsiya-zhenshhin-na-religioznoj-pochve-v-kyrgyzstane/#_edn1

Regardless of existing research aimed at studying the channels and causes of radicalisation in our country, the problem of female radicalisation is not given enough attention due to the specificity of the issue.

For example, due to methodological difficulties, not all experts get into research aimed at identifying the causes and ways of radicalisation among women. The main causes are the following:

1. It is very difficult to obtain permission and interaction from the SPS and MIA;
2. Due to the lack of female employees, it is very difficult to establish contact with women registered with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The main work is carried out with registered men;
3. Formal relations (bureaucracy) of some employees of the MIA during interaction leads to a loss of time and resources;
4. The mistrust factor on the part of the MIA officers towards the researchers, in the sense that after a “non-professional” interview conducted, registered women can write a complaint about them to the supervisory authorities;

A quotation from the interview: “This will aggravate the already difficult situation of the officers ...”

5. The Internal Order of the State Penitentiary Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to conduct interviews only from the press service of the relevant state body. This takes time and resources, and also does not fully cover the research problem due to lack of operational practice, analysis of deep religious knowledge, religious tendency on the part of press service employees which are possessed by the employees working on this line, such as EIMCS officers. Therefore, many employees, fearing admonitions from the management, refuse to go for an expert survey, or agree under the terms of complete confidentiality (without announcement of ranks, place of service and age, etc.);
6. Difficulties of obtaining consent from women registered for participation in interviews;
7. Unfriendly, sometimes aggressive attitude, accusatory, biased attitude of women registered to the government, as well as with pro-Western organisations;
8. Non-disclosure of personal data of women who agreed to an interview;
9. Also, the research is strongly influenced by the socio-political situation in the country (*the border conflict in Batken, aggravation at the gold deposit in Naryn and the situation around the Koy Tash village etc.*).

As a result, at the moment, the researchers do not have a sufficiently complete pattern of radicalisation in women's communities.

Therefore, the problem of religious radicalisation among women is one of the main and relevant issues in our country.

Research Methodology

Research Objective and Main Questions:

Research Questions:

1. What is the theoretical basis for the spread of religious radical ideologies among women in Kyrgyzstan?
2. Through which ways and channels do religious radical ideas spread among women?
3. What are the characteristics of the spread of radical ideas among women registered with law enforcement bodies as members of banned religious organisations?

Research Objective: To identify the main channels for the spread of radical ideas among women in Kyrgyzstan.

Research Methodology:

1. Literature analysis;
2. Interviews with representatives of the SPS, EIMCS, experts in the field of religion;
3. In-depth interviews with women registered with law enforcement bodies as members of banned religious organisations.

Surveyed locations: Osh, Jalal-Abad, Issyk-Kul, Naryn, Chui regions.

Initially, the research object was women in correctional labor facility No. 2 of the State Penitentiary Service in the Stepnoye village, convicted of extremist and terrorist clauses. This facility is considered the only correction facility for women in Kyrgyzstan. Due to the refusal of the SPS to our written appeal, which was being considered for 1.5 months, there was nothing for it but to change the research object.

Three religious groups, such as Hizb Ut-Tahrir, Yakyn Inkar and supporters of radical Salafi groups were selected for the interview. The main reason for choosing these religious groups is that women from these organisations are most often registered with law enforcement bodies.

Features of Organisation of Research Field Work

To conduct interviews with women, negotiations were held with men who were members of the same religious group or relatives of our respondents. We provided confidentiality guarantees.

It was difficult to get consent for an interview with a man. Therefore, we provided examples from the history of religion, which did find its place when women clarified Sharia norms for men behind the curtain. As well as addition or change of their opinions will be considered a “Giybat”, which is a great sin, also had a mitigating approach in the negotiations. These example facilitated negotiations with the Hizb Ut-Tahrir and Yakyn Inkar religious groups. This did not work with a Salafi group. They put "Awrah" – prohibition/limitation on having the right to speak. Thus, a woman-interviewer was invited to conduct an interview with the Salafi group.

Interviews with the respondents took place behind the curtain in the presence of men and lasted about 1.5 hours. There was a breakdown in one agreed interview with a representative of Hizb Ut-Tahrir, who refused, because their “Amir” (leader) had not consented to her. Members of Hizb Ut-Tahrir coordinated every action with “Amirs” approval.

Chapter 1. Ways of Radicalisation

The ways of radicalisation are various kinds of relationships, connections, events related to the transmission of information that is aimed at the spread of the ideas and beliefs of banned religious groups in order to attract new supporters to their ranks. To analyse the main ways of radicalisation in the country, it is necessary to understand the terminology.

Religious radicalism is primarily a consequence of the distorted ideas “coming from inside” about him and his lines, generated by mass ignorance. (*Page 9 of the Islamic Thought Against Extremism Declaration.*)

Radicalisation – the process by which people or groups of people become adherents of political, religious or other kind of extremism.

To become radicalised – does not mean to become a terrorist, not many people who share extremist views decide on acts of violence. However they become adherents of uncompromising ideas.¹¹

¹¹<https://www.vox.com/2016/6/14/11923514/terrorist-radicalization-orlando>: 03/10/2019

The research made by A.M. Sysoev provides that penitentiary institutions designed to correct convicts become peculiar institutions of radicalisation, which, contributing to the assimilation of hate ideology by the special contingents, prepare potential work forces for extremist organisations.¹²

In the course of this research, the following ways for radicalisation of women have been identified:

Kinship Relationship

As a result of interviews, it was revealed that kin relations often act as a channel for attracting women to the activities of radical organisations. A family member, accepting the religious beliefs of radical groups, begins to involve other family members in the religious ideology. In most cases, men are the ones who spread the religious idea among family members. As surveys show, women are recruited through a close circle, through brothers and fathers.¹³ However there are cases when women are the ones spreading the religious idea. EIMCS officers noted the active participation of some women when several families were recruited by them and transported to Syria. In addition, one woman noted in an interview: “My husband drank a lot, even fell asleep at the wheel. But, after I adopted the religion, even my children began to pray namaz. My husband stopped drinking and became more religious”(Woman, Kyrgyz, 35-40 years old, Yakyn Inkar).

This opinion is also confirmed by the research “Women of the United Nations”, which states that for Kyrgyz women, the traditional pattern of family life with a close intertwining of kin relations may serve as both a shield and a link to vulnerability for extremist propaganda.¹⁴ That is, one can expect both involvement and obstacle to radical movements from family members.

Neighborhood

The research findings show that neighborhood also affects the spread of radical ideas among women. This confirms the words of one woman who noted that the family adopted “pure” Islam thanks to its neighbors: “We observed religious precepts before, but as it turned out just superficially.

¹²[file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/osobennosti-protsesta-radikalizatsii-osuzhdennyh-v-usloviyah-lisheniya-svobody-i-puti-ego-preduprezhdeniya%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/osobennosti-protsesta-radikalizatsii-osuzhdennyh-v-usloviyah-lisheniya-svobody-i-puti-ego-preduprezhdeniya%20(1).pdf): 03/10/2019

¹³[https://knews.kg/2014/10/22/Muslim Women from Islamization to Radicalization](https://knews.kg/2014/10/22/Muslim-Women-from-Islamization-to-Radicalization): 03/11/2019

¹⁴<https://www2.unwomen.org> Women and Violent Extremism in Europe and Central Asia: 03/11/2019

In determining the correctness of religion, we often turned to neighbors who were more educated - “ilimduu” (Woman, Kyrgyz, Salafi, 51 years old).

The fact that neighborhood influences the spread of radicalism is also confirmed by the EIMCS officers. They noted that especially in the south of the country, representatives of one religious group oftentimes live nearby to each other. There are entire streets where houses are located next to each other. They not only practice religion together, but when conducting operational-search measures, such as detention or search, they quickly gather and create a tense atmosphere.

In addition, the research of the Conflict Analysis and Prevention Center “Is it Possible to Prevent New Waves of Radicalisation in the North Caucasus” marked relatives, neighbors and detention facilities as the social environment where people most often get acquainted with extremist ideology.¹⁵

Homeschooling of Religion

Religious groups organise training for women in houses and apartments not only in the regions, but also in large cities.

Both EIMCS representatives and religious experts are united in this opinion.

They noted that homeschooling of religion is one of the most common forms of transmission of religious information. The practice of schooling religious knowledge at home is common among all religious groups. Such unqualified schooling is fraught with many pitfalls, which carries various religious trends.

In addition, during negotiations with male representatives of banned religious groups, it was noted that they all agreed that a woman should teach religion to relatives and other supporters at home.

Experts also noted that leaders of the groups set a task to the participants of the schooling so that the latter should invite their relatives, friends, acquaintances. They motivated this by the fact that those of you who will help people to get out of delusions more, those will receive the blessing of the Most High. This is a reward for spreading religious beliefs.

¹⁵<https://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru>. Is it Possible to Prevent New Waves of Radicalization in the North Caucasus: 03/13/2019

The research “Gender Discrimination as a Factor of Religious Radicalisation of Women in Southern Kyrgyzstan,” refers to cases where women with an unknown educational program gather groups of young girls and women and conduct homeschooling (Hujras).

As noted in other researches, “a big problem is that many families affected by non-traditional teachings prefer not to send their own children to study at secular schools, but to holders of underground “Hujras”, the total number of which reaches 1800 in the entire country”¹⁶.

One of the interlocutors told in an interview:

“We teach religion to children and our supporters (ozubuzdukulordu) at home...

(Woman, Kyrgyz, Yakyn Inkar follower)

This statement once again confirms that religious schooling takes place at home, as well as in the houses of its like-minded people.

Change from One Religious Group to Another During Homeschooling

In an interview, one woman told how she had come to the “true religion” through religious activities conducted at home named “Taalim”. Taalim is a weekly or monthly religious activity conducted for women by Tablighi Jamaat.

“During Taalim, where the topic being taught was wearing a hijab, there was a woman among the audience who asked questions like everyone else. In the beginning she added a few points to the previous speaker in some places, and at the end she clearly provided the examples from ayahs and hadiths, from practice, from the history of religion, from politics, more fully and deeply revealed the true purpose of Islam. All this was emotional and accompanied by tears”(Woman, Kyrgyz, Hizb Ut-Tahrir follower)

In addition, EIMCS officers confirm that there are cases of women participating in meetings of religious groups in order to spread their ideas. Thus, subtly leading to the correctness of her religious group without revealing herself, so to speak, “recruitment with penetration”. In this case, it is described that the topic of the lesson was wearing a hijab, but the second woman changed the topic to talking about a school uniform and contradictions of Sharia norms with existing laws, infringement

¹⁶Gender Discrimination as a Factor of Religious Radicalization of Women in Southern Kyrgyzstan <https://krsu.edu.kg/vestnik/2016/v10/a41.pdf>:03/14/2019

of the rights and interests of religious women. Thereby gaining great sympathy and interest from the women in the audience.

EIMCS officers also noted the activity of a woman belonging to a banned religious organisation in the Kyrgyz Republic, who recruited several families in the Chui region and sent them to Syria.

“We can provide an example of a case that happened in the Chui region, when several families were recruited through one woman and sent to Syria” (From an interview with EIMCS officer).

Internet

Currently, the Internet has become an integral part of life activities of modern society. Internet offers a wide range of new opportunities for communication, entertainment, education and transmission of information. Supporters of radical groups actively use existing Internet sites and services, or create their own online communities to promote religious beliefs and recruit new supporters.

A report¹⁷, that Joanna Cook, senior researcher at the London International Center for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), presented at the UN Security Council, notes that women are ready to play an important role in promoting the ideology and legacy of the Islamic State after its fall in late 2017. The ability of women to recruit terrorists online has already become a powerful weapon. The effectiveness of women as recruiters is largely related to their ability to manipulate social norms, primarily those related to concepts such as masculinity. Taunts and ridicules against Muslim men who allegedly do not fulfill their male duty is a very powerful tool used as a method of provocation. The scheme of recruiting a woman by a woman also works, in which the “victim” gets the feeling of belonging to a close-knit group in exchange for loyalty.¹⁸

¹⁷ Cook J and Vale G. (2018) From Daesh to ‘Diaspora’: Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State. www.icsr.info.

¹⁸ <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/columns/cybercolumn/> How is Europe Trying to Understand Online Extremism? :13/07/2019

One of the respondents noted in an interview: “I always got answers to religious questions of interest online. And also the “sisters” tell us which site to visit and which sermon to listen to”(Woman, Uzbek, 25-30 years old).

Distributing leaflets to households

EIMCS representatives noted that spreading leaflets with religious explanations into houses is also commonly practiced. Oftentimes the first sheet of such leaflets contains information about prayers, the reading of which will provide you with a reward, and the second sheet contains more directed information about the religious group.

Joint Being at Correction Facilities

In an interview with SPS officers, it was noted that women convicted of religious extremism, disseminate their beliefs to other convicted women who are interested in learning about religion in the guise of a normal conversation.

“After talking to REOers- (*convicted of participating in religious extremist organisations*), some arrestees behave more religiously. The mutual assistance and support of these women from other convicts is also increasing”(from an interview with SPS representatives)

A.M. Sysoev notes in his research that the dullness of convicts leads to a wide spread of ideas in this environment. The similarity of life of convicts, the need to obey the regulated requirements of the administration representatives, which is perceived as a suppression of the identity of the convicts, leads to encouraging protest moods. Thus, the assimilation of radical ideas by convicts in this case might act as a form of protest or as an attempt to escape from reality, plunging into the study of dogma.¹⁹

At present, separate blocks were built in male correction facilities for those convicted of extremist acts. However, there are no such separate blocks in the female penal colony No. 2 in the Stepnoye village.

¹⁹<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/v/osobennosti-protsesta-radikalizatsii-osuzhdennykh-v-usloviyah-lisheniya-svobody-i-puti-ego-predup>:03/20/2019

Family Trips Abroad for Long Dawah

Yakyn Inkar followers noted that they changed their beliefs in religion after 4 months of Dawah in India. Prior to that, they were members of the Tablighi Jaamat.

Experts in the religious sphere agree that this religious group separated from the Tablighi Jamaat religious group, and that there is a tense atmosphere between the two religious groups. To reduce chances of conflict, representatives of both religious groups even traveled to India to consult with a religious leader Mawlan Saad for conflict resolution.

Chapter 2. Causes of Religious Radicalisation

Candidate of Political Sciences Chynara Esengul, based on the results of a research conducted for the UN Women agency, noted that there are many causes of radicalisation and violent extremism, and it is a certain combination of factors that leads to this in one case or another. The main group of factors include: individual personality characteristics, socio-economic factors, including discrimination and difficult living conditions, religious and ideological factors, the factor of gender and gender inequality, religion policy, actions and harsh law enforcement bodies' practices, the degree of religious and secular literacy or illiteracy of the population, corruption, etc.²⁰ As well as the impossibility of visiting many mosques, the lack of involvement of women in making important decisions, the lack of secular education in madrassas, the lack of courses for raising qualifications for female religious leaders and many other problems might be the causes of radicalisation in the country.

According to our research findings, the following causes of the radicalisation of women may be identified: poor religious literacy, poor legal literacy, resentment and protest moods, politicisation of religion, distrust of state bodies and the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan.

Poor Religious Literacy

Some respondents, having no sufficient knowledge of religion, searched for it in different places. Due to the lack of information about destructive religious movements, they accepted the first thing that had come across in the way of their search.

²⁰<https://cabar.asia/ru/radikalizatsiya-zhenshhin-na-religioznoj-pochve-v-kyrgyzstane/>:03/21/2019

From an interview: “Before I knew religion, I believed all vaticinators. To have the road and good fortune opened, I even brought my relatives and friends to them. However after realising the fallacy (astagfirullah-3 times), I escaped from the wrong road”. (Woman, Kyrgyz, Salafi).

Poor Legal Literacy

Some respondents understand “secularism” in the state as a denial of religion.

So during an interview, one of the respondents telling about the obstacles in implementation of religious norms, compared the state system with the Kafir one.

From an interview: “The state structure itself was created by man, not by God. After all, secularism in the state is the same denial of religion. If Kurmanbek Baatyr came to life, he would kill most of the men in our region. Since he died by the hands of the Kafirs for religion, for the honor and dignity of women from whom the royal soldiers wanted to remove the burqa”. (Woman, Hizb Ut-Tahrir follower, Uzbek)

Resentment and Protest Moods

The actions of law enforcement officers are considered by our respondents as unreasonable and too harsh. In each example provided, they say that the authorities who came to their home early in the morning by breaking down the door, and therefore the Most High will punish them over time. For example, the Salafi group reinforces the feelings of their supporters by the fact that they are avenged, that many of the officers who had persecuted them were removed from their positions or were involved in traffic accidents.

And representatives of Yakyn Inkar and Hizb Ut-Tahrir say that high-ranking officials sitting in the detention center regret that they did not understand the essence of religion in time.

Distrust of State and Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan

The respondents noted that state agencies do not pay due attention to the appeals and problems of women. And the Spiritual Board just “serves” them.

From an interview: “When our deposits are being robbed, our men go to a protest act, and other men do not go anywhere by the decision of the Mashfara of the Spiritual Board. Nobody hears us, soon we will be left without land” (Woman, Kyrgyz, Hizb Ut-Tahrir follower)

Silent Consent or Concealment on Grounds of Nationality or Kinship

As EIMCS officers noted, sometimes when detaining members of a banned religious group, a mass of unfriendly-minded people gather and shout a curse at them. Although, some of those present are not members of banned religious organisations. It also takes place during the funeral of members of banned religious organisations.

And conversely, when individual religious groups or local community are strenuously persecuting members of a banned religious group on their own.

Politicisation of Religion

Our respondents were very well informed in matters of international relations. One gets the feeling that someone is constantly enlightening them. So one representative of the Hizb Ut-Tahrir religious group, a housewife who married early, without a corresponding higher education in international law, could have easily talked about international relations, and constantly monitored the movement of the head of state.

Conclusion

Our research has found that there are different ways and causes of radicalisation among women. Each attraction of adherents to the ranks of banned religious groups depends on personal life circumstances and interests of a woman.

We have found out the following ways to attract women to religious groups. Initially, a religious group explains the basic principles of religion. Each religious group proves its correctness and considers all innovations in religion as “Bidat”, which means a sin. The suppression of women's feelings as “zombification” is confirmed by the fact that in the process of studying religion people try

to turn off logic and take everything literally without meaning. The Salafis say "Allahu Alem" on this part which means the Most High knows better. Members of Yakyn Inkar say “Haqq” which means real truth. Thus leaving no room for analysis and questions.

Usage of specific expressions and words in Arabic lead to the detriment of the national language and culture.

While speaking about urgent and pressing issues of local importance, members of Hizb Ut-Tahrir give examples from religion and slowly move on to global topics such as Myanmar, Iraq, Palestine, etc. At the same time, they try to show everything unilaterally and provide comparisons in which state agencies and other religious groups are discredited.

However, it was noticed that one of the common attractive approaches for all religious groups is to fix the feelings of believers on emotions. Women noted the particular diligence and attentiveness of teachers in explaining religion in well-trained pleasant voices.

All groups give an example, the hadith of the Prophet, that there will be a division into 72 movements and only one will be correct. In all three groups, early Muslim communities are set as an example.

In spreading religious beliefs, Hizb Ut-Tahrir and the Salafi group actively use the Internet and mobile applications. Yakyn Inkar prefers personal communication.

It was also noted that all three religious groups, especially in the north of the country, are trying to actively use Tablighi Jamaat supporters, who have basic religious knowledge, in order to become involved in their ranks, which simplifies the explanations of the foundations of religion for the above religious groups.

In the south of the country, the practice of involvement through kinship and neighborhood relations is more common. Women who moved from one group to another noted that they have accepted the truth and gained further spiritual growth. It can be noted that when discussing issues, sympathy is given to those women who surpassed the previous speaker, which probably played a major role in switching to other religious groups.

As part of the research, we found out that all three groups reject the existing political system and the Spiritual Board of Muslims. They are all unanimous in the opinion that no one should interfere with the way of knowing religion.

Representatives of Hizb Ut-Tahrir conduct all their beliefs and actions through the politicisation of religion. They believe that religion is politics. As EIMCS officers noted, “Bayat” were revealed during the search - written oaths of members of the group about their commitment to the Hizb Ut-Tahrir party. Moreover, it is suggested that some find it difficult to quit the party because they swear allegiance to the Quran. As a result, they are afraid to go against the holy book and become unfaithful.

However, there are also cases where members of Hizb Ut-Tahrir avoid their like-minded people, leaving to work abroad. They try not to meet with them upon arrival back home. While as in other religious groups, “Bayat” - taking the oath in other religious groups, was not observed.

It was also noted by religious experts and EIMCS officers that representatives of Yakyn Inkar, for the most part, have a closed (secret) lifestyle. They do not talk about politics, but also do not accept the political system. They look more like martyrs. The reason why they became members of this religious group is excessive asceticism, to rely on the Most High for everything. They also do not perceive analysis and logical conclusions.

In our viewpoint, a serious danger for Kyrgyzstan is the radicalisation of religious views, which, hiding behind religious slogans, becomes the basis for different extremist and terrorist activities. If this problem is not resolved, this will lead to religious contradictions and a wider stratification of Muslim society. Against the background of the disunity of Muslims, which will not fit into the ordinary life of other citizens, the emergence of Islamophobic sentiments is possible, which in the future may escalate into a civil confrontation.

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2. The Role of Non-Profit Organisations in Countering Terrorism and Extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic

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Abbreviations

VPG – Voluntary People’s Guard

VRT – Voluntary Rescue Team

KR – the Kyrgyz Republic

NPO – Non-Profit Organizations

MM – Mass Media

SPC – Social Prevention Center

CTE – Countering Terrorism and Extremism

SPC – Social Prevention Centers

VRT – Voluntary Rescue Team

VPG – Voluntary People’s Guards

PAC – Public Advisory Committees at Regional Level

NCCTI – National Center for Information Counteraction to Terrorism and Extremism in the Educational Environment and the Internet

Introduction

The relevance of the research topic is that non-profit organisations (hereinafter NPOs) play an important role in the process of regulating socio-political relations, improving the legal framework and state policy, solving socio-humanitarian problems, education in the law, economic development of municipalities, and conflict prevention in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Non-profit organisations effectively carry out their activities in domestic politics and in the system of international relations.

The problem of terrorism and extremism is one of the urgent in the modern world. The states won't be able to ensure the safety of its citizens and guarantee the observance of human rights and freedoms without the solution to this challenge.

Today non-profit organisations play an important role in the process of regulating socio-political relations, improving the legal framework and state policy, solving socio-humanitarian problems, education in the law, economic development of municipalities, as well as preventing and minimising the consequences of conflict situations in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Section 1. Research Methodology

Research Purpose — study of the role of NPOs in countering terrorism and extremism in Kyrgyzstan over the past five years.

Main Objectives:

- Study the degree of participation of non-profit organisations in the activities on countering terrorism and extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic;
- Analyse the main methods and mechanisms in the activities of NPOs on countering terrorism and extremism in Kyrgyzstan;
- Identify the level of interaction of non-profit organisations and state bodies in the field of countering terrorism and extremism.

Research Target Group: representatives of NPOs, scientific and expert community and civil society.

Research Methods:

1. Desk research;
2. Telephone interview with representatives of NPOs and experts;

3. Focus groups in Osh and Bishkek.

1. Desk Research was conducted through study of literature, mass media materials and other sources.

Desk Research Objectives:

- Study of the experience of domestic and foreign NPOs and analysis of the tools to counter terrorism and extremism used by NPOs of different states;
- Determination of the number of operating NPOs in open databases to create a register of NPOs working in the field of countering terrorism and extremism.

2. Telephone Interview. A total of five interviews were conducted. Heads of NPOs, representatives of civil society and scientific and expert community in the Kyrgyz Republic participated in the telephone interview.

Telephone Survey Objectives:

- Find out how NPOs work to counter terrorism and extremism;
- Identify the best tools to counter terrorism and extremism;
- Identify the needs of representatives of specialised NPOs in the field of countering terrorism and extremism.

3. Focus Group Discussions (FGD/FGDs) in Osh and Bishkek.

The Focus Group Discussion’s objective is to conduct a focused discussion on the activities of Kyrgyzstani NPOs representatives on countering terrorism and extremism and their needs. FGD participants were selected using a “snowball” method.

FGD participants included 7 representatives of NPOs, 8 representatives of the scientific and expert community.

Research Hypothesis: activities and methods used by NPOs in the field of countering terrorism and extremism are not effective enough, as they are fragmented, not systematic and sustainable.

Section 2. Legal Content of Key Terms

Non-Profit Organisation — a voluntary self-governing organisation established by individuals and (or) legal entities on the basis of a community of their interests for fulfilling spiritual or other intangible needs in the interests of its members and (or) the whole society, for whom profit is not the main goal of the activity, and the profit earned shall not be distributed among members, founders and officials.²¹

The state guarantees non-profit organisations the conditions for performing their chartered objectives. State bodies and officials ensure the observance of the rights and legitimate interests of non-profit organisations in accordance with the Constitution and legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic and support their activities. Interference of state bodies or officials with the activities of non-profit organisations as well as interference by non-profit organisations with the activities of state bodies and officials shall not be allowed, except as otherwise provided by law.²²

“Terrorism” is defined as the “ideology of violence and the practice of committing violent and (or) other criminal acts related to intimidation of the population or violation of public safety, as well as a call for such actions with the aim of undermining the constitutional order or influencing decisions made by public authorities, local governments or international organisations”²³.

The concept of "extremism" derives from the Latin word "exstremus" which means "extreme". According to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Countering Extremist Activity” dated August 17, 2005 No. 150 “extremist activity (extremism)” is the activity of public associations or religious organisations or other enterprises, organisations and institutions, as well as mass media, regardless of ownership form, or individuals on planning, organisation, preparation and implementation of actions aimed at:

- Dismantlement of the foundations of the constitutional system and violation of the integrity of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- Undermining the security of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- Seizure or usurpation of power;
- Creation of illegal armed groups;
- Carrying out terrorist activities;

²¹ Article 2 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Non-Profit Organizations" dated October 15, 1999 No. 111.

²² Article 2 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Non-Profit Organizations".

²³ The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Countering Terrorism” dated November 8, 2006 No. 178.

- Incitement of racial, national (interethnic) or religious hatred, as well as social hatred associated with violence or calls for violence;
 - Humiliation of national dignity;
 - Mass riots, violence and acts of vandalism based on ideological, political, racial, national (ethnic) or religious hatred or enmity, as well as on the basis of hatred or enmity against any social group;
 - Promotion of exclusivity, superiority or inferiority of citizens on the basis of their attitude to religion, social, racial, national (ethnic), religious or linguistic identity;
- 2) Propaganda and public demonstration of Nazi attributes or symbols or attributes or symbols similar to Nazi attributes or symbols to the point of confusion;
- 2-1) Propaganda of attributes or symbols of an extremist organisation;
- 3) Public calls for carrying out these activities or commission of these actions;
- 4) Financing of the indicated activity, or other assistance in its execution or taking the indicated actions, including by providing financial means, real estate, educational, printing and material-technical base, telephone, fax and other types of communication, information services, other material-technical means.²⁴

Every year, more than 800 terrorist acts are committed in the world, while their geography covers both Western states (USA, Great Britain, Spain), and Eastern states (Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq), clearly indicating that terrorism threatens most countries of the world, regardless of their level of economic development, military potential and model of government²⁵.

Article 1 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Countering Terrorism” dated November 8, 2006 No. 178 determines that “countering terrorism” is the activity of state authorities, local governments, organisations and enterprises, regardless of ownership form:

- To prevent terrorism, including identification and subsequent elimination of the causes and conditions conducive to the commission of terrorist acts (terrorism prevention);
- To identify, prevent, suppress, disclose and investigate a terrorist act (fight against terrorism);

²⁴ Article 1 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Countering Extremist Activities” dated August 17, 2005 No. 150.

²⁵ Methodological Materials “Countering Terrorism, Extremism, Anti-State and Destructive Activities” / Magomedov S.M., Karataev M.V. - Moscow 2016. - page 4.

- To minimise the consequences of terrorism.

Section 3. Current Situation Regarding Non-Profit Organisations in Countering Terrorism and Extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic

20409 public associations and organisations are registered in the Kyrgyz Republic as of January 1, 2019.²⁶ A strong non-profit sector of NPOs is the basis for the development and strengthening of democracy in the country, as well as a social mechanism for combating negative trends in society.

Some NPOs, as part of their mission, work in the field of de-politicisation of Islam and countering terrorism and extremism. These include the Mutakalim Progressive Public Association of Women, which works in the field of preventing radicalisation among the female community, the Iyman Foundation for the Development of Spiritual Culture carries out activities in the field of civil society to develop spiritual and religious culture of the population, and to counter religious extremism in Kyrgyzstan.

In addition to local civil society organisations, the following international non-profit organisations actively implement their projects in Kyrgyzstan: Search for Common Ground, Internews, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), actively carrying out activities to counter terrorism and extremism by initiating and supporting socio-political, informational and other projects at the national and regional level.

Kyrgyzstan has sufficient potential through non-profit organisations, which is currently not used to the full extent. For example, there is a lack of serious attitude to specialized public associations that have a legal basis for their activities. These include aqsaqal courts, Social Prevention Centers (SPCs), Voluntary Rescue Teams (VRTs), Voluntary People’s Guards (VPGS) at the municipality level, Public Advisory Committees at the regional level (PACs) and others.

Practice shows that the threats of modern radicalism and terrorism can only be confronted by the joint efforts of the state and civil society. In this regard, the need to actualise cooperation of authorised state bodies, NPOs and other stakeholders to counter radicalism and extremism as a threat to national, public and personal security is clearly traced.

A review of the scientific literature and other sources has revealed that today there is no research of the complex role of NPOs in countering terrorism and extremism in the Kyrgyz and world

²⁶ Kyrgyzstan in Numbers 2019. National Statistical Committee, Bishkek 2019, page 145.

scientific literature. In almost all early publications and research, study takes place in a certain area: for example, exclusive study of legal framework of organisations or analysis of the formation and development of non-profit organisations. Publications and research on non-profit organisations appear once every five years averagely. Therefore, there is a need for periodic updating of information material on NPOs.

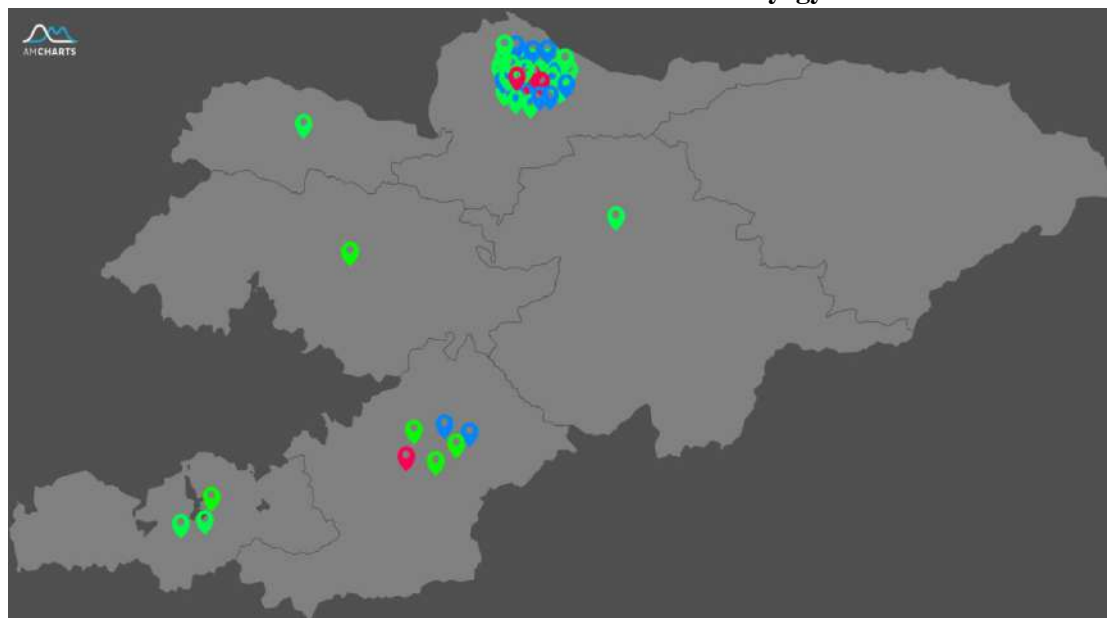
Section 4. Research Findings

During the research, a review of the literature, mass media materials and other sources, two focus groups in Osh and Bishkek, and telephone interviews with NPO representatives, civil society and the scientific and expert community were conducted.

Based on the results of which the following conclusions were made:

- in the course of studying the role of the civilian sector in the field of countering terrorism and extremism based on open sources, those non-profit organisations that directly work in this area were highlighted (Annex 1). According to Figure 1, a large number of state, international and local non-profit organisations engaged in countering terrorism and extremism operate in Bishkek, but their availability (according to our sources) is limited in other regions, and in the Issyk-Kul region there are practically no civil communities engaged in countering terrorism and extremism.

Figure 1. Map of State Non-Profit Organisations in the Field of Countering Terrorism and Extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic.



- Local non-profit organisations and communities;
- State institutions;
- International donors and non-profit organisations.

Table 2. The Number of State Institutions, International Donors and Non-Profit Organisations by Regions

Region	State Institutions	International Organisations and Donors	Nonprofit Organisations and Local Communities
Chui Region	4	10	16
Osh Region	1	1	2
Talas Region			1
Issyk-Kul Region	-	-	-
Naryn Region	-	-	1

State Bodies	-	-	-
Jalal-Abad Region	-	-	-
Batken Region	-	-	2
Total in Kyrgyzstan	4	11	22

In particular, a multi-agency plan was developed to counter extremism and terrorism together with the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan. The task of countering, preventing and suppressing the ideology of Hizb Ut-Tahrir at the local level began to be taken among the population²⁷.

During the focus group discussions and interviews it turned out that the main problems of the functioning of NPOs are:

1. Projects Duplication. Today there is no monitoring of implemented and ongoing projects in Kyrgyzstan, which in turn leads to duplication of educational or social programs.

2. Financing of Local Civil Communities. As representatives from the civilian sector noted, non-profit organisations have problems in the regions with financing of their own projects. Therefore, many local public associations work for larger NPOs through outsourcing, that is, performing a certain part of their work at the local level.

3. Human Resources. Today there is a staff shortage in civil society for specialists in the field of countering terrorism and extremism in Kyrgyzstan. Many NPO employees involved in countering terrorism and extremism do not have the appropriate knowledge and skills.

4. Difficulties in Interacting with State Bodies and NPOs in the Regions. The research has revealed that cooperation with central state bodies in the cities of Bishkek and Osh is positively characterised by NPOs. However, respondents indicated the existence of certain problems in the interaction between regional public reception offices of state bodies and local NPOs in the regions.

The most effective NPO tools in the field of countering terrorism and extremism used by NPOs are:

²⁷ Mirsayitov I. “Religious Extremism on the Example of the 2008 Nookat Events” // Almanac "Experience of the Kyrgyz Republic in Crisis Management: Lessons for the Future". Ed. A.Alymbaeva, T.Tagareva. - Geneva - Bishkek - Riga - Sofia, 2014. – page 59.

1. The Internet (social networks). Prevention of the spread of radical extremist ideologies online is one of the most effective tools in the fight against terrorism. Radical organisations use all opportunities of social networks:

- 1) Thematic pages in social networks and forums;
- 2) Personal pages of users of social networks;
- 3) Placement of video, audio and other educational materials;
- 4) Commenting ²⁸.

According to experts, the following methods are available for the effective fight against terrorism and extremism:

a) Creation of a specialised state body or department, following the example of the National Center for Information Counteraction to Terrorism and Extremism in the Educational Environment and the Internet (NCCTI), which will conduct monitoring and evaluation on social networks.

b) Public Involvement (Crowdsourcing). Kyrgyzstan already had successful experience (Internet patrol), but for some reason, the project is currently in an uncertain state. Creation of a feedback tool for target audiences for which preventive literature is intended.

c) Creation and distribution of own media content on social networks and the Internet, which will contribute to the socialization of Islam and counteraction to radical views and values.

2. Projects with the participation of opinion leaders. The role of the leaders is an important link in formation of public opinion among the population, since the patriarchal system of public relations prevails in Kyrgyzstan. According to experts, it is necessary to actively attract opinion leaders in the framework of republican and regional youth forums.

The experts who participated in the survey also identified the least effective tools, such as leaflets and brochures, short-term seminars and trainings.

- A lack of serious attitude has been formed towards the legitimate aqsaqal courts, SPCs, VPGs at the municipality level, regional PACs and other public associations.

- In the field of interaction of NPOs with state bodies, there is openness on the part of central institutions, but there are difficulties with certain regional state bodies. The main positive and

²⁸ Lashin. R.L. Churilov S.A. “Countering Extremism and Terrorism on the Internet and in the Educational Environment”. URL access mode: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/protivodeystvie-ekstremizmu-i-terrorizmu-v-seti-internet-i-obrazovatelnoy-srede>

negative processes of interaction are outlined in the table of positive and negative aspects of cooperation between state bodies and NPOs.

Table 3. The Practice of Interaction of NPOs with State Bodies

Positive Aspects of Cooperation with State Bodies	The Main Problems in the Process of Interaction with State Bodies
Openness of State Specialized Departments and Institutions; Attracting Attention of Authorised Bodies to Specific Problems of Local Community; Joint Integrated Activities of Various Government Departments and Local NPOs in the Field of Countering Terrorism and Extremism.	Lack of Unifying Institutional Base of Non-Profit Organisations for Joint CTE;
	Ineffective Cooperation of State Bodies with Local Civic Associations;
	Ineffective Work of Regional Public Reception Offices of State Bodies.

Conclusion

According to the legislation, NPOs have the right to carry out activities and actually work in the areas of prevention and minimisation of the consequences of terrorism.

The non-profit sector is still underrepresented in the infrastructure to counter terrorism and extremism in Kyrgyzstan. It is worth noting that NPOs at the national level are more effective and efficient than local level organisations. This is explained by the fact that national-level institutions try to realise their mission by influencing the improvement of state bodies’ policies, while local civic institutions operate at the community level, working directly with the parties to the conflict.

Almost all civic peacebuilding institutions have similar problems and limitations. First of all, this is regulatory uncertainty of the status, order of activity, coordination and interaction in the system of countering terrorism and extremism, which significantly narrows the competency resource of these institutions.

The problem of NPOs sustainability is crucial due to extreme logistical, financial, organisational dependence on donors. Therefore, generally, the majority of NPOs still have a rather low potential in the field of prevention and countering manifestations of local conflicts. At the same time, these institutions have achieved some recognition by the population as being more open and transparent subjects, and unless they solve their urgent problems, they will at least try to convey them to the relevant authorities, as, for example, PACs, SPCs and ANKs do it.

In pre-crisis and crisis situations, authorised state and municipal institutions will play a decisive role in any case. Hence, local NPOs should only effectively consolidate their support functions for the prevention of terrorism and extremism, provide the authorities with timely and reliable information, in addition, offer adequate strategies and tactics for prevention, identification and suppression of terrorist and extremist activities, and minimise the consequences of terrorism.

Research Recommendations

In order to take urgent measures to eliminate the shortcomings identified above, as well as to ensure the effectiveness of all stakeholders in the field of countering terrorism and extremism, it is recommended:

To the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic:

1. To define the functions for civil society and NPOs of countering terrorism and extremism in Kyrgyzstan in the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Countering Terrorism” dated November 8, 2006 No. 178. This authorised state body should coordinate the interdepartmental interaction of state bodies and NPOs in this field at the republican and local levels.

2. To actively involve NPOs in the process of development of conceptual programs and strategies. The function of observer to detect indicators of changes in the religious sphere and the sentiments of believers should be assigned to NPOs.

3. To create a territorial interdepartmental commission on countering terrorism and extremism at the local level.

4. To add authorities and functions to prevent, detect terrorist and extremist activities for NPOs and local public associations (assigned to the Social Prevention Center and the Aqsaqal Court).

5. To introduce necessary amendments and additions to the provisions of the current legislation with regards to NPOs specializing in the field of countering terrorism and extremism. To determine their status, authorities and spheres of influence on the processes of countering terrorism and extremism more specifically.

6. To cooperate with international organisations and local non-profit organisations involved in the activities on countering terrorism and extremism in developing strategies, plans and monitoring of the implementation of relevant regulatory acts, as well as to specifically determine the cooperation format and the regularity of meetings.

7. The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic should increase funding for programs related to religious education and prevention.

To the Authorised State Body Performing the Functions of Countering Terrorism and Extremism (MES, SALSGIER, LSG, SCRA and SBMK):

1. To strengthen the preventive work of law enforcement bodies, NPOs, educational and religious institutions.

2. To maintain interconnection and interaction between state and municipal bodies, civil society institutions and stakeholders to counter terrorism and extremism.
3. To develop indicators of positive and negative changes in the religious sphere and the sentiments of believers, in the behavior of people at risk and undergoing social rehabilitation.
4. To promote the opening of (stationary and distance) courses for retraining and advanced training of specialists with the aim of working in the field of countering terrorism and extremism, at the political, theological, sociological and psychological faculties of universities, on the basis of training centers of specialised non-profit organisations.
5. To hold a bidding within the framework of the state order for groups of researchers and NPOs on the most relevant topics of countering terrorism and extremism, so that interested specialists and specialised organisations could contribute to the study of existing problems and preparation of necessary recommendations.
6. To cooperate with international organisations and local NPOs to exchange experiences, study best international practices with a view to their application in Kyrgyzstan.

**To Non-Profit Organisations and International Organisations that are Involved in
Countering Terrorism and Extremism:**

1. To promote the formation of a comprehensive social mechanism (including the coordinated joint activities of the authorised state body, municipalities, relevant state bodies, specialised NPOs and the business sector) to counter terrorism and extremism.
2. To conduct public examination of regulatory acts, concepts and programs regulating the issues of countering terrorism and extremism, as well as monitoring their implementation.
3. To support advanced training: decision-makers, state and municipal officers, experts of non-profit organizations, teachers in educational institutions and clergy in religious institutions, as well as local community activists.
4. To participate in mentoring and social support for victims of violence and persons undergoing social rehabilitation in cooperation with representatives of social services, specialists of authorised local authorities on site.
5. To support the implementation of educational and advisory activities on countering terrorism and extremism for all stakeholders.

6. To popularise the best foreign and local experience in the field of countering terrorism and extremism throughout Kyrgyzstan.
7. To strengthen public control over the processes of social adaptation of target groups which have undergone radicalisation and politicisation on site and in the country in general.
8. To develop standards for monitoring and evaluation given the positive international experience in countering terrorism and extremism.
9. Civic institutions and NPOs, first of all, need to adjust their priorities in the direction of working with target groups, since they are the risk group and are subject to radicalisation and politicisation.

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Annex 1

State Bodies

No.	Name of Organization	Address	Contact Details
1	State Committee for Religious Affairs	96 B, Kievskaya Str., Bishkek. 4, Zadneprovskaya Str., Osh.	E- mail: info@religion.gov.kg 1592 Hot Line Bishkek, telephone: (0312) 90-05-26 Fax: (0312) 66-18-21 Osh, telephone: (03222) 4-80-15 Fax: (03222) 4-80-04
2	Extremism and Illegal Migration Countering Service	Address: 469, Frunze Str., Bishkek 720040.	+996 312 26 60 64
3	Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan	57, Gogol Str., 720021.	Fax:: +996 (312) 486322 Tel.: (+996 (312) 48-61-64 E- mail: kg_muftiyat@mail.ru
4	State Agency for Local Government and Interethnic Relations under the	96 b, Kievskaya Str., Bishkek.	Hot Line 0312 662576

	Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (SALGIR)		Email: gamsumo-kr@mail.ru
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International Organizations

No	Name of Organization	Address	Contact Details
1	UN	160, Chui Avenue, Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic, 720040.	Tel.: +996-312-611211 Fax: +996-312-611217
2	OSCE	6, Ryskulov Str., Bishkek.	Office: +996 312 66 50 15 Office: +996 312 61 24 41, 61 24 43, 61 24 45, 61 24 46 Fax: +996 312 66 31 69 Bishkek@osce.org
3	European Union Delegation	5th floor, Orion Business Center, 21, Erkindik Boulevard, Bishkek, 720040.	+996 312 26 10 00 delegation-kyrgyzstan@eeas.europa.eu
4	International Alert	64B, Erkindik Boulevard.	+996 (312) 98-88-11 +996 (312) 98-88-13
5	Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)	Office No.1, 114/2, Kievskaya Str.	+996 312 313 097, 312 955 iwpr.kyrgyzstan@iwpr.net
6	Search for Common Ground	103, Ibraimov Str.	+996 (312) 622-777 Fax +996 (312) 662-777
7	Crisis Group		media@crisisgroup.org
8	PeaceNexus	103, Ibraimov Str.	info@peacenexus.org
9	Saferworld	Classic Hotel (7F floor), 143, Aliev Str., Osh, the	+996 (3222) 48577

		Kyrgyz Republic, 723500.	
10	PRI	96 b, Kievskaya Str., Bishkek.	pricentralasia@penalreform.org +7 (7172) 79-88-84, 76-99-34, 76-99-35
11	Internews	Asyl-Tash Business Center, 115, Ibraimov Str., Bishkek. 271, Kurmanjan Datka Str., Osh.	Telephone +996 (312) 98-68-80 Fax +996 (312) 31-78-50 Email: office-kg@internews.org

Bishkek (Chui Region)

No	Name of Organization	Address	Contact Details
1	Center for Public Policy	qasqad@inbox.ru 50-1, Razzakov Str., Bishkek.	0312-621410
2	Agents of Change	103, Ibraimov Str.	+996 507-89-26-89
3	Mutakalim	354, Den Syaopin Str., 720046.	Tel.: +996 (312) 883-023 Tel.: +996 (312) 883-717 Mob.: +996 555-622 092 Mob.: +996 702 288-301 Email: ppaw.mutakalim@gmail.com Email: jamal789@mail.ru

4	Foundation for International Tolerance	Apt. 36, building 27, Umetaliev Str., Bishkek. Apt. 7, building 88, Masaliev Str., Osh. b / 2, 12, Erkindik Blvd., Jalalabad. Building 22, Str. Khodzhaev, Batken.	Bishkek +996 (312) 910-757 +996 (312) 910-858 ftibishkek@gmail.com Osh +996 (3222) 412-86 fti.osh@gmail.com Jalalabad +996 (3722) 209-60 jalalabad.fti@gmail.com Batken +996 (3622) 501-15 +996 (3622) 502-01 fti.batken@gmail.com
5	Institute for Strategic Analysis and Forecasting (ISAF)	42, Chui Avenue, Bishkek.	(996-312) 43-94-15 Fax: (996-312) 43-94-17 E-mail: isap@krsu.edu.kg
6	Integra Discussion Club	87, Orozbekov Str.	0554505095
7	Prevention kg		preventionkg@gmail.com
8	Islam Post		http://islam-post.com/ islam-post@gmail.com
9	Ummah Islamic Magazine	134/309, Akhunbaev Str., Bishkek.	ummamagkg@gmail.com +996 (709) 65-36-85, +996 (551) 040-264
10	Research Institute of Islamic Studies	Room 417, 5-building, 51a, Razzakov Str.	0312 663 981
11	School of Peacekeeping and Media Technology	101\1, Manas Avenue, Bishkek.	+996 312 694015; +996 312 694016

			peacemakingschool@gmail.com ca-mediator@safe-mail.net www.ca-mediators.net
12	Internet Policy Civic Initiative	Office No. 13, 3 Floor, 79-B, Ryskulov Str.	Tel: +996 312 54 04 40 Tel: +996 770 700 300 Tel: +996 555 88 77 93 E-mail: info@gipi.kg
13	Media Policy Institute	Room 608, 6 floor, Russia Business Center, 19, Razzakov Str., Bishkek.	Contact Numbers: +996 (312) 961-960, +996 (312) 961-962. E-mail: mpi@media.kg
14	Reasonable Solutions Analytical Center		
15	Bulan Institute	40, Manas Avenue. +996 312 61 37 11, +996 555 37 35 02.	info@bulaninstitute.org
16	Iyman Foundation	Erkindik Boulevard.	

Talas Region

No	Name of Organization	Address	Contact Details
1	Aikol CIDC PA	Apt.23, building 77, Sarygulov Str., Talas.	03422) 53710; (0555) 887753 cidcaikol@gmail.com

Naryn Region

No.	Name of Organization	Address	Contact Details
1	Young Leaders of Naryn PA		550360506 Youthleader55@gmail.com

Batken Region

No.	Name of Organization	Address	Contact Details
1	Women Peacekeepers of Kyrgyzstan Network		Batken 0777393077
2	Peace Initiatives PA		0774 500 550 peace.batken@gmail.com

Osh Region

No.	Name of Organization	Address	Contact Details
1	Master of Joy Public Foundation	205/ 420, Lenin Str., Osh.	99603222 29912; 550422902 772440095 pbjoymaster@gmail.com
2	Iret PF		(03222) 23781 (0772 224357)

3. The Role of Religion in the Politics of Kyrgyzstan

Researcher: Omorov Akzhol

Mentor: Sheradil Baktygulov

Annotation

The purpose of this research is to identify whether the religion of Islam or the religious factor plays a role in the political life of Kyrgyzstan. It is important to note that religion is highly politicized despite the existence of current legislation on secularism.

As part of the research, the authors conducted analysis of various Internet sources, publications, video materials, electronic and print media, including the results of previous research on religion and related regulatory acts. In addition, the authors conducted interviews with political scientists, religious scholars, university professors, and members of the Ulema Council. As part of the research, secondary materials were analyzed and qualitative method of the research was used.

Abbreviations

HEE (university) – Higher Educational Establishment

SBMK –Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan

SCRA–State Commission for Religious Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic

JK – Jogorku Kenesh

KR–the Kyrgyz Republic

MM – Mass Media

Introduction

In Kyrgyzstan, the religious situation has changed significantly over the past 20 years and has developed in a new direction, that is, there is a frequent confusion of religion with politics. These processes taking place in the religious sphere are considered a new phenomenon, a new experience for Kyrgyzstan, which was under an atheistic ideology for 70 years (1918-1991). Religious freedom, which came along with the acquisition of independence, contributed to the show up of the young state to the world religious community. Currently, we can observe rapid developments of various religious communities which can be caused by trips of young people to foreign countries to receive religious education as well. The number of their supporters, representatives, and religious educational institutions is increasing. There is a strong influence of some religious leaders on the public and the frequent use of religious paraphernalia in everyday life, etc. According to the Constitution, the Kyrgyz Republic is a secular state, i.e. religion should not intervene in state administration²⁹, but, despite the principles in the country's law that religion is separate from the state, religion should not intervene in politics and state administration, therefore there is a participation of religion in the political life of Kyrgyzstan being observed. The following examples may be evidence of this.

Disputes about the bill draft to extend the lunch break on Fridays in connection with the Friday prayer started to take place in June 2016. The public strongly supported this discussion on social media, and disagreements between the religious leader, member of the Ulema Council, Ch. Zhalilov, and the people's deputy Zh. Akaev caused great public outcry in this discussion. The interference with the adoption of the bill draft by the religious leader as a member of the Ulema Council raises the following question:³⁰ “To what extent is Islam politicized?”.

In addition, the following cases show that religion is used for political purposes: the support of one of the candidates for presidency by a religious leader before the presidential election in 2017³¹; speaking to the people in favor of the candidate; plea to others to support this candidate³² and the words said by the Speaker of the Kyrgyz Republic during the 2018 Ayt Namaz that “if we wait for

²⁹Article 1 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic.

³⁰https://www.azattyk.org/a/kyrgyzstan_religion_security/27786378.html

³¹Member of the Ulema Council, Ex-Mufti Ch.Zhalilov Supported the Candidate for Presidency of the Kyrgyz Republic.

³²<https://kabarlar.org/news/93631-chubak-azhy-men-sooronbay-zheenbekovdu-koldoym-zhana-baardyk-musulmandardy-koldoogo-chakyrar.html>

support from religion, we follow the instructions of the spiritual board, we will get developed”³³etc. etc. These and other events clearly show that religion is used for political purposes.

The events of recent years can be regarded as the use of religious values in political processes in order to find support among Muslims. In this regard, there are fears that the politicization of Islam in the future may lead to an aggravation of the situation and to the risk of the state losing the secular regime. In addition, it is observed that politicians and high-ranking state officials started to actively participate in the activities of religious organizations in order to achieve political support.³⁴ All this raises a number of very important questions.

What is the role of religion in the politics of Kyrgyzstan as of a secular state? In what direction is religion moving from a political point of view? What will the politicization of religion lead to? What is politicization? What is the meaning of political Islam? If a state official or a municipal official is religious or close to religion, how should he perform his official duties? If he has to make any decision, then what rules, what principles should he use?

The answers to all these questions are relevant both for the state and for the religious sphere. This research is one of the first regarding the politicization of religion in Kyrgyzstan. There has been no research on the problems in this direction until today.

As part of the research, methods of desk research and expert interviews were used. The desk research was conducted on the basis of 17 researches, monographs and methodological guidelines, as well as the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic in the field of religion, in more than 30 periodicals and Internet sources. The expert interview involved 12 religious experts versed in religious issues.

Legal Framework of State Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Religious Sphere

The foundations of the state policy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the religious sphere are clearly stipulated in the Constitution of the country. According to Article 1 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic: “The Kyrgyz Republic is a sovereign, democratic, legal, secular, unitary, social state”.³⁵

³³<https://www.azattyk.org/a/kurman-ait-jumabekov-religion/29445427.html>

³⁴State Policy in the Religious Sphere: Fundamentals of the Law, Concepts of Kyrgyzstan and “Traditional Islam”, p.8.

³⁵See more in detail: the 2010 Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, 2010.

Article 7 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic defines the principle of secularism as follows: "No religion may be established as state or mandatory in the Kyrgyz Republic". Clause 2 of the article states that: "Religion and all cults are separate from the state", and clause 3 states: "Intervention of religious associations and ministers of religion in the activities of state bodies is prohibited."

At the same time, according to Article 32 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, every citizen shall be guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion. Every citizen has the right to freely choose and have religious and other beliefs, and no one can be forced to express his/her religious or other beliefs or to reject them. Article 20 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic states that the right to freedom of religion shall not be subject to any restrictions.

The Constitution provides for the principle of secularism in public administration, prohibits the creation of political parties on a religious basis (Article 4/3), prohibits the activities of religious associations whose actions are aimed at dismantlement of the statehood, inciting religious hatred, social superiority and discrimination (Articles 4/5 and 31).

The right to freedom of religion and the position of relations between the state and religious organizations is detailed in the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic" dated December 15, 2008, No. 282. According to Section 4/1 of the Law, everyone shall be guaranteed the right to freedom of religion and atheistic belief.³⁶

Freedom of religion defined in the Law - the right of a person to choose, have, change, express and disseminate religious beliefs, act in accordance with them, participate in worship, rituals, rites, not prohibited by law.

The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic", characterizes religious activity as activities aimed at satisfying religious needs of believers, spreading religions, religious education, conducting divine services, prayer meetings, reading sermons, training spiritual experts, clergy, missionary activities, as well as other activities aimed at organizational and material support of worship practice of a religious organization (publication and distribution of religious literature, manufacture and distribution of cult objects, production of apparels for spiritual workers and clergy and other activities).

³⁶More in detail in the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic" dated December 15, 2008, No. 282.

It should be noted that paragraph 15 of article 22 of the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On the Election of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic” indicates that religious leaders shall not have the right to propagandize, issue and disseminate any campaign materials³⁷.

The Concept of State Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Religious Sphere for 2014-2020, approved by the Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic PD No. 203 dated November 14, 2014, for the first time defines the following areas of the principle of state secularism:

- Religious organizations carry out their activities in accordance with the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic, the state establishes an equal attitude to religious confessions.
- The state introduces regulators that will ensure conditions for conducting the activities of religious associations and organizations in accordance with the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic, taking into account the fundamental principles of respect for human rights and the secular nature of the state.

At the same time, religious associations and organizations do not interfere in state administration, internal and foreign policies of the state, do not pursue political goals in their activities, and do not carry out actions that pose a threat to public and state security.

The state and religious associations cooperate in the social, cultural, educational, charitable and economic spheres, as well as in ensuring public safety, including the prevention of extremism.

The Kyrgyz Republic is a secular state in which everyone shall be guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion. The state pursues its religion policy on the basis of harmonious coexistence and mutual respect between secular and religious value systems.

The secularism principle of state regulation of the activities of religious organizations means the implementation of constitutional norms on the separation of religion and all cults from the state by preventing religious organizations and worshipers from interfering in the activities of state bodies.

In Kyrgyzstan, no one can be forced to express their religious or other beliefs or reject them, no one can be discriminated against on the basis of religion or lack thereof due to the secular nature of the state.

³⁷More in detail in the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On the Election of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic” dated July 2, 2011, No. 68.

The exercise of the right to freedom of conscience and religion is carried out in a secular state based on the principle of separation of functions between state bodies and religious organizations. This principle can be implemented subject to the following conditions:

- the state is confessional-neutral, does not associate itself with any religion and does not use any religious ideology as an official, mandatory for citizens;
- religious organizations do not interfere in the activities of state bodies and local authorities; have the right to apply to state bodies with proposals, statements and invitations to participate in events held by religious organizations;
- religious organizations do not perform any state functions;
- religious organizations do not participate in the activities of political parties and political movements;
- the state helps to strengthen inter-confessional harmony, mutual respect of believers of various confessions, as well as believers and disbelievers;
- state interference in the inter-confessional activities of religious organizations is allowed only in cases stipulated by the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- state control over the observance of the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic by religious organizations is based on the principle of respectful attitude of state authorities to the religious sentiments of believers.

The state, providing freedom of conscience and religion, based on the principles of protecting personal, public and national interests, in order to ensure stability and security of citizens, in the framework of the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic, takes the following measures:

- prevents conflicts on religious grounds and takes measures to resolve them;
- restricts the activities of religious organizations and movements dangerous to the individual, society and the state;
- exercises control over the content of religious education, religious literature, religious materials in mass media in order to prevent the propaganda of extremist or destructive ideas, religious hatred and incitement to violence.

What is the Meaning of the Principle of Secularism?

In cases where the secularism of one state is clearly envisaged in the constitution of that state, the principle of secularism of the state in social science is determined by the following criteria:

- partnership of state bodies with religious organizations;
- legal system of the state is determined by the degree of influence of religion.

Currently, principles of secularism are provided in the constitutions of 27 countries of the world. Among them 13 countries are the states where the vast majority of Muslims live: Azerbaijan (Article 7 Dunyevi), Kazakhstan (Article 1 Zaiyrly), Tajikistan (Article 1 Dunyavi), Turkmenistan (Article dünýewi), Turkey (Article 2 laik), Burkina Faso (laïc), Chad (laïque), Guinea (laïque), Guinea-Bissau (laica), Kosovo (secular), Mali (laïcitédel'Etat), Senegal (laïque) and the Kyrgyz Republic (secular form of government).³⁸

The concept of “secular” has changed in our country with atheism, as a result, the state was considered to be atheistic, that they decided to completely get rid of religion. Civil activists of atheistic views, not knowing the principles of religion and secularism, in some cases violate the peace of the public, arguing that religion interferes in politics.³⁹

If due to the fact that we would consider the concepts of “secular” and “legal” as identical, and the system as completely secularized and exclude Islam, then the word “secular” will start to be translated as “godlessness” and introduce the philosophy of godlessness. Pretending that we do not see religion that is natural for humanity, exclude it, this, in turn, can lead to a split and confrontation in society. As a consequence of this process, the other part of citizens who are against secular democracy can revolt.

Research Purpose

To determine the influence of Islam on political processes, and to determine on what level does it mostly affect (local level, district level, regional level, republican level).

Research Objectives

1. Determination of the relationship of the religion of Islam and politics in the legislative and practical processes that have occurred and are taking place in Kyrgyzstan.
2. Determination of political processes in which the religion of Islam is involved.
3. To determine at what level does the influence of the religion of Islam take place (at local level, district level, regional level, republican level).
4. Determination of the place and role of the religion of Islam in modern political processes.
5. Introduce models of state-religious relations.

³⁸<http://www.maviyorum.com/islamcilik-dislayici-laiklik-ve-pasif-laiklik-ahmet-kuru/> (Date of Last Visit:07/25/2017)

³⁹<https://center.kg/article/74>

Research Object

Political processes of the Kyrgyz Republic in which Islam participated.

Research Subject

Relations of Islam and politics in political processes.

Research Hypotheses

The religion of Islam is actively used in political processes taking place in the Kyrgyz Republic. The confusion of religion with political processes leads to the politicization of religion, which ultimately leads to the emergence of religious and political parties”.

Those politicians and civic activists who include religion in the political processes taking place in the Kyrgyz Republic, confusing the principle of secularism with atheism, have decided that religion and politics are a danger.

Research Questions

What is the role of religion in the politics of Kyrgyzstan as of a secular state? Where is religion leaning toward in the country from a political point of view? What can the politicization of religion lead to?

Research Methodology

Desk research was conducted at the first stage.

Desk research materials are used to identify research tools and field research progress. Desk research information sources:

- Internet sources (various publications, forums and video materials);
- Electronic and print media;
- Results of religious study;
- Laws and regulatory acts.

An expert interview was used from a qualitative research methodology along with desk research in order to conduct a more thorough analysis.

An expert survey was conducted in Bishkek. The list of experts was formed through mass media monitoring based on the following criteria: political scientist; understands the religious situation in Kyrgyzstan; actively participates in activities in the field of religion. In addition, recommendations were received through the additional method of "snowball", and database of experts was created on their basis.

In total, 12 experts participated in the interview: 9 interviews were conducted using the “face to face” method and due to the fact that it was not possible to meet with some experts, 3 experts were interviewed by phone. The dialogue was recorded on a tape recorder with the permission of the respondents themselves. The survey provided open-ended questions and created the conditions for experts to be able to express their thoughts openly and fully enough, as well as for the convenience of respondents the interviews were conducted in Kyrgyz and Russian languages. All information is summarized and given in the form of recommendations, and it was promised that the respondents' personal information will not be used and anonymity was guaranteed.

According to the research plan, the group of respondents consisted of independent experts, researchers, university teachers, specialists in the field of religious education, representatives of law enforcement agencies, state officials and employees of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan (SBMK).

Table 4 List of Experts

Interview No.	Profession	Education
1	Independent Expert	PhD
2	Independent Expert, Researcher	Higher Education
3	Independent Expert, Researcher	Higher Education
4	Researcher, Head of Research Center	Higher Education
5	Theologian	Higher Education
6	State Official	Higher Education
7	Independent Expert	PhD
8	Expert in Religious Education, Expert in the Structure of SBMK	Higher Education
9	University Teacher, Expert	PhD
10	Member of the Ulema Council	Higher Education
11	Independent Expert	Higher Education
12	MIA Officer	Higher Education

Research Tools

The expert survey was recorded on the tape recorder through a semi-structural interview with the permission of the respondents themselves.

Basic Concepts:

Politics – the activities of state authorities, which regulate internal and external relations, the tasks of the country in accordance with general interests of the state.

Religion—is a worldview conditioned by a belief in the supernatural, including a set of moral standards, rituals, cult actions.

Desk Research Results

Brief History of State Policy in Religious Sphere

In order to determine the role of Islam in the Kyrgyzstani politics and their relationship, it is necessary to consider the stages of state policy in the religious sphere of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The first stage can be called liberal, it was during this period that complete freedom of religion was granted.⁴⁰ The state policy in this direction was neutral at the initial stages, mainly limited to registering the number of different religious organizations. Such passivity removed the state from the function of controlling the religious sphere. As a result, many non-traditional religious organizations began to arrive on the territory of the country, which launched their activities here. Due to the liberal attitude in the country, relations with the Muslim world have strengthened and the foundation of the Islamic Renaissance processes has been established. In addition, most young Kyrgyzstani people began to travel to foreign countries to receive religious education.

As a result of the Batken events of 1999, the invasion of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan on the territory of Kyrgyzstan, necessity to combat religious extremism arose in the state.

The second stage conforms with 2000-2006, which can be arbitrarily called the stage of "moderate punishment." Since the state experienced many difficulties and used forceful methods in the fight against religious extremism, but at that time preventive work was not carried out.⁴¹

During this period, the religious community continued to develop in its parallel world, minimally intersecting with the state in the field of socio-political and economic relations.

The third stage, 2006-2013 period, when the state gradually began to enter the role of an active player. Since the events and processes that took place in society led to the fact that it was possible to observe how religion began to play an important role in the life of citizens and became more active in their socio-political life. During this time, the public sharply increased interest in

⁴⁰K. Malikov, Religious Freedom and Public Safety: Assessment and Prospects for the Development of the Religious Situation in Kyrgyzstan

⁴¹Ibid

religion, as a result of which there appeared such problems as: missionary work in mass media, proselytism, problems related to inter-confessional relations, extremism, as well as problems related to registration of the number of religious objects.

Thus, the Government adopted the State Concept in the Religious Sphere in 2006, and finally the Law on Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations was adopted in the end of 2008. It should be noted that the State Commission for Religious Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic (SCRA) was created and began to function in 2006.

The last stage can be considered the period from 2014 to the present day. Since in February 2014, the decision of the Security Council (at that time - Defense) adopted the Concept of State Policy in the Religious Sphere of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2014-2020.

Kyrgyzstani Politics and Religion of Islam

Despite the fact that religion is separated from the state in a secular state, in reality, religion is not yet separated from the people and is used in their daily lives. Maybe, gradually, it can become the core of traditional, social norms and rules of society. The religion of Islam has a special place in the socio-political life of Kyrgyzstan. The first reason is that most of the population follows this religion; the second reason - religion has merged with the customs and traditions of the people and mixed with their spiritual culture. As noted in the law, religion does not intervene in state administration, religion and all religious cults are separated from the state. However, in fact, it is observed how religion and the state began to strengthen the relationship and are even closer. At present, there are prayer rooms for personal prayers of employees in state institutions. It is even known that there are 2 prayer rooms (namazkana) in the building of the Jogorku Kenesh. This phenomenon indicates that religion has its place not only in the lives of ordinary people, but also in the lives of state officials, civil servants, who make important decisions. It should be noted here that the problem is not that there are prayer rooms in state enterprises, but that who and for what purposes uses religion.

According to the professor of the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University, doctor of historical sciences Z. Kurmanov, the Islamization of Kyrgyzstan is a normal phenomenon, as this is a global

trend, whether we like it or not, affect our society. However, over time, Muslim parties will appear that will even demand the establishment of a caliphate in the country, headed by an imam.⁴²

Director of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting A. Sultannazarov believes that religion has long gone beyond the boundaries of the spiritual institution. The increase in the number of supporters of Islam suggests that this is actually a ready-made electorate. Religion is gradually becoming an instrument of political games, a substitution of moderate Islam for radical views. This contributes to the strengthening of negative trends in society.⁴³

Religion scholars believe that religion performs integrative, regulatory, psychotherapeutic and communicative functions. According to the sociologist Bakyt Maltabarov, it has recently been easy to notice how people began to use religion for political purposes. In sociology this is called “the politicization of religion” or “the Islamization of politics”. To be more precise, the state intervenes in the affairs of religion, religion participates in state affairs.⁴⁴

After all these statements, the following question arises: how is the process of politicization of religion or the Islamization of politics going on?

We can consider this process in different groups:

The first group – is the work of the political elite in order to get support and votes of electors, including the believing electorate, during a large political campaign. Rather, they often use religious rhetoric before the elections, they say that it is necessary to legalize some problems of religion. Candidates create the look of a religious person.

For example, before the presidential elections in 2017 at the Islamic University of Bishkek, T. Sariev handed the Koran, dating back to the 18th century, not to the head of the educational institution, but to the Ulama Chubak azhi famous to the Kyrgyz public.⁴⁵

The second group – the efforts of some state officials to use religion in their personal interests to replenish political points. In addition to the election period, one can notice attempts to politicize religion for different interests.

⁴²https://24.kg/obschestvo/24382_politika_vs_religiya_hojdenie_po_mukam/

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴<https://www.azattyk.org/a/kyrgyzstan-religion-policy-discussion/29450963.html>

⁴⁵https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNIFDLtm6_8

The leader of the Ata Meken parliamentary party, O. Tekebaev, in 2016 initiated a draft law On State Support for Traditional Religions, which contradicts the norms of the Constitution on equality of religions.⁴⁶

In June 2016 (conforms with the month of Ramadan of the specified year), the deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh T. Ikramov proposed a bill draft to extend the Fridays lunch break by 2 hours. As a result, the bill draft “On Amending the Labor Code of the Kyrgyz Republic” was put up for public discussion, but did not find support in the right amount.⁴⁷

Congratulatory speech of the speaker of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic D. Zhumabekov on August 21, 2018 that: “If we accept good intentions and instructions expressed by the spiritual board with our hearts, if we follow these events, the development of the Kyrgyz state will also be rapid,” provoked heated discussions in society. And even if this event was not a political process in which religion participated, we can say that it served as a good example of religious policy.⁴⁸

The third group occurs through the active participation of clergy in important socio-political problems. Everyone knows that there is freedom of religion in the country. However you must be able to use this freedom within the law.

For example, in June 2016, a clergyman supported the deputies, who took the initiative to increase the Fridays lunch break by two hours, and also spoke out against the people's deputy Zh. Akaev, who did not support this bill. He accused him of “opposing religion” and intimidated him by not taking part in his religious rites, by not going to read the janaza, and not sitting at the same table with him.⁴⁹

Before the presidential elections in 2017, the clergyman Chubak azhi Zhalilov supported the candidate for presidency S. Zheenbekov, who called on the people to support him, and that he does not act as an ex-mufti and clergyman, but as a citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic, who has a Kyrgyz passport.⁵⁰ These examples were made public as they were published in the media. The same clergy pleas can be often found on social media. For example, a SBMK employee and an imam-khatib of

⁴⁶kabarlar.org/news/press/40410-salttuu-dinderge-mamlekettik-koldoo-krst-zhnnd-myyzam-koldoo-tapty.html

⁴⁷https://www.bbc.com/kyrgyz/kyrgyzstan/2016/06/160608_discussion_namaz

⁴⁸<https://www.azattyk.org/a/kurman-ait-jumabekov-religion/29445427.html>

⁴⁹https://www.azattyk.org/a/kyrgyzstan_religion_security/27786378.html

⁵⁰kabarlar.org/news/93631-chubak-azhy-men-sooronbay-zheenbekovdu-koldoym-zhana-baardy-musulmandardy-koldoogo-chakyrar.html

one of the districts of Bishkek posted similar opinions on the pages of Facebook on September 18, 2017.

As can be seen from the above fragment, there is a plea through a direct expression of their position, since you can see followers in the comments who say that they will vote for the one for whom the “elders” will vote.

The fourth group – is the phenomena that arose due to the direct connection of religion with politics, despite the principle of secularism of the state. For example, Tursunbai Bakir uulu, having become a deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh, refused to put his hand on the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, and took an oath, putting his hand on the Koran.⁵¹ He noted that over the past 10 years, the Constitution had repeatedly changed, and he took the oath on the holy book, which will always be unchanged, and that his oath is stronger than that of others.⁵²

Fifth group. It can be called politicization, which arose along with an increase in the number of believers in society. For example, Chubak azhi openly called for support for the Uluu Kyrgyzstan party, which was created in 2012. The reason he called the fact that in the specified party, many read namaz and the party consisted of his followers.⁵³

The sixth group – is the replacement by the local authorities of their own segment with religious organizations. For example, you can name the controversy surrounding the burial of the body of a female Baptist. Due to the fact that religious leaders were opposed that she would be buried in their local community, she was buried in a neighboring village. Despite the fact that the land was municipal property, aiyl okmotu could not have solved this problem.⁵⁴

Types of Relations between Religion and State

In general, three general types of relations between religion and the state can be pointed out:

1. State and municipal bodies conduct "neutral" work with religious organizations. In this model, a distance is maintained between the state and religious organizations; good opportunities are created for religious organizations to receive education and conduct activities. In this case, it will be difficult for the state to impose a ban, restrict or control.

⁵¹<http://limon.kg/news:63902>

⁵²Ibid

⁵³https://www.azattyk.org/a/kyrgyzstan_election_politics/27275039.html

⁵⁴https://kaktus.media/doc/346425_delo_o_perezahoronenii_vse_v_odnom_materialie.html

2. State bodies are becoming “leaders.” Religious organizations are subordinate to them. In this case, state supremacy prevails and religious leaders are under strict state control.

3. Religious organizations are becoming “leaders.” State bodies are subordinate to religious organizations. In this case, religious organizations become authoritative and influence decision-making by state bodies.

Political processes in which the religion of Islam participated were listed in this section through an analysis of secondary sources, research, articles and mass media.

Expert Survey Results

The results of the analysis of expert interviews showed the following:

Basically, experts noted that the religion of Islam at some level plays a huge role in the Kyrgyzstani politics. “At present, the role of Islam in the Kyrgyzstani politics has not been checked and analyzed. If we dwell on some citizens, then this topic should be investigated more specifically. Some officials who work in parliament and have senior government positions, as well as prominent businessmen, fulfill all 5 pillars of Islam. Some parliamentarians and officials have committed Hajj and Umrah. And even if they do not adhere to religious principles when making decisions, still religion has an impact on their worldview, behavior, relations with other citizens, and attitude to work.⁵⁵ Also in the Jogorku Kenesh and in the Presidential Administration there are supporters of religious communities that came to us from foreign countries, such as Tablighi Jamaats, Muslim Brothers.⁵⁶

“Religion and the state continue to cooperate, it is even possible that religion is simply being used. This is especially well observed during presidential, parliamentary and local elections whereby there is an attempt to use religion. In other cases, they try to separate religion from the state”.⁵⁷

“There are no concepts distinguishing between religion and politics in Kyrgyzstan. Currently, everything is mixed up and all possible resources are used to achieve political goals, be it religion or money. Thus, when the opportunity arises, they try to find a more authoritative leader, try to find support from the people and voters. For example, most politicians build mosques in their villages and

⁵⁵Interview No.1

⁵⁶Interview No.2

⁵⁷Interview No.10

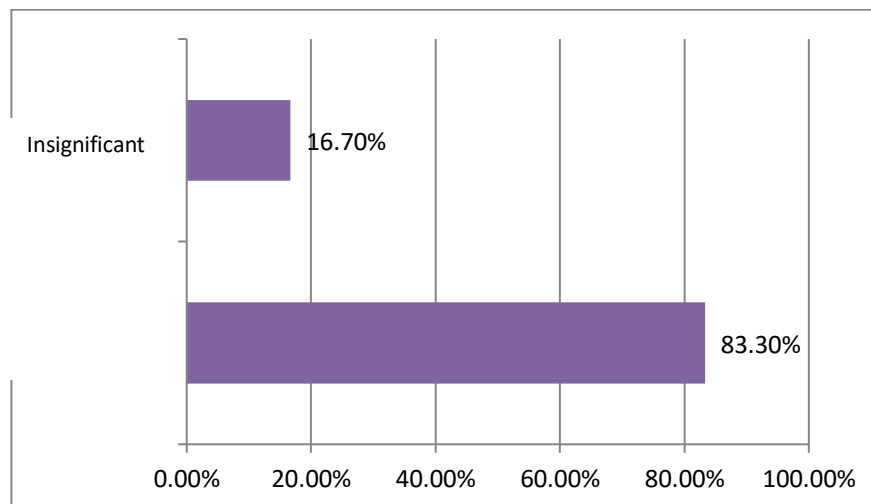
assign them the names of their fathers or grandfathers. In addition, it became a habit to go to mosques and show off to people during the elections”.⁵⁸

“At present, religion has embarked upon a chaotic and erratic path”.⁵⁹ Maybe it seeks to find its place, position, which it has lost over the past 70 years. Today, the law aims to open and control religious organizations, mosques, madrassas. However besides this, we can say that religion is observed in the economic sphere (halal industry, food industry).

“The entry of the phenomena of social media into the political sphere is logical”.⁶⁰ “Some active Muslims do not work on Fridays. For example, private firms, private shops, auto repair shops in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions have rest on Fridays, and work on Saturday and Sunday. Even if the local population is outraged, this is considered private property, and even the law cannot do anything to personal choice ”.⁶¹

Therefore, many experts believe that religion plays an important role in politics. According to only two experts, today religion plays an insignificant role (Diagram 1).

Diagram 1 The Role of Religion in Politics



⁵⁸Interview No.7

⁵⁹Interview No.7

⁶⁰Interview No.9

⁶¹Interview No.1

“Politicians use religion as an instrument to influence society, especially during elections. If some religious leaders openly participated in campaigning during the last presidential elections, then campaigning for some candidate is secretly executed in the mosques of the regions”.⁶²

“Religion began to be used in personal interests. Some deputies began to build relations of religion, as well as to unite based on religious characteristics”.⁶³ “In addition, in order to maintain their position, the interests of people from the religious sphere merged with the interests of political figures. If anyone, starting from the spiritual board and ending with Kazy, has a strong political personality or lever behind his back, then no one can remove this Kazy or Mufti from his position”.⁶⁴

According to all experts who participated in the survey, the religion of Islam is being politicized, and religion is used as an instrument for political purposes. “There are situations when, using Islam, they want to come to power, and in some cases they hide behind religion for political interests. Since no political party or political leader has as many followers on social networks as some religious leaders do. The ratings of religious leaders are very high among 20-30-year-old young people. If A.Narmatov and Ch.Zhalilov join any political party, then they can easily bring this party to the Jogorku Kenesh”.⁶⁵

At what level is the influence of Islam? The majority of experts (66.7%) answered this question at all levels: local, district, regional and central (Diagram No. 2). According to some experts (25%) – at the local level; only in the opinion of one expert – at the central level. “Since religion is widespread in all regions of the republic, it strongly influences everywhere, as well as at the local level. We can provide, as an example, the facts when ayil okmotu purchased a carpet for a mosque, organized iftar from the funds of the budget, etc”.⁶⁶ According to one expert, “the influence is more often at the central level, as in the regions the influence varies depending on regions and areas”.⁶⁷ (Diagram 2)

Diagram 2 Religion Impact Levels

⁶²Interview No.1

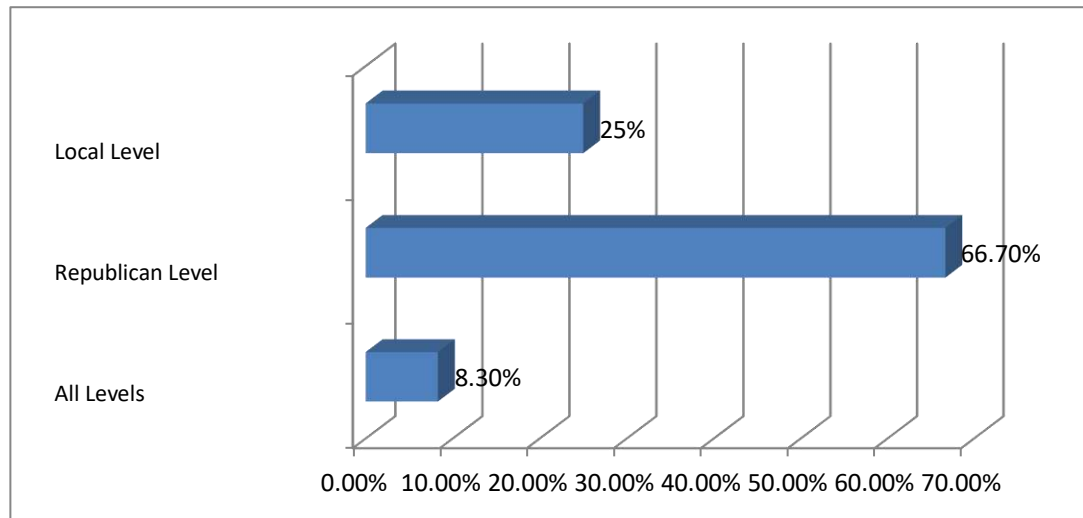
⁶³Interview No.11

⁶⁴Interview No.8

⁶⁵Interview No.2

⁶⁶Interview No.6

⁶⁷Interview No.8



What is the role of religious figures and religious leaders in the politicization of religion? One can see a general opinion on this issue that politicians use believers (figure 3). For example, "10 years ago, politicians who tried to get the votes of ethnic minorities through the "Assembly of the Peoples of Kyrgyzstan" today are trying to get the votes of the believing part of the population.⁶⁸ Religious activists listen to the opinions of religious leaders. “Mullahs do not act on their own, they take such steps, because there is someone who supports them. When the time comes, politicians will support that particular clergyman”.⁶⁹ A religious leader expressed the idea to this question that: “religious leaders cannot but intervene. Since they are trying to maintain their authority and reputation. And the people also want to hear his opinion. They are waiting for them to be told how we can do the right thing for Kyrgyzstan, what we must do so as not to become disgraced. In order to deliver on their hopes, we need some kind of need, responsibility”.

Who does politicize religion the most, and who does intervene in politics? Religious leaders or politicians? Half of the experts answered this question – political figures, and some noted that both sides (figure 3). According to only one expert, religion is politicized by famous Aalym, especially by members of the Muftiyat.⁷⁰ There are those among the clergy who want to rule the state and believe that it is impossible to rule the state without Islam.⁷¹ (Diagram 3.)

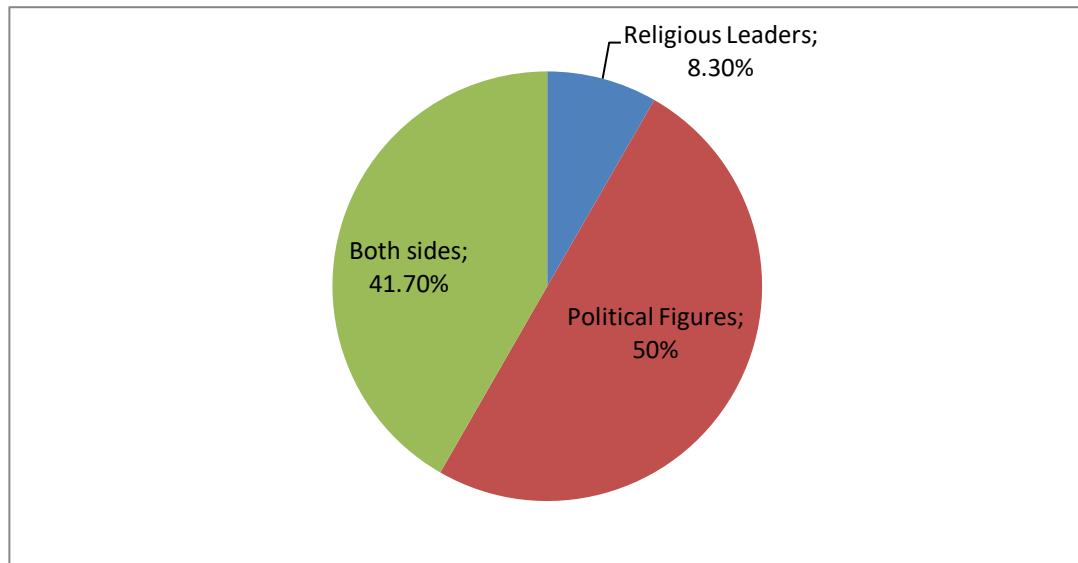
Diagram 3 Politicization of Religion

⁶⁸Interview No. 6

⁶⁹Interview No.1

⁷⁰Interview No.12

⁷¹Interview No.7



If a state or municipal employee is a believer or close to religion, then how should he fulfill his official duties? What principles should he be guided by when making any decision? Experts answered this question that, no matter what conflicts of interests arise, everything should be resolved within the framework of the law and as indicated in functional duties, since we have freedom of religion and everyone can adhere to any religion, but it is necessary for an expert to be able to distinguish between the personality and trust, given his position, specialization, professionalism.

The clergy cannot express their position regarding the candidate for the post before the elections. Does this anyhow restrict the freedom of one citizen or any of his rights? The answers of experts to this question are as follows:

Diagram 4 Assessment of the Rights of Citizens and the Religious Factor During Elections

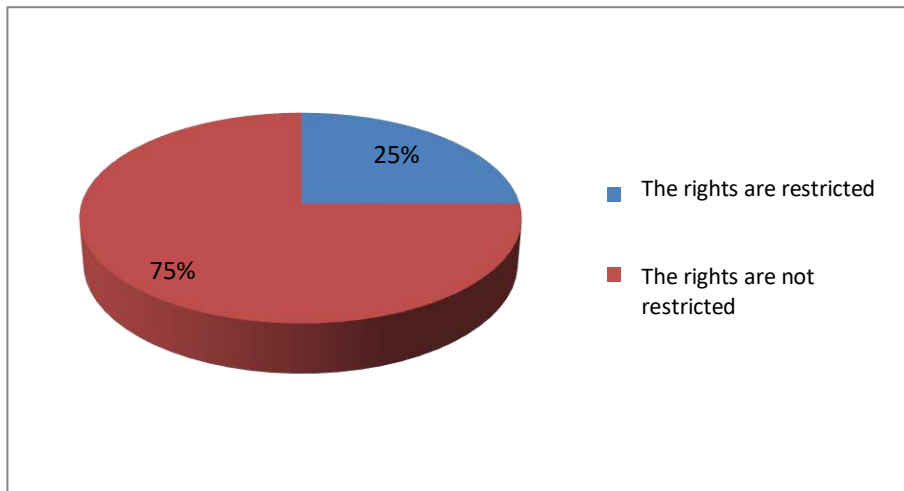


Diagram 4 provides an assessment of the rights of citizens and their religiousness during the elections. Before the election, the clergy cannot express their position regarding the candidates for the post. Does this anyhow restrict the freedom of one citizen or any of his rights?

According to the experts of the first group (Diagram 4), the law prohibits the propaganda and agitation in favor of a particular candidate by religious leaders working in the structure of the Muftiyat and a member of the Ulema Council. There is no restriction of rights and freedoms, everything is only put in order here. They express their position without any restrictions.

Experts who expressed a second opinion believe that no matter what important events take place in the country, every citizen should express his opinion,⁷² even religious leaders, being state taxpayers, have the right to express their opinion.⁷³

At what stage of religious politicization are we now?

“Due to the fact that we have just begun to strictly adhere to religion, and religion is only becoming popular, we can say that we are only at the beginning of the path. Now we are standing on the path of the politicization of religion. It is necessary to protect the principles that are characteristic of a legal, democratic, secular state and to prevent the politicization of religion”.⁷⁴

⁷²Interview No.11

⁷³Interview No.3

⁷⁴Interview No.11

“As they say to the warrior heroes from fairy tales: “If you go to the right - you will lose the horse, if you go to the left - you will lose life”- we are also standing at the crossroads, that is we have a choice.”⁷⁵

“We are on the verge of politicizing religion”. The experts also replied that: “We have moved from the closed phase of the politicization of religion to the open phase, now in the future the politicization of religion will be open”.⁷⁶

What processes can happen after that?

“In the coming years, several political parties with Muslim activists will appear. It will be a secular-political party, the regulations of which will be based on religion, and which will consist of religious activists. These parties will have their own distinctive signs. For example, they do not openly declare, but little by little are engaged in the construction of large companies in business structures, create construction companies, trading companies and continue to work. And now there will turn up those who will enter politics from the business sphere. Large firms will push their people. The elections to be held in 2020 will reveal a lot to us. I think that 30% of the parliament will be activists. Before that, as well, a member of the Tablighi Jamaat community was the mayor of Batken, and there were also facts when a young businessman, religious activist was a deputy of the Osh city kenesh”.⁷⁷

“Before, there were only one or two deputies reading namaz. Now the number of people reading namaz has increased. People began to say that: “There will be created a party consisting not only of those who read namaz, but also of devout believers, which will be led by a very serious person and among whom there will also be Aalymys. If we elect them, they will be able to raise the state”.⁷⁸

Experts believe that religion will be used very actively in the upcoming 2020 elections and will show in the future what place it will take in politics.

What will be the result of the politicization of religion?

“The politicization of religion will never lead to good. Politicization spoils religion, spoils religious practice”.⁷⁹“Since there are only interests in politics, and there are no personal interests in religion. Everything dirty in politics can spoil the purity and innocence of religion, and religion can suffer more from this”.⁸⁰

⁷⁵Interview No.9

⁷⁶Interview No.2

⁷⁷Interview No.1

⁷⁸Interview No.8

⁷⁹Interview No.9

⁸⁰Interview No.3

“In world practice, the politicization of religion has never brought either good or development. This can be seen in the example of foreign political parties. For example, if, as in Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey and other countries, a party will come to power on the basis of religion, then this could lead to a civil war, as in Algeria”.⁸¹

Conclusion

The research findings have revealed that the religion of Islam has spread widely among the public and due to the fact that the number of followers of the religion is increasing, there are attempts to politicize religion. In many cases, religion becomes an instrument for the political interests of elites.

In Kyrgyzstan, the process of politicizing religion is implemented in the following ways:

The first way is the work of the political elite in achieving their specific goals in order to get more votes and cause sympathy among voters, including the believing electorate, with the start of large election campaigns. Before the elections, they often use religious rhetoric, talking about the need to legitimize some problems of religion. In some way they want to show themselves to be a religious person, present gifts to religious educational institutions, etc.

The second way is the effort of some state officials to use religion in their personal interests in order to earn political points. In addition to the election period, one can notice attempts to politicize religion for different interests. For example, to wait for support from the believing population, offering them some kind of a bill draft, or to say on ayt namaz that if we work according to the guidance of the spiritual board, we will develop, etc.

The third way occurs through the active participation of clergy in solving important socio-political problems. It happens through offers, campaigning that are contrary to the laws.

The fourth way is the phenomenon that arose because of the direct attempt to connect religion with politics, despite the principle of secularism of the state. For example, when the oath is taken not on the Constitution of the country, but on the Koran.

The fifth way is the replacement by the local authorities of their own segment with religious organizations.

⁸¹Interview No.7

Half of the parliamentarians and officials committed Hajj and Umrah. And even if they do not adhere to religious principles when making decisions, then religion has an impact on their worldview, behavior, attitude to other citizens and even attitude to work.

Religion began to be used in personal interests. Some deputies began to build relations on the basis of similar religious beliefs, as well as unite based on religious communities.

In order to be in a high position in the SBMK structure, it is necessary to have acquaintances in state power.

Islam began to be used as an instrument for politicizing religion and political interests.

Islam affects all levels of social life, i.e. influence occurs at the local, district, regional and central levels. All levels of society are influenced by religion starting from ayil okmotu and ending with the central state bodies.

Religion is politicized mainly by political figures. There are those among the clergy who want to rule the state and believe that it is impossible to rule the state without Islam.

In the coming years, several political parties with Muslim activists will appear. It will be a secular-political party, the rules of which will be based on religion, and which will consist of religious activists.

There is also an opinion that: “There will be created a party consisting not only of those who read namaz, but also of devout believers, which will be led by a very serious person and among whom there will also be Aalymys. If we elect them, they will be able to raise the state”.

The politicization of religion will never lead to good. Politicization spoils religion, spoils religious practice, since in politics there are only interests, and there are no personal interests in religion. Everything dirty in politics can spoil the purity and innocence of religion, and religion can suffer more from this.

In world practice, the politicization of religion has never brought either good or development. This can be seen in the examples of foreign political parties.

Three general types of relations between religion and state can be pointed out:

1. State and municipal bodies conduct "neutral" work with religious organizations.
2. State bodies are becoming “leaders.”
3. Religious organizations are becoming “leaders.” Religion in the life of society played an important role in the global community, in the history of mankind, in political and economic life, in maintaining the integrity of society, in solving important problems, etc. We cannot ignore the fact

that, together with the proper use of religious potential in solving some problems of our society, it can benefit the state and people.

Recommendations

State Commission for Religious Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic:

- It is necessary to legitimize the principle of secularism of the state, as it was indicated in the Concept of State Policy in Religious Sphere for 2014-2020.
- Prevent the use of religion as a political tool.
- In order to clearly explain the place and function of religion to the public, political and religious figures need to carry out preventive measures and set the condition for developing methodological guidelines in this direction.
- It is necessary to develop our own concept of secularism, own principle, and not to use the concepts of America, France or another state.
- Develop a guide named “Religion in Electoral Processes” (a guide on interaction between state bodies, local governments and religious organizations in the electoral processes).

Central Electoral Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic:

- In order to regulate and identify the use of religious factors in the electoral process, to create a working group consisting of employees of relevant state bodies, members of the Ulema Council in order develop election guidelines.
- It is necessary to prepare a guide and conduct trainings for political parties and their representatives.

Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan:

- It is necessary to issue a guide for religious leaders on what relations they should adhere to with candidates and political parties during the election campaign, as well as during elections.
- It is also necessary to conduct trainings in this direction.

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4. Comprehending the Causes of Intersectional Discrimination of Religious Girls and Women in Osh city

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Osh 2019

List of Abbreviations

WGPI	Women and Girls Practicing Islam
SBMK	Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan
RA	Regulatory Acts
KR	the Kyrgyz Republic
MM	Mass Media
CA	Central Asia
UN	United Nations Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SCRA	State Commission for Religious Affairs
AEIMS	Anti-Extremism and Illegal Migration Service
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
CS	Civil Society
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
DMP	Decision-Making Process
DM	Decision Makers
LEB	Law Enforcement Bodies
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
MTA	Municipal Territorial Administration

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Annotation

The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic and relevant industry-wide regulatory acts (for example, “On State Guarantee of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women”, “Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic”, etc.) prohibit any forms of violation of human rights and forms of discrimination. There is no single approach to define the concept of “discrimination”, as well as the term “multiple or intersectional discrimination” at the legislative level. It must be admitted that in Kyrgyz society the problem of discrimination is relevant in general, including its intersectional form (based on gender, language, various beliefs and social origin) that is encountered in relation to the object of this research - WGPI.

The research findings showed that, on the one hand, self-identification of WGPI noticeably influences the degree of their integration into the public life of the city, on the other hand, society is trying to accept this as something natural and not to show a certain position - welcoming or opposing to this phenomenon.

There are certain prerequisites and causes that contribute to discrimination and restriction of the rights and opportunities of WGPI in public processes, including the decision-making process at the city level. These causes include, for example, the internal situation and rules of departments and institutions, well-established stereotypes and prejudices in society, as well as insufficient understanding of the term “secularism”, etc.

Introduction and Literature Review

Islam in Kyrgyz society remains one of the most important subjects for discussion, which in turn is controversial. On the one hand, the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic⁸² provides all citizens with freedom, equal rights and duties in matters of religion and religious beliefs. On the other hand, an increasing number of messages that are covered mainly in mass media indicate the existence of facts of violations of the law, universal human values of the equality of all this area. This is due to a number of reasons,⁸³ which, firstly, can be expressed in stigmatisation of people who follow the norms and rules of Islam⁸⁴ conditioned by well-established prejudices, stereotypes and local traditions. Secondly, it would be correct to assume that there are problems of marginalisation and discrimination of people, in particular women and girls who practice Islam in certain areas of the socio-economic life of society. Such areas include places of employment, as well as study in secondary educational institutions,⁸⁵ with restrictions or rules of wearing clothes. In turn, these two points through “reinforcing” each other lead to the fact that WGPI also become vulnerable to multiple or intersectional discrimination. Given the historical perspective that there is an Islamic tradition society living in modern Kyrgyzstan, where the dominant part (85%)⁸⁷ identifies themselves as Muslims, it’s also interesting to try to understand why there are manifestations of discrimination in the “Muslim” society precisely because of religious affiliation and practice.

Before proceeding to the definition of the research problem - discrimination, it makes sense to dwell on important aspects of social and Muslim identity. From the viewpoint of sociology, identity is a category through which certain norms and values inherent in a social group are acquired, where an individual sees himself. And in this group there is a small subgroup of leaders who form universal formulas for the rest⁸⁸. There is also an opinion that a person’s identity is constructed from two

⁸²The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, section two “Rights and Freedoms of Human and Citizen”;

⁸³Azattyk "The topic of hijab is discussed at the highest level in Kyrgyzstan". 2015. Available at: [\[https://bit.ly/2Pw1Ne1\]](https://bit.ly/2Pw1Ne1) (08/02/2019);

⁸⁴Cabar Asia "Hijab is not a reason to limit yourself." 2018. Available at: [\[https://bit.ly/2EuaCUz\]](https://bit.ly/2EuaCUz) (08/02/2019);

⁸⁵News Asia "The Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic believes that wearing a hijab as a "religious attribute" is not provided in schools". 2018. Available at: [\[https://bit.ly/2UFVAjr\]](https://bit.ly/2UFVAjr) (08/02/2019);

⁸⁶VB. 2018. “A girl in a headscarf is not allowed in school in Kyrgyzstan. Is this legal?” Available at [\[https://bit.ly/2CaaAPq\]](https://bit.ly/2CaaAPq) (08/03/2019);

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⁸⁸Hogg M.A. and Reid S.A. 2006. Social Identity, Self-Categorization, and the Communication of Group Norms. *Communication Theory*, 16, 7–30;

important aspects - the psychological basis, including, for example, honor, a sense of belonging that is inherent in all social groups, and specific practices and traditions that distinguish one group from another.⁸⁹ Another substantive approach in understanding identity lies in the fact that two types of factors form identity. Firstly, these are factors that are important from the viewpoint of the person himself, secondly, these are factors for identification that are significant from the standpoint of society, which reinforce individual and social levels of identity⁹⁰. All of the above opinions help to reveal the concept of Muslim identity in general, and of WGPI in particular. For example, based on Phinney's opinion on the psychological component and specific practices, it would be correct to assume that hajj can be considered as a practice of a Muslims prayer, and psychological ones include a sense of belonging to the Muslim community, for example, in the mouths of believers in our society it is often affirmed as follows: “*Alhamdulillah, I am a Muslim*”.⁹¹ It should be noted that physically visible elements of these aspects play an important role in shaping the surrounding opinion on the one hand, and the ways of expressing oneself as a Muslim (male) or Muslim (female) on the other hand. In this sense, wearing a hijab by women and girls is one of the clear indicators of the visible element of the Muslim identity. Moreover, researchers note that currently wearing a hijab is not only a symbolic of purity, piety and religiousness,⁹² but also cultural and political self-esteem which is accompanied by independence and pride.⁹³ Based on the above opinions, it can be assumed that in most countries, including the Kyrgyz Republic, where Islam is not an officially recognised state religion, WGPI are trying to position themselves not only as ordinary believers, but also as part of a larger Muslim community that seeks to achieve respect and freedom from the rest. At the same time, one of the few religious women leaders of the country, Zhamal Frontbek kzyzy complains that “SBMK has no systematic work with women. Women in a headscarf are weak, it must be admitted. Many are not ready to fight for their rights». ⁹⁴

⁸⁹Phinney, J.S. 1990. Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: A review of research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 499–514;

⁹⁰Facets of Identity: Collective Monograph / A.A. Buchek [et al.]; under the general ed. of E.A. Kormochi. Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky: KamGU Publishing House, 2014, 187;

⁹¹It can be translated from Kyrgyz into Russian as “Praise Allah, I am a Muslim;

⁹²CAAN. “Helen Thibault: On Hijabs and Failures of Secularism in Central Asia”. [\[https://bit.ly/2ZoiFWM\]](https://bit.ly/2ZoiFWM). Available at: (08/24/2019);

⁹³Droogsma, R.A. 2007. Redefining hijab: American Muslim women's standpoints on veiling. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 35, 294–319;

⁹⁴CABAR Asia. “Zhamal Frontbek kzyzy: Religious women must fight for their rights.” 2018. Available at: [\[https://cabar.asia/ru/zhamal-frontbek-kzyzy-religioznye-zhenshhiny-dolzhny-borotsya-za-svoi-prava\]](https://cabar.asia/ru/zhamal-frontbek-kzyzy-religioznye-zhenshhiny-dolzhny-borotsya-za-svoi-prava)(07/24/2019);

The concept of “discrimination” is present in industry regulatory acts, where it is explained as an unlawful phenomenon that restricts the rights and freedoms of citizens on the basis of belonging to a social group⁹⁵, and there is a punishment for manifesting discrimination provided in the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic.⁹⁶

There is no single approach to the definition of multiple or intersectional discrimination as such. In this regard, for an accurate explanation of this issue, the expert and civil society refer to the definitions used in research and academic circles. There are various approaches and theoretical thoughts that try to reveal the essence of the concept of multiple or intersectional discrimination. One of the first attempts to conceptualise this concept was made at the UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Article 2 of the official document states: “... a person may be a victim of multiple ... forms of discrimination ... on other related grounds, such as gender, language, religion, political and other beliefs, social origin...”.⁹⁷ Defining the concept of multiple discrimination, it is noted that a person, having many aspects, is at risk, each person can become a victim of discrimination on several grounds (race, gender, ethnic group and age).⁹⁸ In turn, international law has developed the fundamental characteristics of the forms of multiple and intersectional discrimination. The Human Rights Committee claims that “discrimination against women is often combined with discrimination on other grounds...”⁹⁹, similar provisions are also observed in the General Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.¹⁰⁰ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights contains the list of potential grounds for which discrimination is prohibited: skin color, gender, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, financial situation, birth or other circumstances of marital status, professional status, disability etc..¹⁰¹

⁹⁵See for example Art. 1 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women” dated August 4, 2008, No. 184;

⁹⁶See Art. 4, partially Art. 313 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic dated 02/02/2017 No. 19;

⁹⁷Miguel S. Valles Martínez et al. 2017. *Multiple Discrimination* and Immigration: Traces from Institutional, Academic and Populational Discourse, *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 159: p.138;

⁹⁸Paola Ucellari, Multiple Discrimination: How Legislation Can Reflect Reality, *The Equal Rights Review Magazine*, No. 1–7 (2008–2011), pp. 11-12;

⁹⁹Human Rights Committee. General Comment No. 28 on Equal Rights of Men and Women, in

¹⁰⁰The Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Bodies Established on the Basis of Human Rights Treaties, UNDoc.HRI / GEN / 1 / Rev.6, 2003, paragraph 30;

UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General Recommendation No. 25 on Gender-Related Aspects of Racial Discrimination, 56th Session, 2000, paragraph 1;

¹⁰¹Article 26, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Resolution of the UN General Assembly, 16/12/1966.

Continuing the study of discrimination, it is necessary to focus on a scientific approach and to understand why there is a separation and restriction on some grounds. In this sense, it should be noted that the presence of three main factors, such as ethnocentrism, confrontation and a different level of power and influence¹⁰² may well contribute to the development of discrimination. As is known, the problem of ethnocentrism arises when one ethnic group wants to dominate others, confrontation involves a struggle for limited resources, and having power and leverages guarantees one group superiority over another. In turn, the presence of these three factors directly affects the manifestations of the problem concerning social exclusion of certain groups of people when they lose social connections,¹⁰³ where it is entirely possible that discrimination on any grounds is a determining element, and cultural and historical experiences of members of society that differ from each other can only fuel it. Possible discriminatory phenomena based on these aspects are especially noticeable in those regions of the country that are represented by various social and ethnic groups. In the mosaic of the mentioned issues, the situation of girls and women should be of particular interest for research.

This research examines the issue of multiple and intersectional discrimination in the context of Osh city in various aspects, which in general may be grouped into three main categories: (1) equal rights of WGPI in society, (2) their access to various services and tools, and (3) well-established opinions and public expectations with regards to WGPI and the relationship problems, also information about the respondents and a brief description of WGPI in various communities of Osh city is provided. The research is intended to contribute to existing workson the study of discrimination against women and girls in general, and particular, of multiple or intersectional ones, based on their commitment to the beliefs and rules of the religion of Islam.^{104 105}

¹⁰² Noel, Donald. 1968. «A Theory of the Origins of Ethnic Stratification. »Social Problems 16:157-72; Pyle, Ralph E., and James D. Davidson. 2003. «The Origins of Religious Stratification in Colonial America. » Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 42:57-75;

¹⁰³ Dewandre N. 1995. «Social Exclusion Indicator: Problematic Issues European Commission», DGXII, G-5 (Social Research), pp.191-199;

¹⁰⁴ Slovo Kyrgyzstana. "Hijab - Forward to the Past." 2016. Available at:[<https://bit.ly/2EjOETa>](08.01.2019);

¹⁰⁵ CPLR. "The Problems of Female Communities in the Osh Region: from Polygamy and Early Marriage to Religious Radicalization". 2017. [<https://bit.ly/2NA74ng>]. Available at:(22.08.2019)

Research Methodology

Aim of the research is to determine the perception and opinions of citizens regarding the intersectional form of discrimination and marginalisation of WGPI in Osh city.

Achieving the purpose presumes solving the following specific **tasks**:

- identifying the sphere of public life where women and girls practicing Islam are most vulnerable to discrimination or vice versa;
- determining the expectations of citizens in thinking of an ideal image of women and girls practicing Islam;
- opinions of women and girls practicing Islam on whether they consider themselves to be a part of a marginalised group in the public life of the city;
- assessment of experts on the current situation of women and girls practicing Islam and the public's attitude towards them.

The focus of the research are women and girls who adhere to and practice the rules of the religion of Islam and their current situation, as well as the perceptions of ordinary citizens regarding WGPI.

The subject of the research is the probable intersectional discrimination and marginalisation of the specified categories of people because of their religious beliefs and practices.

The research relied on a mixed method,¹⁰⁶ the use of which contributed to the collection of quantitative and qualitative data in a more flexible format, reflecting pluralistic opinions about the subject and object of this research. The research was conducted from March to August 2019.

In general, this research focuses on the issue of intersectional discrimination against religious women and girls, and in particular is oriented to those who obey Islamic practices in everyday life. In this regard, the objective was set to answer the following **research questions**:

- *What is the perception of citizens about the religiousness of women and girls?*
- *Why and how can public perceptions, expectations, and certain actions reactions generate intersectional discrimination against women and girls?*

¹⁶Ibid, <https://bit.ly/2vOTnd7>;

¹⁰⁶Creswell, J. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003), p.18-19;

- *In the opinion of religious women and girls, what relates to discrimination, including its intersectional form?*

Based on the above research questions, the following hypotheses are brought forward:

- the public perception of Osh city is quite friendly towards women and girls who adhere to the rules of Islam;
- the secular part of society would not want to have close relations with religious women and girls, since they see them as potential threats to the modern and traditional way of life of society in various fields, WGPI, in turn, believe that this leads to various forms of discrimination against them;
- there is a difference in where and when religious women and girls are discriminated against, including its intersectional form.

Main Stages of Research

At the first stage, a population survey was conducted in six municipal territorial administrations of Osh city: Kurmanjan-Datka, Sulaiman-Too, Amir-Timur, Manas-Ata, Turan and Kerme-Too. 200 respondents were interviewed using a target and quota sampling to cover various social groups in order to identify the most pluralistic opinions. The research toolkit was developed for the most complete disclosure of the public opinion of the residents of Osh city on the issue of discrimination against WGPI. It should also be noted that in addition to textual materials, there were questions with photographs which visualised various situations related to WGPI in the present and in the future. Since any object is initially amenable to visual study, the respondents' perception was conducted on the examples of certain photographs. The photographs were prepared by members of the research team, with the involvement of people on a voluntary basis.

At the second stage of the research 6 expert and elite interviews, consisting mainly of open-ended questions, were conducted¹⁰⁷. Experts of the research were representatives of the human rights, academic, spiritual, law enforcement sectors of civil society who are engaged in the problem of this research. The third stage consisted of two types of activities.

First, we had 2 focus groups. FGD participants were selected using the target sampling: 1-group of FGD participants - girls practicing the rules of Islam; 2-group - a mixed group which

¹⁰⁷ Here, “elite” does not mean the status of the respondent, but his/her ability to access information on the topics being researched. See in detail: Manheim et al., *Empirical Political Analysis*, Chapter 21, p. 372-373;

included young men and women who support a religious lifestyle, but do not fully practice Islam and adhere to modern and traditional (national-cultural) views.

The second activity was represented by the collection of information using the method of problems mapping associated with manifestations of intersectional discrimination with the involvement of 20 WGPI. Using this method, we obtained information in a visual form on where and when cases of discrimination in relation to the WGPI are possible.

In this work mixed methods of researching technical innovations and the possibility of obtaining primary data from both qualitative and quantitative sources are used. Typically, this is followed by the analytical-interpretational model “QUANT+qual+qual”, according to which the quantitative method is fundamental, and the qualitative method is auxiliary, clarifying. Qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analysed separately, and then various results are juxtaposed and compared during interpretation. The triangulation of data took place through verification by researchers and data from various sources. When processing and analysing data, MAXQDA and SPSS computer programs were used, that allowed us to achieve a high degree of openness, transparency and quality of analytical work.

The respondents of the survey were divided on the basis of a zoned sampling according to the following socio-demographic indicators:

Table 1. Ethnic Characteristics of Respondents with Breakdown by MTA of Osh city (in%)

MTA	Kyrgyz (no.)	Uzbeks (no.)	Russians (no.)	Total (no.)
Amir-Timur	32,1	67,9	0	100,
Kerme-Too	51,5	36,4	12,1	100,
Kurmanjan-Datka	60,9	30,4	8,7	100,
Manas	48	52,0	0	100
Sulaiman-Too	9,7	83,9	6,5	100
Turan	44,4	52,8	2,8	100
Total	42,7	51,8	5,5	100

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents by Gender with Breakdown by MTA of Osh city (in%)

MTA	Men	Women	Other	Total
Amir-Timur	39,3	60,7	0	100
Kerme-Too	63,6	36,4	0	100
Kurmanjan-Datka	41,3	56,5	2,2	100
Manas	40	56,0	4,0	100
Sulaiman-Too	48,4	51,6	0	100
Turan	52,8	47,2	0	100
Total	47,7	51,3	1	100

Table 3. Characteristics of Respondents by Age Groups with Breakdown by MTA of Osh city (data given in%)

MTA	18-28	29-45	45 +	Total
Amir-Timur	25	60,7	14,3	100
Kerme-Too	36,4	45,5	18,2	100
Kurmanjan-Datka	39,1	30,4	30,4	100
Manas	60	16	24	100
Sulaiman-Too	29	32,3	38,7	100
Turan	50	38,9	11,1	100
Total	39,7	37,2	23,1	100

Table 4. % Ratio of Survey Results with Breakdown by MTA of the city

MTA	Survey Completed	Suspended Respondents	by Suspended Interviewer	by Total
Amir-Timur	85,7	14,3	0	100
Kerme-Too	97	0	3	100
Kurmanjan-Datka	95,7	4,3	0	100

Manas	92	8	0	100
Sulaiman-Too	90,3	9,7	0	100
Turan	100	0	0	100
Total	94	5,5	0,5	100

As can be seen from the data in tables 4, 12, the survey data were rejected due to the fact that they were not completed in full and were not included in the research findings.

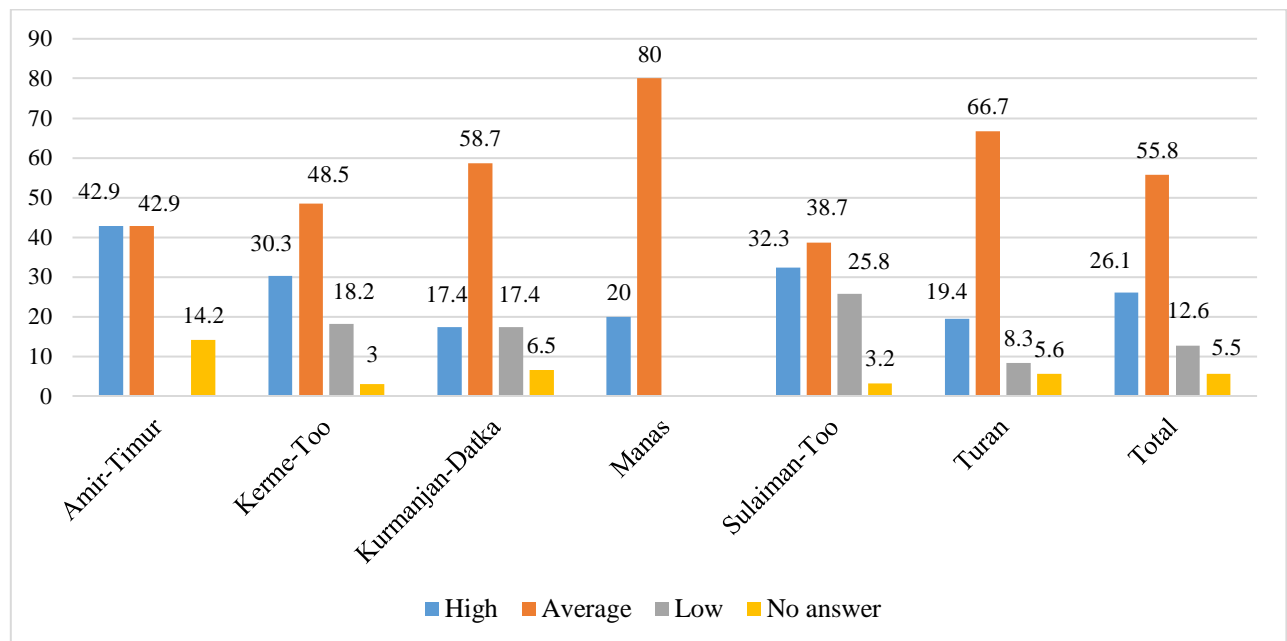
During the survey, the research team guaranteed the anonymity of the respondents. Conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive approaches were also observed in working with various socio-demographic groups. The importance of adhering to these approaches is determined by the fact that Osh city was the flashpoint of interethnic conflicts in 1990 and 2010, and many residents of the city’s micro-districts are conservative in their way of life and viewpoints. Access to those territories that are perceived as mono-ethnic or sensitive in terms of certain parameters, for example, when the question is about ethnicity, was provided with the participation of people who are familiar with the peculiarities of local communities. All data collected during the research will be stored in the Center for the Study of Peacebuilding and Development, the members of which are the authors of the research, in hard copy and electronic form, and all of them will be encoded/encrypted with special names. As we have already noted, Osh city is the geographical scope of the research. The choice of this territory is determined by the availability of the respondents for the authors of the research.

Analysis of Research Findings

General Characteristics of Research Object

The object of the research - characterisation and clarification of the public opinion and perception regarding WGPI. Based on the opinions of the respondents and a review of relevant literature, as well as other sources, including articles from popular websites, the situation of WGPI in Osh city can be described as active. They try to be involved in social processes, despite the fact that the positions and perceptions of the local population as a whole are ambiguous and highly polarised. It was interesting to observe how the respondents from various MTAs of the city assessed the level of religiousness of women and girls practicing Islam in their communities.

Diagram 1. Level of Religiousness of Women and Girls by MTA of Osh city (in%)

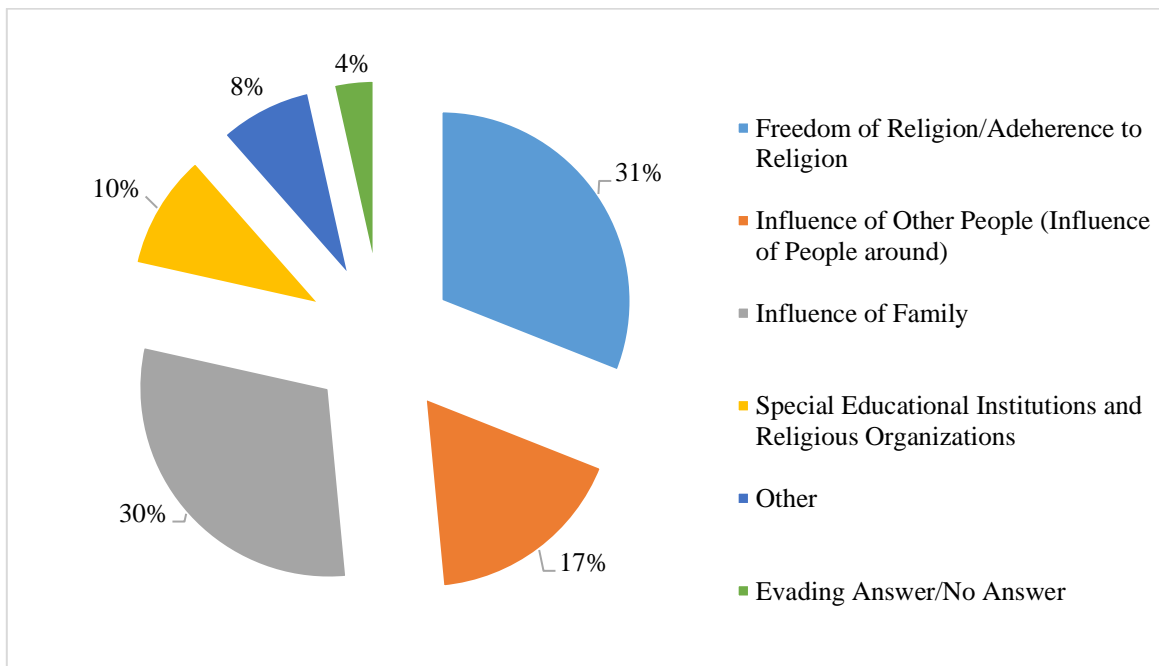


If we consider individual territorial administrations, then the majority of residents of Amir-Timur administration believe that women and girls practice Islam at a high or middle level in their local community, and it is interesting to observe that none of the respondents provided a “low rating”. It should be noted that the vast majority of the population of Amir-Timur are Uzbeks. According to one of the experts, following Islam is an important component of the culture of the Uzbek part of the population of Osh city, while the Kyrgyz people simultaneously observe both national and religious

traditions.¹⁰⁸ In other words, the Uzbek part tries not to mix religious, national and cultural customs, and most Muslims from among the Kyrgyz people consider it normal that folk traditions and beliefs should not be considered as something separate and contradictory in relation to the rules and norms of Islam. In general, the respondents agree that interest in religion has been increasing in recent years, therefore, there is a lot of families practicing Islam in the south of the country including Osh city. One of the clear observations is the changing appearance of women and girls towards wearing a hijab, and in some cases niqab.¹⁰⁹

A number of factors determines that women and girls have begun to practice Islam. For example, such as the traditional foundations of the Muslim community, family, certain influential people, including relatives and specialised educational institutions or circles. Opinions of citizens on this matter were diverse:

Diagram 2. Factors Influencing Religiousness of WGPI



In turn, WGPI themselves agreed with the above factors, while noting the relatively equal importance of each of them. The only exception is the influence of family members, since they play a crucial role in the formation of religious views and beliefs:

¹⁰⁸ Interview with the human rights activist from among WGPI M.Abdraupova, 07/12/2019;

¹⁰⁹ Interview with expert R.Abazbekov, 07/12/2019;

“... due to the fact that I received information about this religion from my parents, I accepted it. My parents had a great influence on the fact that I began to adhere to the norms of the religion of true Islam. Father, brothers went to dawah, so I began to wear a hijab”(WGPI, 21, Uzbek (female))”¹¹⁰

But at the same time, there is freedom of choice in the country that allows citizens to follow which ever religion, including Islam. In this sense, the role of others, especially those who are considered knowledgeable in Islamic matters, is very large.

It should also be noted that local community members are trying to accept this and be tolerant, while a very small part (7.5%) have ideas about the norms and rules that are being implemented by WGPI. The latter believe that society around them is simply “pretending” that they respect and show tolerance, in fact, many have doubts and ambiguous opinions about WGPI.¹¹¹

There is no clear idea of the rules of religious practices of following religion in Kyrgyz society, and this happens despite the fact that the state has provided sufficient freedom in the field of religion and confession. In order to understand this issue, it is necessary to consider several factors that give rise to this situation. The first factor can be attributed to the fact that many people believe that religion and the state should not cooperate, since a secular regime has been developed in the Kyrgyz Republic. The second factor suggests that various initiatives and programs that control this area, force many to hide, which preconditions the loss of connecting links between the religious and secular sectors of society. The third point refers to the fact that those who consider themselves practicing Islam are not sufficiently aware of religion and thereby create a contradictory image of the believer in the eyes of the public, which forms the perception of the population:

“... it was clear that the population was not well informed about religion and secular society. It should also be noted that laws are not enforced

¹¹⁰ Participant of WGPI FGD, 05/14/2019

¹¹¹Participants of WGPI FGD, 05/14/2019

and citizens do not know their rights in the country ...”(woman, 24, Kyrgyz)¹¹²

All of the above factors may indicate that the relationships between WGPI and the rest of the society can be regarded as conditionally trusting relationships, which become one of the key reasons for the emergence of controversial issues around issues of equality, access to services and influence of well-established prejudices and stereotypes on WGPI.

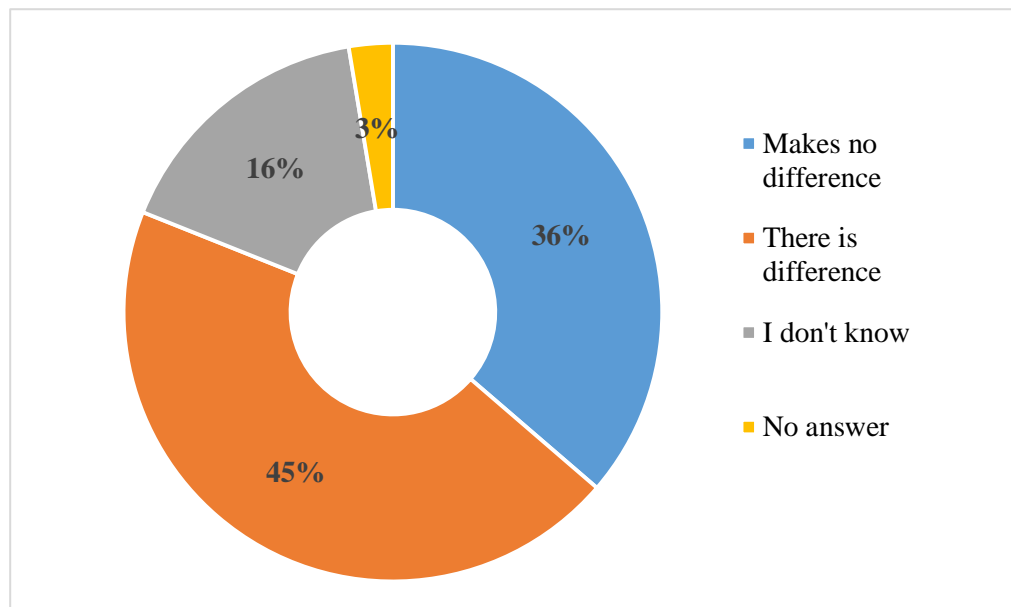
Issues of Equality

According to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as generally accepted human values, everyone has equal rights and no one can be discriminated against on the basis of religion. This thesis applies to all citizens of the country. Along with this, there are still facts and phenomena of discrimination against WGPI, since they are compelled to file complaints with public and human rights organisations in order to defend their rights and freedoms.¹¹³ Certainly, issues of equality are complex, especially when achieving equality has an element of religious ideology. For this reason, WGPI are also perceived as objects who insufficiently exercise their rights and struggle for their freedom, which is confirmed by the results of our research. 43.5% of respondents are inclined to believe that for some reason WGPI cannot fully use their rights in various spheres, 28% admit this phenomenon, part of the remaining reject the similar state of things, and one part refused to answer. These data are provided in Diagram No. 3. In addition, the respondents' answers to the question “*Are there differences in relationships with girls/women who practice Islam and those who do not practice?*” were of great interest. The majority thinks that there is certainly a difference, and the most common reason is that religiousness inspires confidence in a person.

Diagram 3. Features of Relationships between WGPI and Non-Practitioners of Islam

¹¹²Participants in the exercise of problems mapping, 05/21/2019;

¹¹³ Kloop.kg. “You want a hijab, go study in a madrassah.” Why Kyrgyz schools are against headscarves. 2018. Available at [\[https://kloop.kg/blog/2018/11/26/hochesh-hidzhab-uchis-v-medrese-pochemu-kyrgyzskie-shkoly-protiv-platkov-i-pochemu-oni-ne-pravy\]](https://kloop.kg/blog/2018/11/26/hochesh-hidzhab-uchis-v-medrese-pochemu-kyrgyzskie-shkoly-protiv-platkov-i-pochemu-oni-ne-pravy) (08/05/2019);



Undoubtedly, there are certain differences in relationships with practitioners of Islam. Those who are aware of Islam and its norms generally treat them with respect and positiveness, expressing greetings to such a lifestyle.¹¹⁴WGPI believe that relations with people like them are much more comfortable, as they get the opportunity to reveal themselves fully in communication and joint affairs, and difficulties arise with others, since attitudes to specific issues are very different. In general, it is common for people to perceive the WGPI research by external parameters, which is also reflected in building relationship with religious people. The respondents' answers indicate that people either show respect towards religious women or think that all this is an alien culture and traditions for Kyrgyz society. If not to take into account the nuances of religious norms that WGPI follow, then, in general, there are no fundamental differences in relationships.

The next question dealt with the intersectional form of discrimination, specifically, how much does the public opinion about WGPI depend on their ethnicity, restrictions on their state of health, age, economic conditions and region. In almost all categories, the respondents answered that public opinion as a whole does not depend on various characteristics of WGPI. Below it is proposed to consider the answers of representatives of various nationalities to a question including the category of WGPI nationality.

Table 5. Dependence of Public Attitude to WGPI on their Nationality

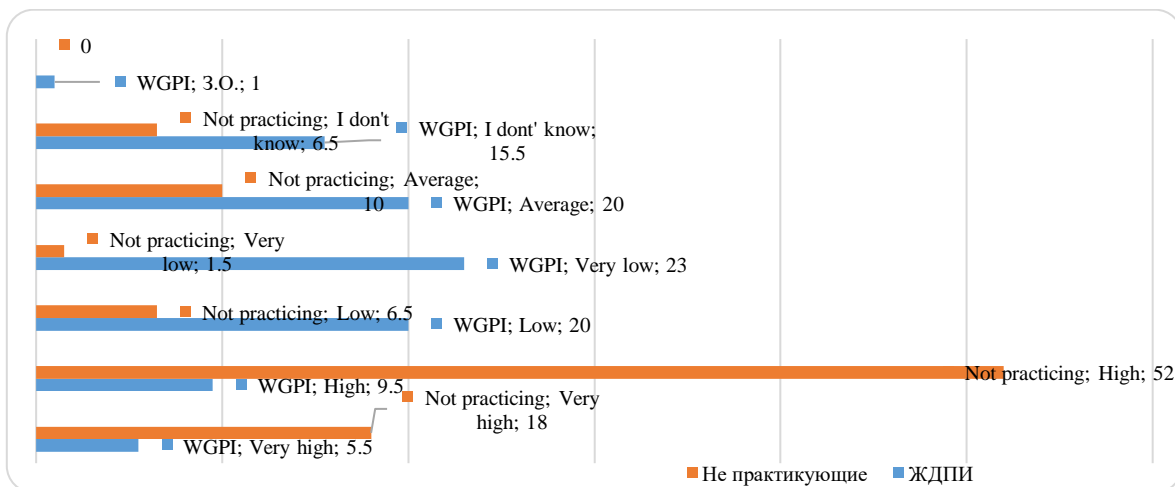
¹¹⁴Participants of mixed FGD, 05/14/2019

Nationality of Respondents	Yes	No	Other	No answer
Kyrgyz	32,9	54,9	7,3	4,9
Uzbek	25,8	67,0	2,1	5,2
Russian	36,4	45,5	18,2	0,0
Total	29,5	60,5	5,3	4,7

Answers of this nature may point to the fact that probably because the national issue in the city is very sensitive, the residents would not want the issue to become a problematic and dividing aspect again. However, as can be seen from the table, there are still opinions that there may be cases of discrimination on the basis of belonging to any ethnic group.

The study of the problem of involvement of WGPI in decision-making processes at the city level remains open. It would seem that nobody and nothing opposes WGPI from participating in all areas DMP (for example, participating in budget hearings, the opportunity of being elected to the city kenesh, etc.). However, the respondents' comparative assessments (in% ratio) of the level of involvement of WGPI and non-practitioners of Islam in various areas of the decision-making process at the city level show that WGPI are not sufficiently involved in DMP on various issues:

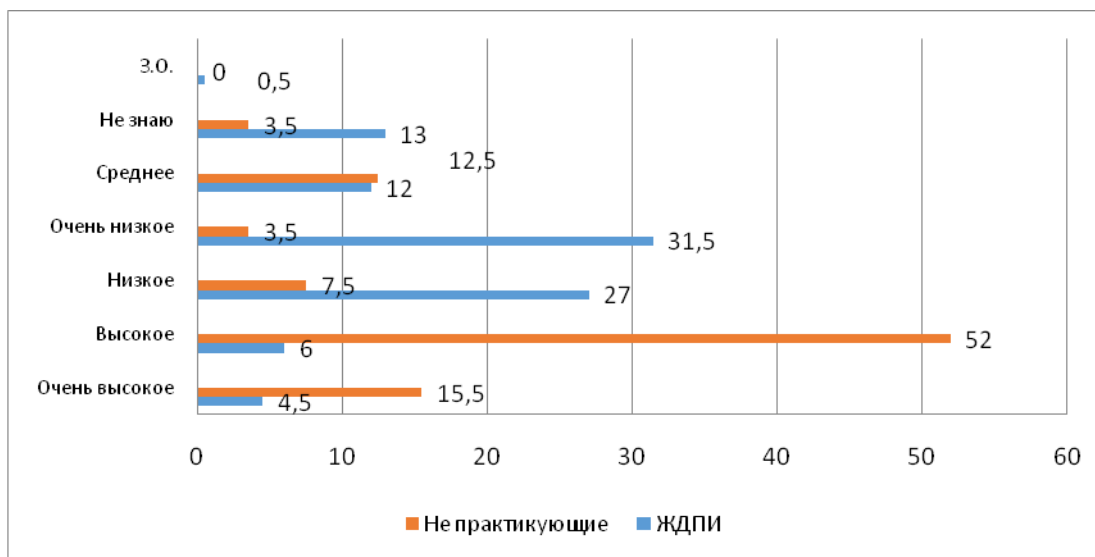
Diagram 4. Participation in Budget Hearings of Osh city



Не практикующие – Not practicing;

ЖДПИ – WGPI;

Diagram 4.1. Opportunity to be Elected as a Deputy of the City Kenesh



Не знаю – I don't know;

Среднее – Average;

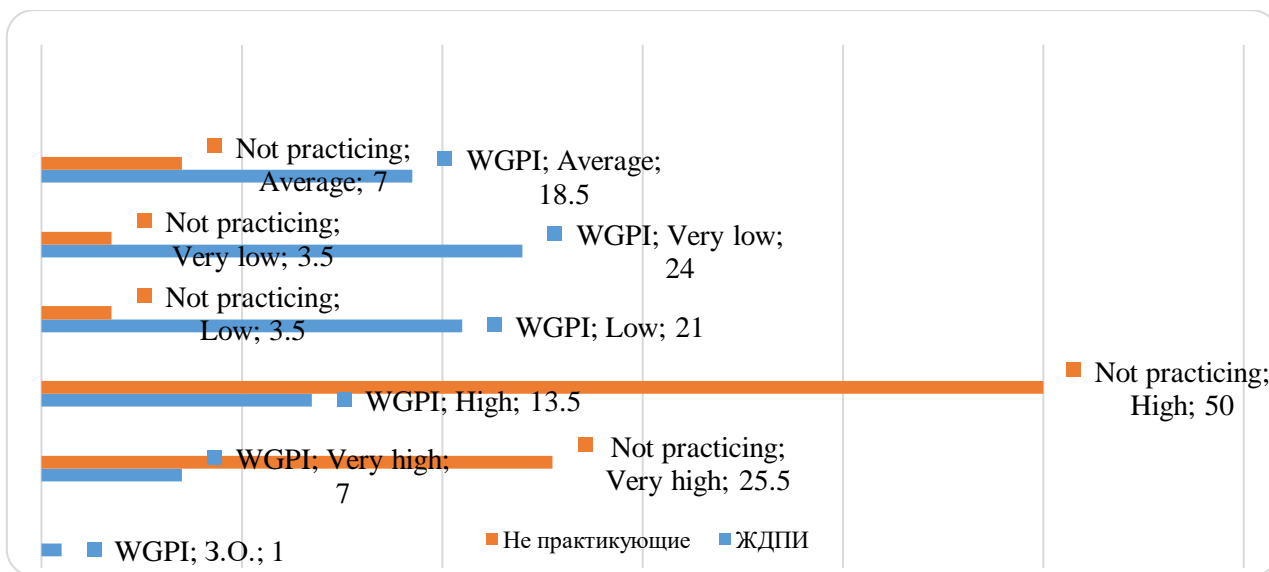
Очень низкое – Very low;

Низкое – Low;

Высокое – High;

Очень высокое – Very high.

Diagram 4.2. Opportunity to Participate in Filling Vacant Positions in Government Bodies



Не практикующие – Not practicing;

ЖДПИ – WGPI.

As can be seen from the diagrams, the share of participation of WGPI in DMP on various issues is significantly lower than the participation of non-practitioners. Many respondents noted that one of the reasons for this may be the fact that being a religious woman and at the same time being active in public affairs is perceived by most WGPI as contrary to religion, where women must first of all take care of their own home. Along with that, the events taking place in Syria compel society to look at the religious part of the population with a certain degree of suspicion, which can also be considered a contributing factor of the low participation of WGPI in DMP.

WGPI do most often get problems with the exercise of rights (in particular, employment regardless of religious practice in state structures) rather than men, however, government authorities do not take effective measures to regulate this sphere, in particular regarding WGPI.¹¹⁵ It must be recognised that discrimination in certain areas of life has various forms in relation to people practicing religion. For example, the object of discrimination is subject to restrictions not only on the basis of religious beliefs, but also on frequently encountered grounds such as ethnicity, age and economic conditions. Religiousness is sometimes attached to nationality, for example, it is not uncommon for residents of the city to say that since they were born Kyrgyz, then they donot have to follow the Arabs, just imitating the latter in clothes. In addition, many institutions in various fields (departments, financial and economic formations, educational institutions) refuse to hire, preferring personal appearance and belonging to a particular nationality. In favor of this practice the respondents noted that it is impossible to meet someone who practices religion externally and spiritually and can declare it in any high-ranking state position at both the national and local levels. The prevailing prejudices that men completely dominate women play a negative role in the formation of a society with equal rights where WGPI could fully live up to potential. Experts noted that due to lack of information, many departments and institutions are generally reluctant to give work to WGPI, which can be regarded as a restriction of their rights. It is necessary to continue carrying out case studies in this direction, the results of which should be presented to the relevant state structures and institutions that directly make decisions.¹¹⁶ It is generally accepted that the rule of law problems in most cases are raised by civil society organisations that are trying to bring the existing issues with recommendations to decision makers. However, it must be recognised that in the matters of religion, including WGPI,

¹¹⁵Interview with a human rights activist from WGPI M. Abduraupova, 07/12/2019;

¹¹⁶Interviews with experts Z.Azhimamatov, R.Abazbekov, 07/12 and 07/14/2019

the opinions and authority of Islamic preachers and leaders are unquestioned among the rest. For example, from the answers of the respondents and experts, it was possible to observe that the instructions and teachings of religious leaders Abdushukur azhy Narmatov and Chubak azhy Zhalilov receive special respect and authority on any issues that concern people. At the same time, the foundations of a secular state stipulate that religion should not interfere in the process of adoption and enforcement of laws. For example, since the school charter clearly states that students should dress in a uniform, this must be followed:

«...secular state - this is when religion does not interfere with the legislative activity of the state at all levels. For example, schools have their own charter. It is necessary to follow what is written there. If the charter requires not to wear a hijab, then this must be observed. The school uniform is intended right for this purpose ... "(man, 44, Kyrgyz)... ”¹¹⁷

Insufficient participation of WGPI in DMP definitely leads to the fact that they become marginalised layers of society and do not live up to their potential, which leads to their vulnerability to various forms of discrimination. In this sense, it was important for us to understand the perception of the public about where and in what capacity are WGPI represented in Osh city. The respondents were provided with relevant photographs for their choice, which reflect the reality in the city:

¹¹⁷ Interview with a LEB representative, 07/16/2019

Photograph 1. WGPI in Various Situations



1-за чтением религ-й литературы



3-подвергается ограничениям



2-активно участвует в общественных делах



5-за работой в офисе



4-в окружении семьи и близких

- 1 – reading religious literature;*
- 2 – actively involved in public affairs;*
- 3 – subjected to restrictions;*
- 4 – surrounded by family and loved ones;*
- 5 – at work in the office.*

Many respondents agreed that WGPI are committed to religion and marked the first photograph. Also, the majority considers house and family as objects with which WGPI are closely connected in Osh city. The participants considered it possible that WGPI are subject to certain restrictions (28.5%), however, given these problems, WGPI are trying to achieve full equality and in recent years they have been active in public affairs, even if they are not sufficiently involved in dmp and official events.

Respondents from among WGPI note that at the moment there is no clear idea of the correct observance of religion in our society, and this happens despite the fact that the state guarantees freedom in the sphere of religion and confession. Many practitioners of religion try to limit themselves according to the norms of Islam.¹¹⁸ This primarily relates to relationships with men and visits to public places. This approach is also conditioned by the fact that others will not accuse on how “*Dressed and positioned as religious, and at the same time behaving like everyone else.*”

¹¹⁸Participants of mixed FGD, 05/14/2019;

However, there are those who are revising the rules of “life” within the context of religion, believing that since the times Islam began to spread, a lot has changed around, so people also have to adapt, but taking into account Sharia norms.

It is relevant that the violation of rights or discrimination based on religious beliefs should be considered from various angles. A person who has reached the age of majority wishes to practice religion in full, and this is his/her own choice. However, minors are under custody of parents or relatives, and it is wrong to assume that they adhere to religion because of their own choice. They are influenced by their parents or ambience. Based on this thought, it must be concluded that freedom of religion is not one of the absolute concepts, which include freedom from slavery and torture. Freedom of religion is a voluntary act when a person has reached the age of majority and consciously declares this. In this sense, WGPI follows an objective attitude in cases of violation of rights or accusations of others of discrimination. A thorough approach is needed in these matters, taking into account the views and positions of all parties concerned, including LEB and human rights defenders who can identify and record violations of human rights.¹¹⁹

At present, there are no effective positive changes in this area, the legislation does not clearly provide for discrimination issues, including the problems of WGPI. Along with this, kazyyat¹²⁰ “began to pay more attention to the issues of WGPI in Osh city. The department created under kazyyat, responsible for operations with women, is trying to approach the problems in a more systematic and organised way”, the clergy representative said.¹²¹

Thus, the work on establishing and creating opportunities for equal participation of WGPI in the life of the city plays an important role, which in turn will help to identify cases of discrimination and respond to them precisely, which should lead to more systemic changes in the future. In particular, new managerial approaches to the problems of WGPI at the level of kazyyat and LSG, respectively, mechanisms of self-development and increasing the potential of WGPI to participate in public processes along with other categories of citizens, etc.

¹¹⁹ Interview with a human rights activist A.A., 07/16/2019;

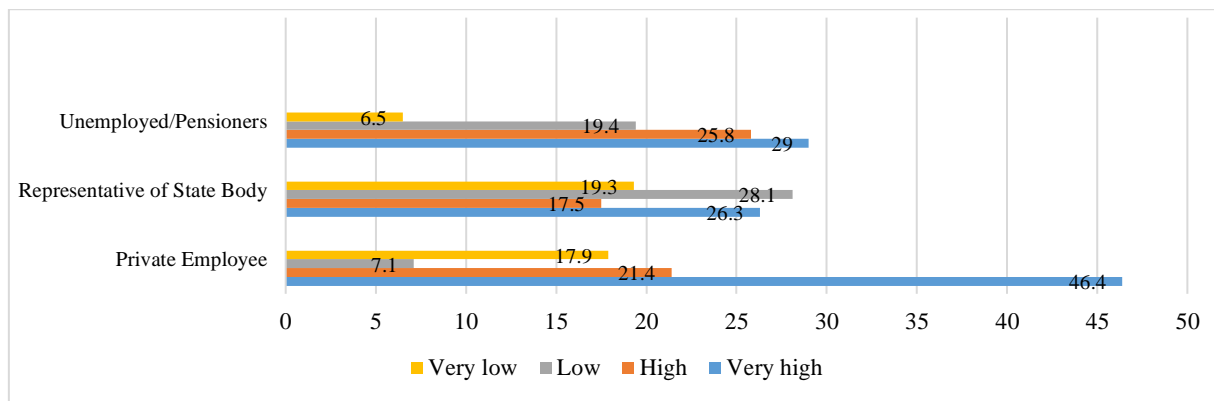
¹²⁰ The territorial division of the muftiate (Spiritual Board of Muslims) is headed by the kazi and is directly subordinate to the muftiate

¹²¹ Interview with a clergy representative, 07/15/2019

Accessibility of WGPI to Various Public Services and Tools.

Personal appearance (clothing) of WGPI is differently perceived by the public. This is especially noticeable in cases where WGPI enjoy the right of access to any services or has employment relations with employers. In the process of survey, the respondents were asked the question “*How would you rate the access of women and girls practicing Islam to the services of various organizations and institutions?*”, and the answers of those involved in various activities differ:

Diagram 5. Accessibility of LEB Services to WGPI



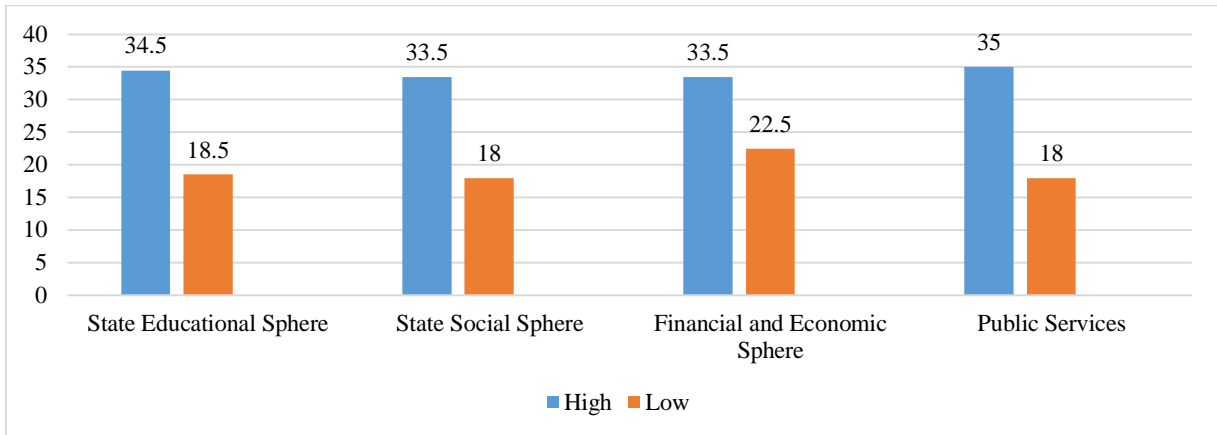
As can be seen from the diagram, employees of private organisations believe that the access of WGPI to LEB services is at a sufficient level. This can be explained by the fact that such organisations do not have any restrictions in their relationships with WGPI, and it would be correct to assume that they proceeded from such a discourse. Representatives of state bodies have a different vision thinking that WGPI do not have an adequate level of access to LEB. It was important to describe the accessibility of LEB services in a separate line, since it is this side that is directly involved in identifying, preventing and precluding violations of human rights, including WGPI.

Along with this, a law enforcement representative shared information that there were no cases of humiliation or discrimination based on his/her beliefs or religious practice for the first quarter of 2019. This is mainly a result of the fact that society is trying to respect religious freedom and the practitioners themselves observe the norms of both religion and secular legislation. Law enforcement bodies constantly monitor this area, as various religious groups such as daavatchy, etc. are very popular at the moment.¹²²In connection with the well-known events in Syria and other parts of the world, Islam itself began to be interpreted by a part of society as “extremist”, because of this, there is

¹²²Interview with a LEB representative, 07/16/2019

inconvenience in relationships and access to certain services for practitioners of religion, including women and girls.¹²³For illustrative comparison, the following are the respondents' opinions on the access of WGPI to various services:

Diagram 5.1. Accessibility of Services from Various Institutions to WGPI



To assess the accessibility of various services in this diagram, only “high” and “low” ratings are used, which can clearly show the respondents’ opinions. In general, the picture of present time is encouraging that the majority believes that the main areas of service provision are quite accessible to WGPI. However, some participants noted that the problem with access cannot be denied, where certain internal rules and employee relations make the above services almost inaccessible for WGPI. The percentages of other answers such as “very high”, “very low” and “I don’t know” were not included due to the fact that the indicators do not provide a significant difference in comparison.

Some departments and institutions express attitude of a discriminatory nature, referring only to physical signs, while ignoring many personal and professional qualities. For example, according to some respondents, the internal situation and the dress code of state bodies and city banks do not allow wearing a hijab, although the real practitioners of religion will not go to work in a bank due to prohibitions on religious norms.¹²⁴WGPI, like other members of society, have the same rights and freedoms. LEB representative notes that in this context it should be emphasized that there are no problems of discrimination based on religious preferences.¹²⁵

It should also be noted that WGPI, especially girls, feel comfortable in higher education institutions and cultural centers. This is probably due to the fact that such institutions provide an opportunity for personal development and create platforms for mutual relationships between different groups of the population,

¹²³Interview with a human rights activist from WGPI M. Abduraupova, 07/12/2019;

¹²⁴FGD participants, 05/14/2019;

¹²⁵Interview with a LEB representative, 07/16/2019;

especially young people.¹²⁶Based on the norms of the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic on freedom of religion and belief,¹²⁷the relevant departments should work to equalize the rights of women practicing religion with others. This is especially relevant when only the style of clothing and religious beliefs are an obstacle to the full exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms, like of all other citizens of the country.

Established Opinions and Public Expectations Regarding WGPI and Relationship Issues

The foundations of Kyrgyz society have developed in such a way that in many life situations and in relationships between people, the latter resorts to certain stereotypes. Prejudices and stereotypes have taken root in people's lives so that certain decisions are even made and conclusions are drawn on the them. It must be emphasized that WGPI are not immune from this approach from members of society. According to WGPI themselves, various stereotypes and prejudices stigmatise WGPI in a negative way. It should be noted that practitioners of religion often encounter stereotypical thinking from other members of society. Based on personal appearance, such as a beard and clothing, they can judge that these are signs of radical and extreme views.¹²⁸ Some people with nationalist sentiments adhere to stereotypes that clothing standards in Islam are those which belong to Arab traditions. Referring to this, they think that religious girls and women bring traditions and cultures that are alien to our society.¹²⁹ Other perceptions are that the stereotypes according to which people believed that a covered woman or girl is honest, disinterested and fair became irrelevant. The behavior of the practitioners of religion or facts about them contribute to the fact that half of them did not find themselves in life and simply wear this style of clothing or live this lifestyle. According to the respondents, black-coated clothes can also indicate that they have negativity in life and this is reflected externally in their clothes. Another prejudice is that if a woman follows religion, then she always limits herself in everything:

«...if we talk about restrictions, then they limit themselves in many places. For example, they do not dance at weddings, noting that this is prohibited by religious standards. It is felt

¹²⁶Participants in the exercise of problems mapping, 05/21/2019

¹²⁷The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic“On Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic” dated December 31, 2008 No. 282, see: <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/202498>

¹²⁸FGD participants from among WGPI, 05/14/2019;

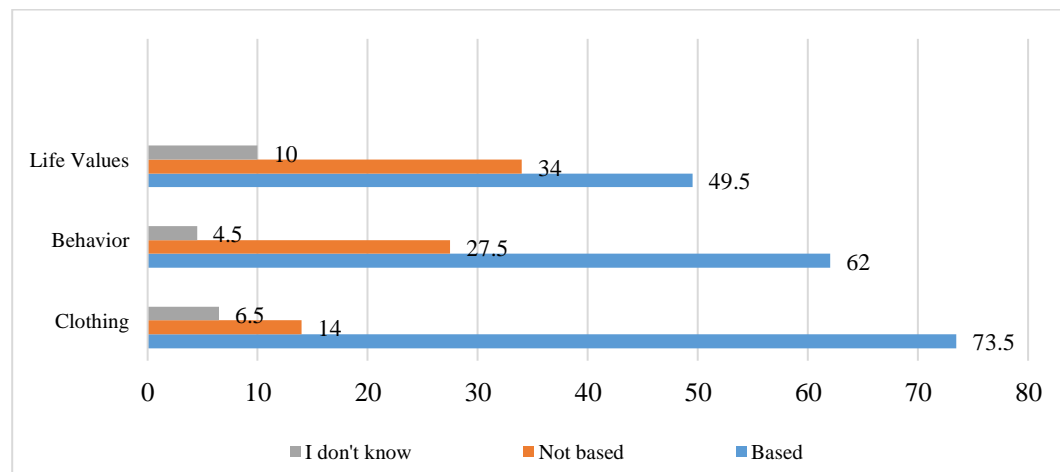
¹²⁹Participants in the exercise of problems mapping, 05/21/2019;

that some want to dance, but they are covered ... ”(man, 27, Kyrgyz)¹³⁰

Along with this, there are very interesting stereotypes that "WGPI, especially young girls, in fact, "pretend to be religious", thereby looking for opportunities to get married." In this sense, the most common stereotype regarding practitioners of Islam, especially covered girls, concerns the biographical past of a particular girl or woman. People are inclined to believe that hijab does not make them angels, they can behave improperly and not follow the rules of Islam, that is, the appearance is only to show themselves religious and pure, while positive moral and psychological qualities of the subject itself are hidden in the background. Oddly enough, some representatives of WGPI agree with this statement. The FGD participants noted that they can wear a hijab in order to get married or for others to think that they are religious and well-mannered.¹³¹

The difference in points of view regarding the stereotypes makes one wonder, under what circumstances were such prejudices formed or is it a product of the subjective representation of people? In order to somehow dispel this dispute, as a continuation of the issue of stereotypes, the respondents were asked a question of this nature - *“What is the basis of the first view/opinion of people regarding girls/women practicing Islam?”*

Diagram 6. Primary Perception of WGPI



Most of the answers suggest that the physical sign still plays a decisive role in the formation of the first thoughts about WGPI. As another visual element – behavior takes the second place among

¹³⁰ Participants of mixed FGD, 05/14/2019

¹³¹ Participants of mixed FGD, 05/14/2019

the respondents. Only a small part forms their view after learning about the values in the life of WGPI. It may be concluded that clothing and behavior is enough to "design" the image of WGPI in Osh city.

Speaking about the image of WGPI, we were interested to know how the respondents answered about the future image of WGPI through photographs:



1-за чтением религ-й литературы



3-подвергается ограничениям



2-активно участвует в общественных делах



5-за работой в офисе



4-в окружении семьи и близких

- 1 – reading religious literature;
- 2 – actively involved in public affairs;
- 3 – subjected to restrictions;
- 4 – surrounded by family and loved ones;
- 5 – at work in the office.

The respondents believe that in the foreseeable future WGPI will play an equal active role in the public life of Osh city. Along with this, as truly religious people they will create families and be surrounded by loved ones, and cases of restriction and discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation will decrease.

Conclusion

In general, discrimination against WGPI occurs not only because of their beliefs and religious practices, but also from a number of other related factors, such as the low level of participation and involvement in DMP on various issues, the prevalence of stereotypes and prejudices. Kyrgyz society is considered traditional, with its own characteristics and foundation in terms of relationships, which gives rise to certain stereotypes according to which the object of this research is being differently interpreted by society. Integration of WGPI is at the slowest pace. In this sense, society needs to understand that WGPI exercise their right to freedom of religion, which is guaranteed by the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic. The absence of relevant norms and provisions in the legal acts regarding the use of “discrimination” terminology creates the problem of recording and monitoring cases of violation of human rights and freedoms. This seems to legitimise, for example, the prevalence of stereotypes that have negative psychological effects on WGPI or the low level of WGPI participation in DMP. Additional elements, such as ethnicity, age group and field of activity should be taken into account when studying and analysing the situation of WGPI, since it is these factors that become objective reasons for the formation of perceptions and opinions of respondents.

In general, the research showed that the problem of discrimination against WGPI in Osh city is relevant for its residents. Today, the issues related to the situation of WGPI not only in Osh city, but also in the whole country require a full and objective study. Prevention of the reasons for restricting rights and freedoms, as well as any form of discrimination, in our opinion, are key challenges to the present and future of Kyrgyzstan. Proper enforcement of the rule of law and freedom of citizens in the country depends on how quickly and effectively prevention mechanisms will be developed. In our opinion, the following issues are most acute:

- **How will concerned parties find common and coherent approaches to prevent cases of discrimination against WGPI?** For example, for the time being some of the population have fundamentally different positions on many controversial issues of religiosity and secularism. And any attempt to suppress one-sided interest can lead to the destruction of mutually trusted relationships.
- Against the background of general trends related to Islam in the world, and as a result, the image of the believer noticeably enhances the negative mood among the population and LEB in relation

to practitioners of this religion. **In this regard, it is not yet known how the population sees the image of WGPI, and what roles are attributed to them in social processes.**

- Against the background of general socio-economic and political upheavals, people are looking for new purposes and supporting points in life. Many find it in the ideologies of religious organisations and leaders whose influence is growing rapidly among the population, including WGPI. **Most likely there are state mechanisms to maintain balance between secularism and religiousness, but we must admit that this is not effective, it is not clear from here what alternatives can be proposed to remove the issue of ensuring equal rights, equal relationships between WGPI and other representatives of society.**

Outcomes

Summarising the outcomes of the research we can say:

- with all the differences between WGPI and the rest of society, the public shows a rather tolerant attitude and tries to promote the integration of WGPI into the public life of the city;
- even if there are negative opinions about WGPI, in many cases it is the result of insufficient information awareness of the rules and norms of Islam as a religion;
- cases of discrimination cannot be denied, especially if there are manifestations of its multiple forms, when the judgments and restrictions of WGPI are intertwined with categories such as nationality, age, sphere of activity, etc.;
- society does not try to isolate WGPI, but interactions in everyday life, at work, and in other public places is the main reason that allow us to discover certain differences between WGPI and non-practicing citizens. These differences make it necessary for the parties to develop certain actions and mechanisms to overcome difficulties in relationships;
- it is necessary to recognise that there are specific places and circumstances when WGPI feel discrimination and vulnerability. First of all, it concerns employment relations with the employer;
- well-established prejudices and stereotypes in relation to WGPI stigmatise their position. This phenomenon makes us think that these prejudices and stereotypes do not form a negative image of WGPI in the country.

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5. Interaction between Young People of Different Religious Beliefs

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Abstract

This report has been developed based on the results of field works to examine the interaction of young people of different religious beliefs. The research attempts to analyse social interaction and impact on propensity toward conflict among young people who practice different religious beliefs. Moreover, the report examines the perceptions of young people and studies the role of local authorities in conflict prevention. It is important to note that knowledge and awareness issues were closely examined as fundamental factors in the interaction process. In addition, the authors provide recommendations based on research findings and the report can be used for further and complimentary in-depth research. The findings do not express the views and policies of International Alert in Kyrgyzstan.

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Glossary

In order to identify trends in the interaction of young people of different religious beliefs, the following main indicators and concepts will be used: religious beliefs, proselytism, confession, tolerance, social interaction, types of social interaction, social relations, conflict (conflict situation).

Religious belief – is an action, deed or belief which reflects the belonging of a believer to a particular confession;¹³²

Proselytism (from the Greek “proselytes” – the one who has adopted a new faith, a new and ardent supporter, a supporter of something) – is the activity of adherents of a particular confession pursuing the aim of converting people of a different faith, primarily pagans, into monotheism;¹³³

Proselytism - the desire to convert the followers of other beliefs into their religion;¹³⁴

Confession and belief - a creed belonging to any religion with traditional cult practice;¹³⁵

Tolerance is the value and social norm of civil society, manifested in the right of all individuals of civil society to be different, ensuring sustainable harmony between different confessions, political, ethnic and other social groups, respect for the diversity of various world cultures, civilisations and peoples, readiness to understand and cooperate with people differing in appearance, language, beliefs, customs and faiths¹³⁶.

Social interaction – the process of interaction of individuals, social groups or communities in the course of implementation of interests. Herewith, social formations may act as objects of mutual interests both directly and indirectly. In the first case, the choice of individuals, social groups or communities is not conditioned indirectly by their qualities; in the second - the content of the outcomes of their activities as a means of fulfilling their needs.¹³⁷

Types of Social Interaction.

¹³² Linda J. Skitka, [Moral and religious convictions: Are they the same or different things?](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6013213/28) [//https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6013213/28;](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6013213/28) (Date of Visit: 03/28/2019 at 20:08).

¹³³ S.K. Kimpaev, S.K. Kimpaev, S.I. Izmailova, Proselytism in Islam, Dagestan State University; Sociology of Islam. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article> (Date of Visit 04/04/2019 at 21.09) p. 6.

¹³⁴ On Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic (As amended by the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic dated June 15, 2011 No. 46, December 7, 2012 No. 196).

¹³⁵ On Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic (As amended by the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic dated June 15, 2011 No. 46, December 7, 2012 No. 196).

¹³⁶ UNESCO Declaration of Principles of Tolerance.

¹³⁷ O.A. Vrublevskaya, “On the Essence of the Concept of “Social Interaction” in scientific research. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article> (Date of Visit 09/16/2019 at 16:58) p. 4.

Social interactions may be classified into a wide variety of categories. Thus, P.A. Sorokin differentiated them as follows:

- By the number of subjects of interaction - the interaction of two individuals, one and many, many and many individuals;
- By duration - short-term and long-term;
- By nature - unilateral and multilateral;
- By organisation - organised and unorganised;
- By consciousness - conscious and spontaneous;
- By “Substance” of exchange - intellectual (ideological), sensual-emotional and volitional.

Social interactions, like all forms of social communication, can be direct and indirect.

The former arise in the course of interpersonal communication, the latter – as a result of joint participation of people in complex systems.¹³⁸

Social relations are a complex system of socially significant relationships between people. They are very diverse in content, penetrate with all spheres of human life in both private and public spheres. Their regulation is carried out by various legal norms based on the subject of the relationship.¹³⁹

Conflict – is a confrontation, a clash of two or more subjects conditioned by opposition, incompatibility of their interests, needs, value systems or knowledge.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ O.A. Vrublevskaya, “On the Essence of the Concept of “Social Interaction” in scientific research. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article> (Date of Visit 09/16/2019 at 16:58) p. 6.

¹³⁹ General Characteristics of Constitutional Law. <https://studopedia.su> (Date of Visit 09/17/2019 at 12.03) p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ V.A.Bozhenko, “Defining the Concept of Conflict” <https://cyberleninka.ru> (Date of Visit 09/16/2019 at 17.45) p. 2.

Introduction

The Kyrgyz Republic is a multinational country that consists of people of different religious beliefs. Today, various religious confessions coexist in Kyrgyzstan which is a direct result of liberal state policy in the field of religion. It is worth mentioning that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a prerequisite for this trend. Moreover, the switch of the totalitarian-atheistic model with the liberal without consideration of socio-political and socio-cultural realities created the conditions for active missionary activity of foreign religious organisations. Mainly of Protestant and Islamic. These changes created favorable conditions for the penetration into the country of new religious movements of Western and Eastern origin, as well as the wider spread of previously traditional religions in Kyrgyz society.

One of the main indicators of the active religiosity among citizens is a sharp increase in the number of religious organisations. Thus, 39 mosques and several Christian religious facilities functioned in the republic in the period preceding the collapse of the USSR in 1990, whereas now the State Commission for Religious Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic officially registered 2989 religious organisations, whereof 2595 are of Islamic and 380 of Christian orientation, as well as one Buddhist and one Jewish community, 12 Bahai communities.¹⁴¹

The relevance of the research is conditioned by the fact that religious diversity has been formed in the Kyrgyzstani society, which should contribute to the harmonious coexistence of representatives of different religious beliefs.

As the practice of recent years shows, a steady increase in the number of people practicing religion is increasing. Religious practice is especially relevant among young people, however the elderly are still less religious. Partially, this can be explained by the education of the Soviet Union times characterised by strong atheistic and anti-religious propaganda.¹⁴²

At the same time, we are witnessing an increase in hostility among young people towards representatives of other confessions.

For example, various facts of vandalism are often published in mass media and violence between young people arising from discrimination of religious beliefs is observed. Thus, for example,

¹⁴¹A.B. Elebaeva. Relations between Religion and State in the Kyrgyz Republic. - Bishkek: Bulletin of KRSU. 2017. Volume 17. No.2. – p. 206. <https://www.krsu.edu.kg/> (Accessed Date: 04/04/2019 at 15.35).

¹⁴²E.Nasridinov, Z.Urmanbetova, K.Murzakhalilov, M.Myrzabaev “Attracting and Repelling Factors of Radicalization among Youth of Kyrgyzstan” Bishkek: Scientific Research Institute of Islamic Studies. Bishkek, 2017. p. 15.

a beating of a 25-year-old young man by three drunken residents in the village of Tamchy, Issyk-Kul Region of Kyrgyzstan, in October 16, 2018, was recorded. Local residents assaulted a young man accusing him of singing Christian worship songs during the day. They demanded that he should renounce the faith. Later, he was beaten after his refusal to do that.¹⁴³ This incident demonstrates the negative perception of representatives of other religious beliefs on a certain part of the youth.

Another case showing a negative relationship between representatives of different religious beliefs occurred in October 2016. Residents of the village of Sary-Talaa, the Ala-Buka district of the Jalal-Abad region and local imams did not allow the relatives of a fellow villager Kanygul Satybaldieva to bury her at the local cemetery because the deceased adhered to Christian-Baptist beliefs. After the conflict with the villagers, she was buried in the neighboring village of Oruktu, but even there the local residents opposed that. The second time it was decided to make interment at the Orthodox cemetery in the same area, but even there the woman's body did not find peace. She was reburied again, however not at a cemetery, but between two mountains along the road to one of the villages.

In January 2017, the district court ruled on five young people who took part in the excavation of the woman's body. They were sentenced to three years in prison with a suspended sentence of one year. However, the woman's family believes that the instigators of discrimination have not been punished. They want the district akim, the head of aiyl okmotu and the imams, who gave instructions to exhume the body, to be brought to justice.¹⁴⁴

Thus, we can conclude from the above examples that there is a trend in negative interaction between different religious confessions and involvement of youth in conflicts. In our opinion, there is no practice of positive interaction between young people of different religious beliefs. Today, the problems of interaction have not been sufficiently studied. However, there are researches that partially address youth and religious beliefs issues. For example, a research called “Religion is a Factor in Promoting Peace or Outbreak of Differences” conducted by SaveYourWorld, a non-governmental organisation. The results of this research have shown polarisation of views among young people, disputing the assumption that religion always acts as a unifying force. In fact, many of the young

¹⁴³ Bermet Ulanova, “The Fate of the Kyrgyz Proselytes: Beaten, Reburied Three Times”; <https://reporting.cabar.asia/ru/sudba-kyrgyzov-prozelitov-izbitye-perezahoronennye-trizhdy/> 10/23/2018. (Date of Visit: 04/04/2019 at 17.21).

¹⁴⁴ Bermet Ulanova, “The Fate of the Kyrgyz Proselytes: Beaten, Reburied Three Times”; <https://reporting.cabar.asia/ru/sudba-kyrgyzov-prozelitov-izbitye-perezahoronennye-trizhdy/> 10/23/2018. (Date of Visit: 04/04/2019 at 17.21).

people interviewed by the researchers hold fairly biased and intolerant views towards people who, in their perception, have other religious beliefs.¹⁴⁵

National legislation guarantees freedom of religion and analyses the implementation of this norm in society. Thus, current issues of ensuring freedom of religion and belief in Kyrgyzstan are considered in the thematic collection of articles “Freedom of Religion and Belief in Kyrgyzstan. Promoting Inter-Confessional Harmony and Ensuring the Rule of Law”. Thus, the universality of the rights of believers to possess constitutional human rights and freedoms is revealed in the collection of articles on human rights and freedoms affecting the sphere of religion. For example, freedom of thought, conscience and religion provides each person with the freedom to have, choose and accept religion or belief that can be exercised individually or jointly with others. The spread of beliefs (missionary activity and proselytism) is based on the freedom to search, collect, receive, store information. Everyone enjoys freedom of expression and peaceful assembly during an act of worship. The article describes legal guarantees of religious diversity and peaceful coexistence of different religious confessions.¹⁴⁶

At the same time, the state is taking the necessary measures to harmonise inter-confessional relations. Thus, the Expert Council under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic functions to strengthen national unity and religious policy. The Council is a consultative and advisory body under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, formed to attract the expert community to work on the formation and implementation of state policy in the field of interethnic development and the strengthening of national unity and religion.

With regard to the legislative framework, it should be noted that the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic refers to freedom of religion, reflecting the right of every citizen to freely choose and have religious and other beliefs, to practice or not to practice individually or jointly with others any religion. At the same time, the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic” dated December 31, 2008 regulates and guarantees the equality of citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic before the law in all areas of civil, political, economic, social and cultural life, regardless of their relationship to religion and religious or atheistic beliefs.

¹⁴⁵“Religion is a Factor in Promoting Peace or Outbreak of Differences”; SaveYourWorld//www.saferworld.org.uk. (Date of Visit 05/04/2019 at 11.25).

¹⁴⁶Freedom of Religion and Belief in Kyrgyzstan. Promoting Inter-Confessional Harmony and Ensuring the Rule of Law / Ed. D.Kabak. - Bishkek: 2015. - 84 p. / www.osce.org (Date of Visit 05/04/2019 at 12.02).

In addition, the Concept of State Policy in the Religious Sphere of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2014-2020 was adopted. The main purpose of this policy is to create an optimal model of state-confessional cooperation based on the secular nature of the state through effective state regulation of the activities of religious and public institutions to ensure the safety of citizens and the state, strengthen inter-confessional harmony and religious tolerance, and counteract religious radicalism and extremism on the basis of principles of human rights and religious freedom.

One of the latest events to strengthen relations between confessions is the conference "Inter-Confessional Dialogue in Kyrgyzstan" held on December 5, 2018. The activities of the Inter-Confessional Council Working Group, which included representatives of 17 religious organisations, were discussed during the conference. All invited parties supported the creation of an inter-confessional council. According to the director of the State Commission for Religious Affairs under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Zaiyrbek Ergeshov, “the creation of the inter-confessional council is conditioned by the fact that the majority of believers in Kyrgyzstan do not know anything about other confessions, which possibly frightens them and becomes an additional barrier to relations” ... The logical conclusion of the conference was a further continuation and finalisation of the formation of the council. The purpose of the council is the formation of inter-confessional dialogue and the promotion of religious tolerance.¹⁴⁷

Thus, the legislation in the field of religion and inter-confessional relations creates favorable conditions for equal coexistence of followers of all religious confessions. The existence and creation of expert and inter-confessional councils is a step to create platforms at the state level for resolving emerging inter-confessional problems.

The urgency and relevance of this research is aimed at analysing the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs, which will help to identify qualitative indicators, determine the causes of existing problems and hear their own vision of interaction between confessions.

¹⁴⁷Inter-Confessional Council to be Formed in Kyrgyzstan.

https://kaktus.media/doc/383484_v_kyrgyzstane_sformiryut_mejkonfessionalnyy_sovet.html (Date of Visit 05/04/2019 at 13.40).

Chapter 1. Research Methodology

The national legislation in the field of religion complies with the standards of international conventions and agreements on human rights and freedoms. In this regard, the concept and methodology of this research are based on current legislation and the Concept of State Policy in the Religious Sphere.

As part of this research, inter-confessional interaction of youth was analysed.

The research purpose is to identify the main trends in the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Research Objectives:

- to study under what life circumstances, factors and causes the social interaction between young people of different religious beliefs occurs;
- to determine the impact of social interactions on individual and group strategies of socialisation;
- to analyse possible difficulties and ways to improve interaction, eradicate misunderstandings;
- to identify what beliefs and perceptions push or push away young people of different religious beliefs to perform certain actions.

The following questions were studied as part of desk research:

1. What types of social interaction exist between young people of different religious beliefs?
2. What is the nature (negative and positive) of the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs?
3. In what areas of public relations do young people of different religious beliefs interact?
4. How effective are the ongoing activities of state bodies and non-governmental organisations to create platforms for interaction between young people of different religious beliefs?
5. What are the views of young people of different religious beliefs about interaction between themselves?

Main Research Hypothesis:

1. Lack of social interaction between young people of different religious beliefs leads to conflict in society. Lack of information and knowledge about tolerance from representatives of a particular confession towards other religions leads to conflict situations;

2. Religious identity is perceived through ethnic affiliation in Kyrgyzstani society, which in turn leads to negative perceptions and conflicts in interaction.

Research Methodology

The research consists of several successive steps aimed at reaching set research purpose and each method serves as the basis for the next stage. The research consists of four main methods / stages:

1. In-depth interviews with representatives of state bodies, religious leaders and youth;
2. Expert survey;
3. Discussion with focus group;
4. Case study.

Geographical Coverage of Research

The research was conducted in the following cities:

1. Bishkek;
2. Osh;
3. Jalal-Abad;
4. Batken;
5. Talas;
6. Naryn;
7. Karakol.

The scope of the research included all 7 administrative cities of Kyrgyzstan. Since many religious confessions are located precisely in administrative cities, this has provided the opportunity and conditions for this research.

In-depth interview was conducted with youth, local authorities and experts. The main purpose of the in-depth interview was to determine the nature and types of social interaction between young people of different religious beliefs. It was a semi-structured interview with questions to evaluate indicators of social interaction.

Respondents were selected using the snowball method. Interviews with experts were conducted in Bishkek and Osh. Interviews by cities were planned according to the following table:

Table 5. Regional Interview Cross-Section

location	State Bodies	Interview with Religious Leaders	Interviews with Representatives of	Interview with Experts	Total
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			Religious Organisations (Youth)		
Bishkek	3	3	4	2	12
Osh	3	3	4	2	12
Batken	3	3	4	-	10
Jalal-Abad	3	3	4	-	10
Naryn	3	3	4	-	10
Karakol	3	3	4	-	10
Talas	3	3	4	-	10
Total	21	21	28	4	74

The total number of participants in the in-depth interview was 74 respondents:

- 1) 28 interviews with young people who represent different religious confessions (4 respondents in each administrative city);
- 2) 21 interviews with representatives of state bodies (3 respondents in each administrative city):
 - A) Representatives of aiyl okmotu;
 - B) Representatives of local law enforcement bodies;
 - C) State bodies for youth affairs;
- 3) 21 interviews with religious leaders
 - A) Imam Khatibs of mosques and pastors or bishops of churches;
- 3) 4 interviews with experts: scientists, researchers and experts in the field of religion and security (2 in Bishkek and 2 in Osh).

Respondents were guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality and safe environment so that they can speak freely. No references to persons or places mentioned during the interview will be published.

Discussions in FGD

The general purpose of focus group discussions (FGDs) is similar to the general purpose of individual in-depth interviews. Nevertheless, the problem of the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs was studied more from the point of view of communities within the framework of FGDs, paying particular attention to group dynamics, norms and practice, rather than

individual experience. FGDs helped to monitor what is acceptable in the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs and what is not.

Thus, FGDs made it possible to explain social and community aspects of youth interaction.

It was planned to hold 7 focus group discussions (FGDs). 1 FGD for each administrative city. Each focus group consisted of 7-8 participants, so the total number of participants varies in the range of 46-48. The composition of the group was quite diverse in order to create a constructive discussion, but not too polar as to avoid conflicts on sensitive religious issues.

The focus group discussions were attended by young people of different religious beliefs; representatives of state bodies and religious organisations took part in some locations.

All FGDs were recorded on a voice recorder and then transcribed for analysis using quality data analysis software.

Case Study

As part of the research, it was supposed to prepare from six to ten case studies, which illustrate various scenarios of interaction and its “positive” and “negative” consequences. Case studies represent a story about how one young person (or a group of young people) interacts with representatives of other religious beliefs, and how events in their life develop after that. We planned to identify respondents for case studies during group discussions and in-depth interviews. It was important for us to get stories that illustrate the variety of possible scenarios with different family / social dramas, various main problems and positive examples leading to the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs. The cases helped illustrate the role of specific conditions, family circumstances and various participants (religious leaders, parents, teachers, law enforcement bodies, friends, etc.) in the interaction process.

The cases were presented as examples of certain interaction between young people of different religious beliefs. Our cases describe the original story so that the environment in which a certain interaction occurs is understood. In addition, in our opinion, it was necessary to study the chronology of events and the dynamics of interactions, with special emphasis on positive and negative characteristics. In conclusion, all practical cases include key findings and recommendations for various stakeholders regarding improving the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs.

Expert Survey

In fact, 49 people were surveyed during the research. Most of the respondents were Kyrgyz. There are Russians, Uzbeks, Azerbaijani, German, Tatar and Polish among the respondents. 24 out of 49 respondents are religious leaders of different confessions and 25 are young people.

Table6.National Characteristics of Participants

Nationality	Number
Kyrgyz	35
Russian	8
Uzbek	2
Azerbaijani	1
German	1
Tatar	1
Polish	1
Total Number	49

From among the respondents surveyed, 35 are representatives of Kyrgyz nationality. From among the 35 respondents, 20 are adherents of Protestantism, 14 are adherents of Islam and one is an adherent of Bahai.

In addition, interviews were conducted with 5 representatives of the SCRA, 6 representatives of law enforcement bodies, 4 representatives of various government agencies and 4 experts in the cities of Bishkek and Osh.

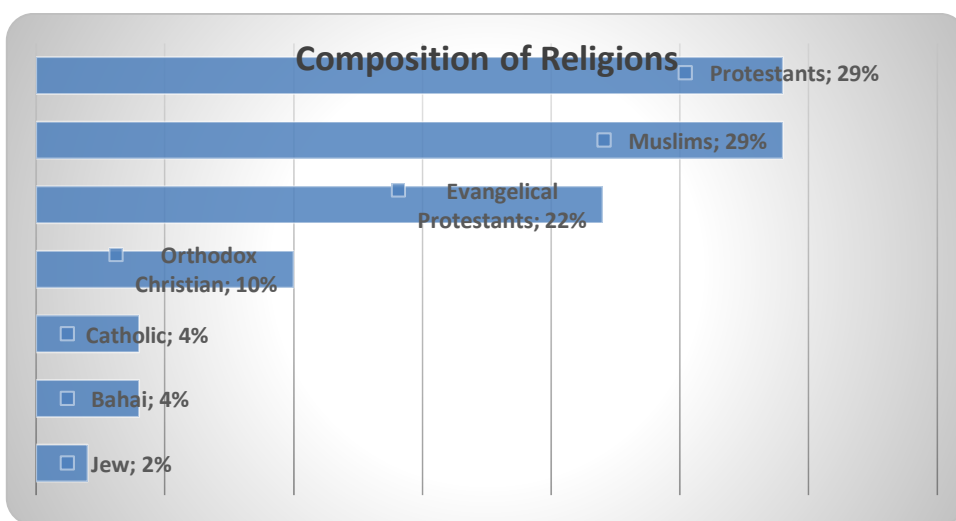
Table 7. Regional Representation of Experts

Regions	SCRA	Law Enforcement Bodies	Representatives of various State Bodies	Experts
Bishkek	1	1	State Agency for Youth and Physical Culture (1)	2
Talas	1	1	-	-
Naryn		1	1	-
Karakol	1	2	-	-
Batken			State Agency for Youth and Physical Culture (1)	-
Osh	1	-	-	2
Jalabad	1	1	Social Department of the Mayor's Office (1)	-

Total:	5	6	4	4
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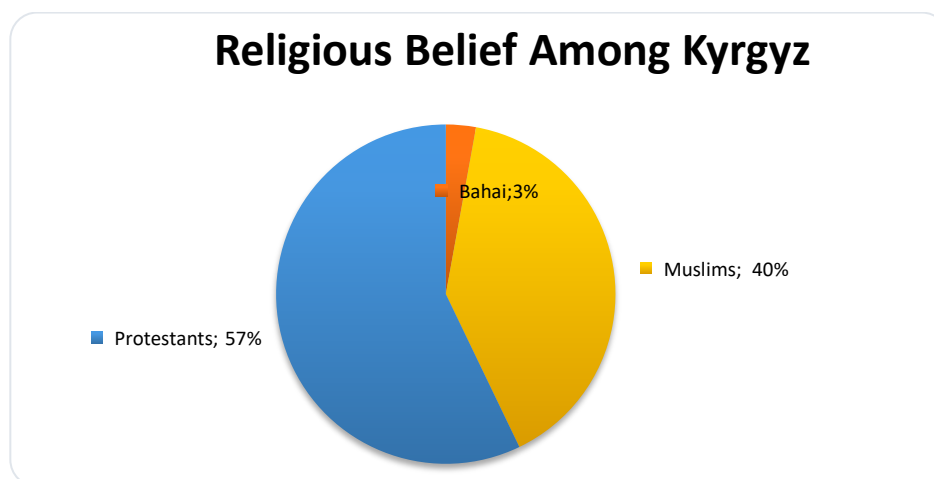
The majority of the respondents surveyed are Protestants 51%, who identified themselves by beliefs with Evangelical Protestants and Protestants. In the future, in order not to separately indicate each movement of Protestantism, they are given in a generalised way as Protestants for the convenience of analysis and perception in all statistics and diagrams.

Diagram 17. Religious Characteristics of Respondents



Below you can see the percentage of religion of the Kyrgyz people.

Diagram 18. Religious Identity of Titular Nation



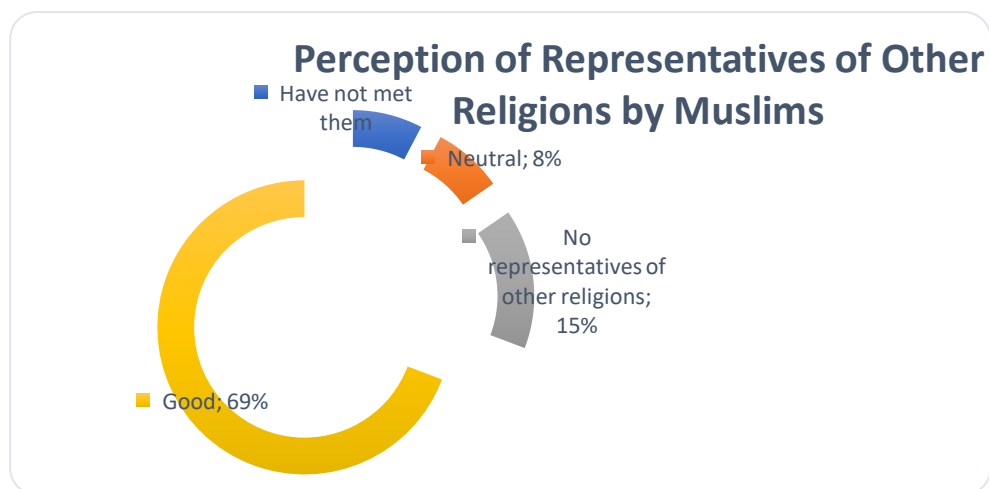
Due to the fact that the research topic is sensitive, the main partners in the field were local authorities and law enforcement bodies, the Spiritual Board of Muslims, representatives of various religious confessions, as well as local youth organisations that helped provide the target audience of the research.

Chapter2. Main Trends in Interaction between Young People of Different Religious Beliefs

2.1.Perceptions, Relationships and Interactions

In general, the perception of representatives of other religions by Muslims surveyed is "positive" in all areas when answering the question "How do you interact with representatives of other religions". The answers were distributed as follows: 69% of Muslims answered “good”, the remaining 23% of Muslims answered that they had not met with them and in the territory where the respondents (Muslims) live, there are no representatives of other religions, such answers were especially often found in mono-ethnic locations. The remaining 8% of Muslims answered they were neutral about other religious beliefs.

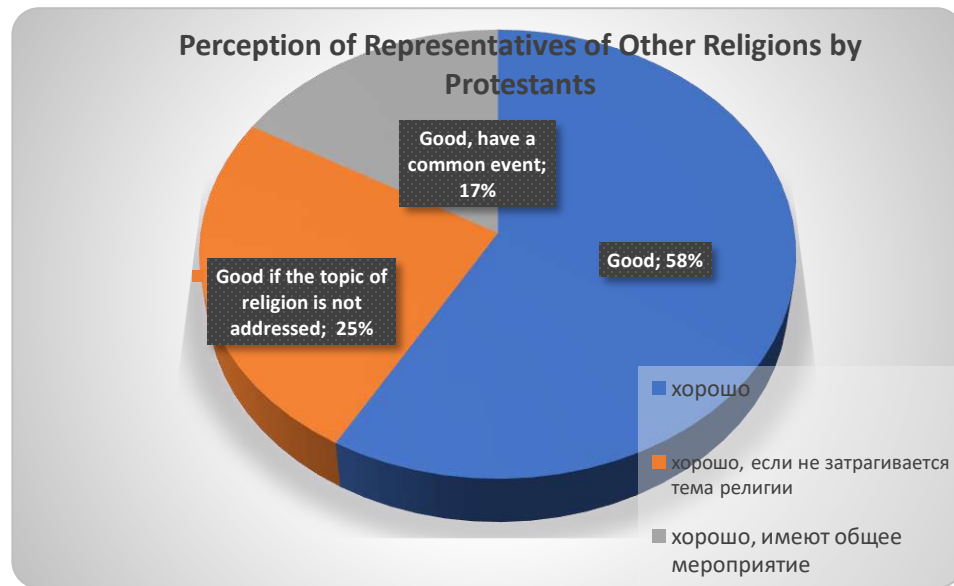
Diagram 19. Perception of Representatives of Other Religions by Muslims



When asked about interaction with representatives of other religions, more than 70% of Protestants answered “yes” in the affirmative. The remaining 25% of the respondents have perceptual

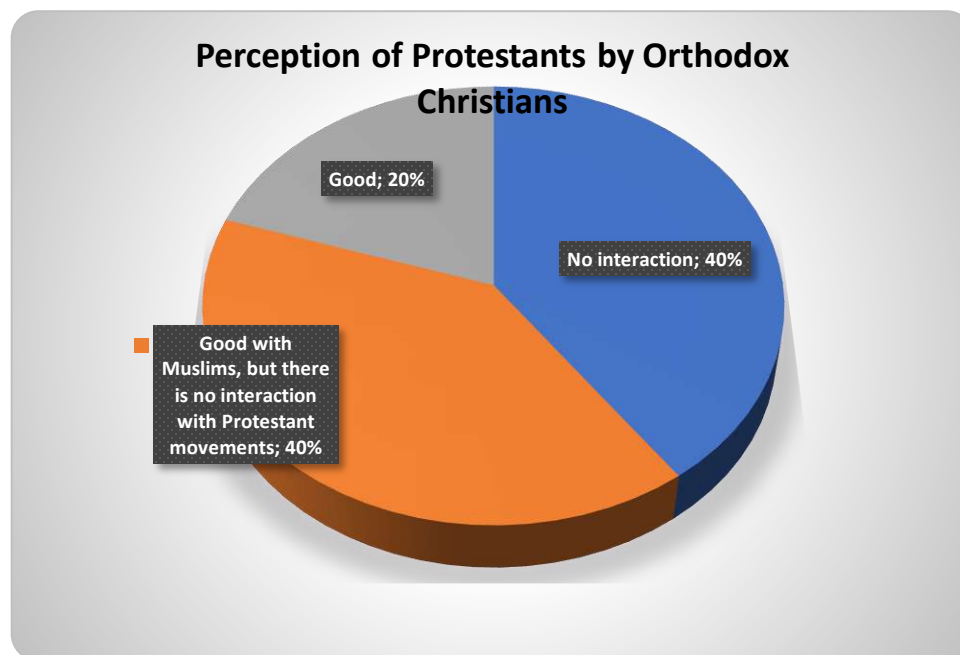
boundaries in the interaction. They have a good relationship, if not to touch on the topic of religion and belief.

Diagram 4. Perception of Representatives of Other Religions by Protestants



As part of the fieldwork of the research, it was revealed that Protestants were perceived negatively by representatives of Orthodoxy. Most Orthodox Christians, around 80%, said they were “negative”, in other words they did not want to interact, some clarified that they “decently” treat Muslims, and “there is no interaction” with Protestants. Only 20% of Orthodox Christians surveyed said they “decently” treat Protestants.

Diagram 20. Interactions between Orthodox and Representatives of Other Religions



These data are of great interest, since representatives of the Christian religion are perceived as a homogeneous, united community in Kyrgyzstani society and there is an opinion that Orthodox Christians have a positive attitude towards Protestant Christians. However, religious leaders of Orthodox Christians do not recognise Protestants as representatives of their religion and perceive them as sectarians. In our research, the respondents were priests and representatives of Orthodoxy who attend Sunday services and receive knowledge from religious leaders.

One of the bright answers of one of the religious leaders of Orthodox Christians: “We do not interact with Christian confessions because they are ...” (Interview No.6, Batken, Kyzyl-Kiya).

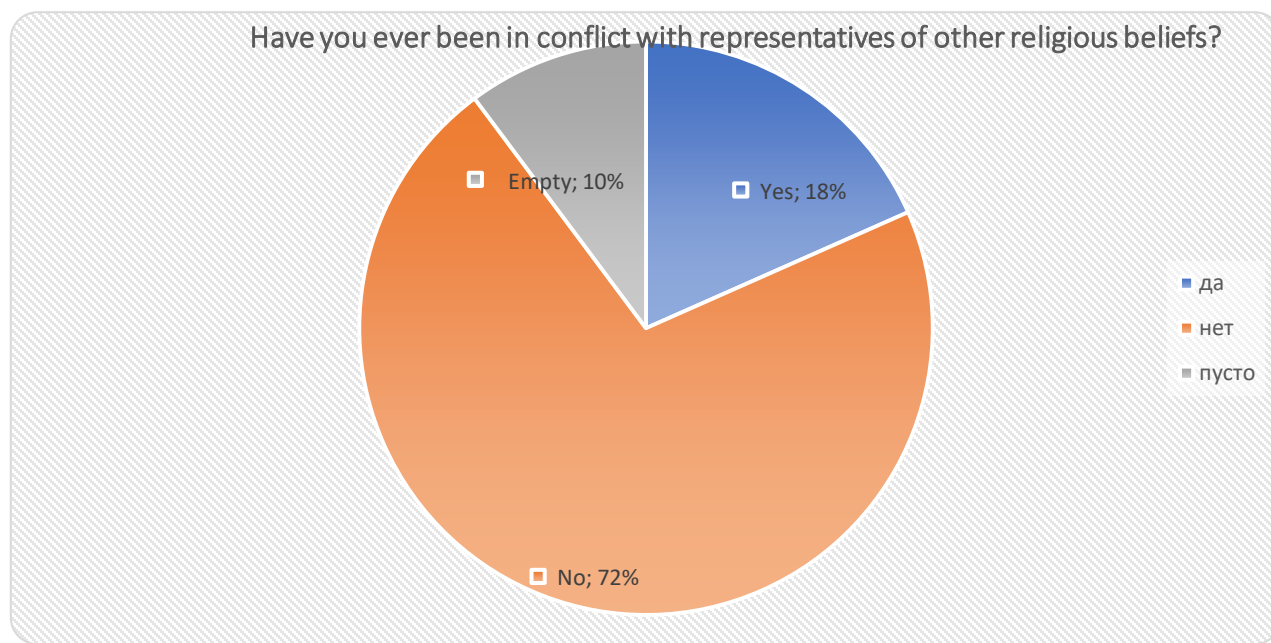
“We positively interact with Muslims, with sects, that is, Christian confessions – non-Orthodox, which are called sects, we do not interact with them” (Interview No.3, Osh).

The answer of another religious leader of Orthodox Christians: “there is no and there can be no interaction at the household level and at the religious level” (Interview No.4 Issyk-Kul, Karakol).

When asked about conflict situations with representatives of other religions, the following results were obtained (Diagram No. 6). Thus, 72% of the respondents answered that they had not gotten into conflict situations, and 18% answered that they had had various kinds of conflicts, starting with infringements and threats up to the point that they were not allowed to bury a deceased in the

ground. The remaining 10% did not answer this question. The respondents who answered “yes” are representatives of Protestantism.

Diagram 21. Conflict Situations



The respondents who answered “no” are representatives of all religions. Representatives of the traditional religions of Islam, Orthodox Christianity and Judaism have no conflicts among themselves.

The nature of conflicts in these cities is the same. In everyday life in the cities of Naryn, Jalal-Abad and Karakol, conflicts occurred at the beginning of the adoption of a new religion. Relatives did not accept and alienate the respondents, but over time they got used to it and began to build relationships. Often conflicts arise with local residents and with local imams during the burial of adherents of this religion.

During the interview, some respondents confirmed these facts:

“R: In 2002, an old man came to us, he had cancer, then he was got recovered. After he came to his village everyone started saying that he had betrayed his religion, and under this influence he started drinking. Then in the end he died, and he was not given a place for burial, and then I went to search, and there were tiffs, but then we went and buried him” (Interview No.10, Jalal-Abad)

This excerpt from the interview demonstrates how the conflict process proceeds:

“Respondent: Usually we do not have any conflicts. Conflicts arise during burial. When the son of Malik Baike died (name changed), we wanted to bury him in one village, but we were not allowed. We had legal land there, money was given for this plot. It was executed through the state register, all laws were observed and there was a separate land for burial. We went to the local deputies. We were not allowed anyway. We began to dig a grave, but villagers came and did not allow. We went to the administration of the region (the position was changed), they accused us backwards. They said that we are at fault for this. So they took the rightful land away.

I (Interviewer): Legitimate land for one person or adherents of your beliefs?

R: For all adherents who believe in Jesus. There was a separate land for burial. We showed the documents, said that this is our land and we have the right to dig a grave there. They blamed us and said that if any unrest begins, then you will be at fault. So the land was taken away from us. We had to bring from the village to the city of Naryn, and bury here.” (Excerpt from the Interview No. 20, Naryn).

The respondents who participated in the confrontations referred to the "burial" issues as the main cause of conflicts. Often, religious leaders at the regional level have to join in to solve these problems. Often, these conflicts arose in the outskirts and villages, where a mono-ethnic population prevails and there is low level of interaction between different religions among themselves. There were no conflicts in the cities. As part of the research, it was revealed that conflicts arise and are provoked by drunken people, as well as people who do not have any knowledge of religion. The respondents identified people with whom conflicts arose as nominal (ethnic) Muslims. They explained the "nominal Muslims" as people who do not practice Islam. "R: Yes, it is with the graves, atheists are buried, but they refuse to bury us, I don't know why, they refute everything, but we believe this is the only one."

(Interview No. 19, Karakol)

In Talas, all Protestants respondents surveyed answered “no” to the question “Have you ever had to get into conflicts with representatives of other religions?” Next are the cities of Osh and Batken. There are no conflicts between local residents and Protestants in the cities of Karakol and Jalal-Abad, but conflicts arise from time to time both at domiciliary level and in matters of burial on the outskirts of these regions, in villages.

There was interesting data for the research obtained in the city of Talas. As already noted above, in this location, all respondents, including Protestants, answered that there were no conflict

situations between representatives of different religious confessions. The respondents had neither conflicts in everyday life, nor in questions of burial, nor did they have conflicts with the administration of the region. An analysis of the answers of the respondents with various religious beliefs, and representatives of state bodies revealed that this city is cohesive and friendly. The unity of all religious institutions is manifested in solving the common problems of the region or city, and in peacetime, each religious united is united within its organisation.

Probably, friendliness and solidarity of the people is the result of events held at various venues on the initiative of both local residents themselves and various NGOs and state bodies. In addition, zero presence of conflict situations is the result of the fact that representatives of different nationalities live in Talas.

It was revealed from interviews with the respondents that the burial problems were solved on the initiative of representatives of different religions. Representatives of different religious beliefs: Protestants, Orthodox Christians and Muslims restored order and fenced off the territory at the cemetery by joint efforts. It was noted from the answers of the respondents in the city of Talas, that there is a unity of all religious movements, except for Jehovah's Witnesses, who did not take part in the refinement of the cemetery. The respondents also noted that by jointly taking the initiative, they helped to put in order the administrative facilities after the defeats during the revolution. This event has had a positive impact on the attitude of religious movements and state bodies.

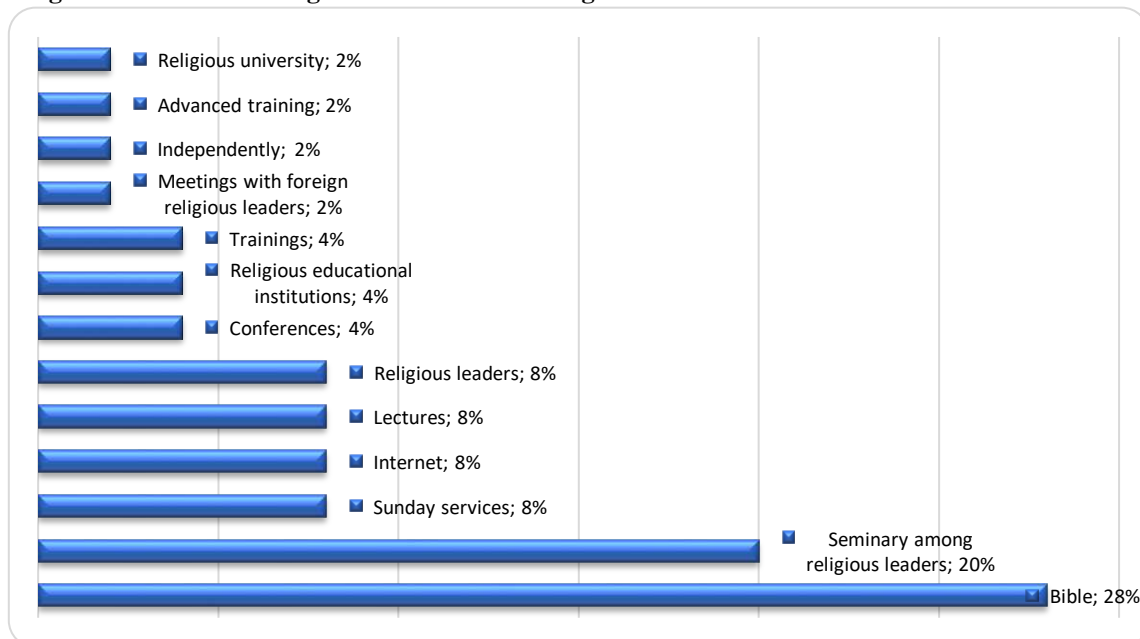
In addition, the international organisation "Red Cross" held a sports competition in football. Representatives of various diasporas participated in this competition. And there were representatives of various religious beliefs in each diaspora. A children's camp for representatives of all nationalities was organised by joint efforts of the State Commission for Religious Affairs and USAID.

All respondents said they did not have conflicts in the cities of Batken and Osh. Nevertheless, that is not to say that they have the same situation as in Talas, due to some reasons. It was difficult to find respondents of Protestantism in Batken. Only 2 respondents were surveyed, and we accessed them only with the help of the head of the "Evangelical Alliance of Kyrgyzstan", located in Bishkek. At the beginning, respondents were afraid to give interviews, and when we asked to invite young people to focus group discussions, they refused, citing the fact that this could be unsafe. When asked about conflicts, everyone referred to the burial problems in Jalal-Abad. In our opinion, the above facts are an indicator of the negative trend in interaction.

2.2. Religious Knowledge and Awareness as Fundamental Factors in Interaction of Youth.

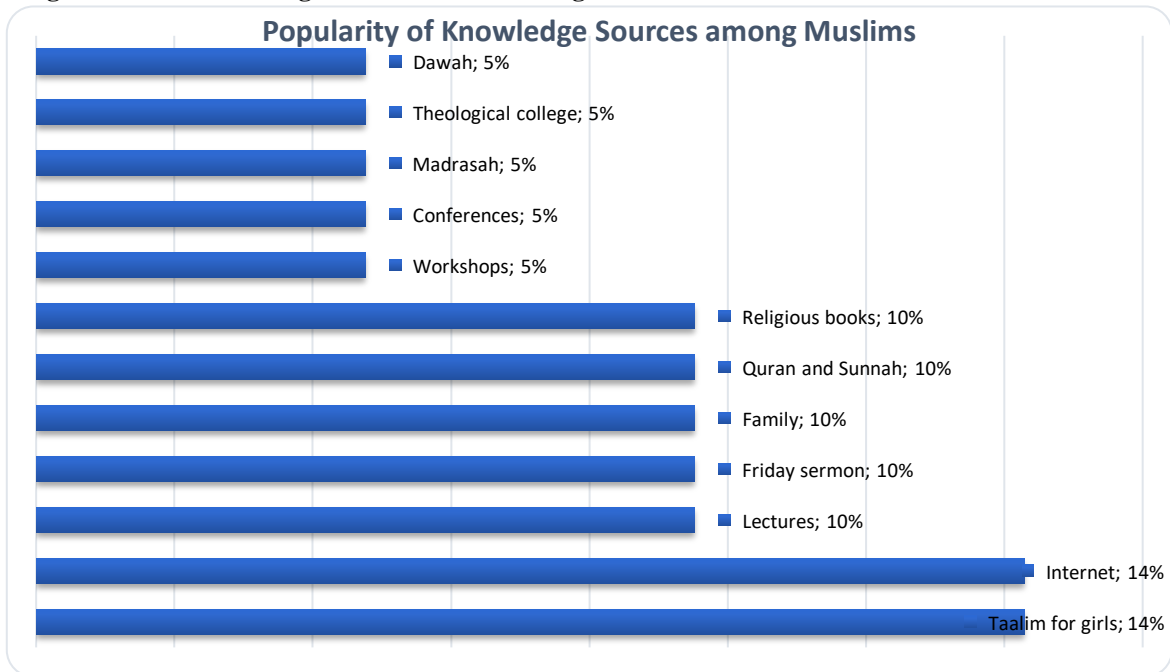
From among 49 respondents surveyed, which include religious leaders and youth, 96% said they attend various kinds of lectures to obtain religious knowledge. Here is what the main sources of information look like for them:

Diagram8. Sources of Religious Information among Protestants



Thus, Protestants receive knowledge from the Bible, next is Sunday sermons and meetings, and some have additional lectures. Pastors of Protestantism noted that they received religious education in theological seminary. And according to the Orthodox Christians surveyed, the Bible and the priests' sermons are considered a source of knowledge.

Diagram9.Sources of Religious Information among Muslims

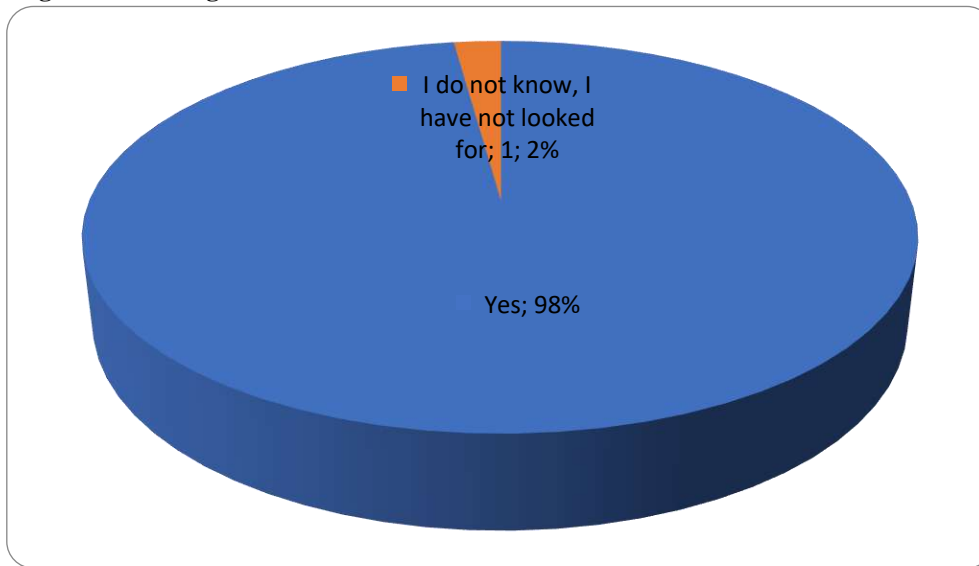


Muslims rather rely on the Quran and the Sunnah, and on religious principles that require certain actions to be performed. It is also important among Muslims to receive religious knowledge from online sources. In addition, family and Friday sermons play a significant role in obtaining religious knowledge. Regarding girls, they get knowledge by visiting the Taalim in their regions.

Religious knowledge is also disseminated by religious leaders in all religious confessions. The role of leaders is great in the provision of religious knowledge, since they have authority among their parishioners, their knowledge is important.

All respondents answered positively to the question “Do your religious beliefs require a tolerant attitude towards representatives of other religions”. Protestants made a reference to the Bible, that "we must love our neighbor as ourselves." They also gave an example of how Jesus Christ treated people with love and kindness. As the priest of the Orthodox Church from Osh notes, “Love is the basis of faith”.

Diagram 220. Religious Tolerance



The question “Does your religious belief require a tolerant attitude towards representatives of other religions?” was claimed by almost all respondents that their religious belief required a tolerant attitude towards everyone, but at the same time, one could see the rejection of some religious confessions or beliefs by respondents of traditional religions.

Thus, traditional religions respect each other, while trying to tolerate representatives of the Protestant beliefs. Protestants, in turn, are tolerant of Protestantism representatives. Their main position is that there should be no infringement and conflict based on the choice of religion. Everyone has the right to choose faith at his/her discretion.

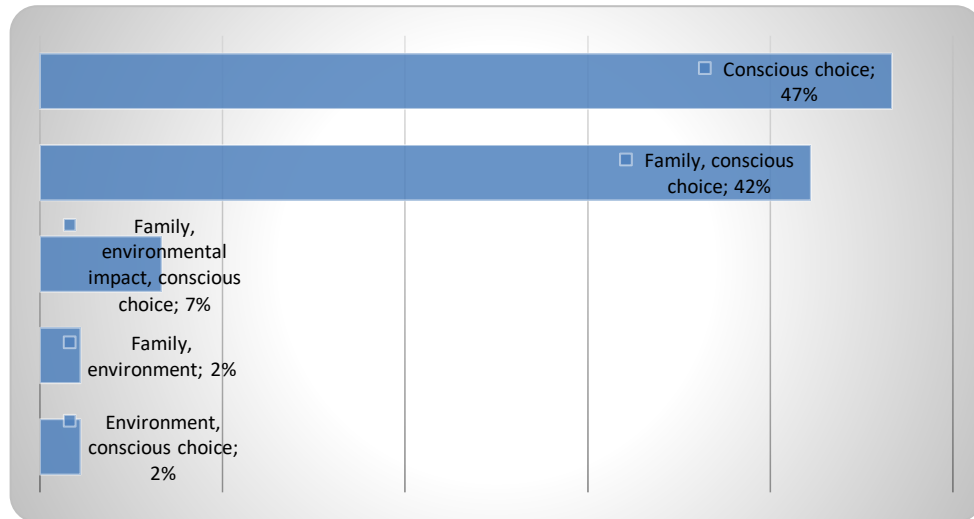
It can be concluded that the teachings of all religions preach a tolerant and respectful attitude towards representatives of other religions. 98% of respondents are familiar with these values and principles, but at the same time, despite this knowledge, negative and suspicious perceptions of representatives of other religious beliefs remain.

2.3.Problems (Issues) of Ethnicity and Religious Identity

Ethnicity is important in the religious identification of youth. Youth correlate ethnicity with religious identity in a different way depending on family upbringing, education and religiousness. Therefore, young people who belong to the Protestant confession believe that ethnicity does not matter for the choice of religion, because it is a conscious choice at any age, regardless of family impact or historical roots. They believe that public opinion, which equates ethnicity with religious

identity, is always morally pressing and causes fears to practice one’s religion calmly and openly. To the question "Is a person born with religion or is it a conscious choice?".

Diagram 231. Sources of Religiousness



According to one respondent, “in accordance with the Constitution, we have freedom of religion, which implies freedom of choice of religion and its practice within the framework of the law.” (Interview No.18, Naryn).

In general, 40% of the respondents surveyed said that a person chooses or comes to religion consciously, and at any age. At the same time, 23% of the respondents surveyed admit that family is the main factor determining religious identity. That is, at first a family impacts on the choice of religion, but over time a person starts to study and impress a particular religion through his perception of the world, and subsequently practice it.

Thus, it can be assumed that the answer “whether a person is born with religion or is it a conscious choice at any age” can be summarised as that a person in a family receives the first basic concepts of religion, and subsequently, the environment and various factors impact so that a person himself comes to the adoption of a certain religion.

Chapter 3. Place and Role of State Bodies and Religious Leaders in Interaction of Young People of Different Religious Beliefs

3.1. State and Young People of Different Religious Beliefs

By analysing the interviews of state bodies, it can be assumed that in all areas, state bodies, in particular the State Commission for Religious Affairs, is taking the necessary measures to strengthen the interaction between representatives of different religious beliefs.

Thus, various events on the interaction of various religious confessions in various venues are actively conducted by the SCRA in the cities of Bishkek, Karakol, Talas and Osh. Both religious leaders and youth participate there. These events are carried out not only by the SCRA, but also by various departments and even ministries. According to a SCRA representative in Bishkek, “There is no doubt that several ministries and departments are involved in this issue, events are organised, we work with youth, programs are created, there is a lot of departments for work with youth in the ministry, with the involvement of international donors. A camp “Zhash Bulak” has been recently organised, last year and this year they teach religion, teach liberalism.”

In addition, international organisations and various NGOs make a great contribution to the development of interaction and strengthening relations between various religious confessions. Local non-profit organisations create various venues on site for interaction between different confessions. From an interview with a SCRA representative in Karakol, it could be understood how the work of state institutions in cooperation with international organisations goes on:

“It seems to me that the state is creating the conditions, but the major point is that we do not have financial resources. I, as a representative of the civil service, we almost do not get help, and state bodies can be understood as there are not enough financial resources and some things are not effective. However, at the same time, it is precisely with us that we have a very close relationship with the assembly of international representatives, we are trying to organise conferences, we are interested in their opinions, we have a lot of ideas, but as you can see we have no finances, mainly the UN and UNDP help us. In September, in honor of the 100th anniversary of T.Usubaliev, we plan to hold an event with representatives of other ethnic groups, and platforms for interaction with each other are being created.

The SCRA holds various events, such as sports competitions, children's camps for all diasporas. Due to the lack of funds in the budget, the SCRA enjoys the support of local donor organisations in order to support such events.

Due to the fact that the SCRA representative began to carry out his activities in the city of Batken recently, we did not receive extensive and significant information about the interactions of the SCRA with young people of different confessions."

In general, youth of Batken is very active, they independently conduct various events.

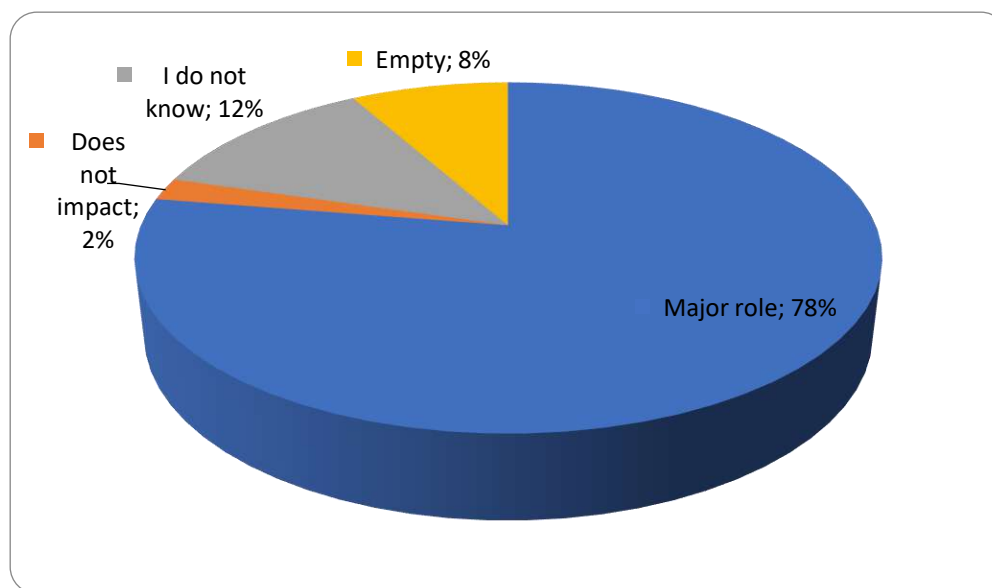
It is not a priority to hold events for the interaction between different confessions in the city of Naryn. The administration believes that there is no need to carry out any events for the interaction between different religions as this city is mono-ethnic.

We have found out that the state holds various events for different confessions. Since these events are held for religious leaders, young people are not particularly involved.

3.2. Religious Leaders and Young People of Different Religious Beliefs

Religious leaders play an important role among young people of different religious beliefs. According to some respondents, people listen and do what religious leaders say. According to the pastor of the Protestants: "youth is like unlimited water, they will swim wherever you send them." This opinion is also supported by young people, they believe that religious leaders act as authorities for their environment and for their parishioners, respectively. Young people consult, ask questions of interest to them and focus on the statements of their religious leaders.

Diagram 12. Role of Religious Leaders in Interaction with Representatives of Other Religions



Young people believe that interaction begins exactly with religious leaders, because if they are in good relations with each other, then this is oftentimes an example of the behavior for youth.

Trust in religious leaders is conditioned by their religious education, knowledge and the position they hold in society. Both youth and religious leaders believe that a leader should have a broad outlook, religious education, be strong and persistent. Thus, youth sees religious leaders as a source of knowledge and role model.

A young respondent from the Protestant beliefs from Naryn shared his thoughts that “first of all, religious leaders should learn and speak on the basis of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic” in his opinion, this is where tolerance starts from”. (Interview No. 25, Naryn)

Religious leaders themselves believe that their role in building relations among young people themselves is fundamental and they should gather, take part in inter-confessional meetings and events, increase their knowledge and conduct joint awareness-raising events to maintain peace and tranquility for the future of Kyrgyzstan.

An interesting indicator is that almost all religious leaders feel responsible for their activities, both before the state and before God.

According to a respondent from Talas, “if a religious leader is benevolent, he will direct all his followers in the positive direction, and if he is bad, he will interfere with friendship relations between religions.

Thus, having summed up all the interviews received from both youth and religious leaders, it can be assumed that religious leaders play a big role in building relations between young people of different religious confessions. They are a guiding start that can both positively and negatively affect the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs.

Conclusion

This research was conducted to identify the main trends in the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs. Qualitative research methods were supposed to help reveal the validity of the hypotheses that we thought were relevant in the framework of this research. These hypotheses emerged from a review of relevant literature.

In the course of our research, a strong correlation emerged in all places where various events on interaction of different faiths were actively carried out. Thus, resulting in higher interaction and conflict prevention. It is important to note that there were also places with fewer conflicts, and in towns such as Talas completely absent.

In addition, in places where representatives of the dominant ethnic group were 99%, the level of conflict was very high. There are conflicts in the city of Karakol, where various events are actively held and representatives of various ethnic groups live. These conflicts arise in remote places, villages, where one ethnic group dominates.

We can strongly argue that in multi-ethnic places with no events on the interaction between representatives of different confessions, the potentiality of conflicts greatly arise.

Conflicts arose among Protestants with the local population, that is, with nominal Muslims. Nominal Muslims are individuals who consider themselves to be adherents of Islam by birth, culture or ethnic group, but do not adhere to any canons of religion.

Some Christianity movements, as Jehovah's Witnesses, create the basis for conflicts not only with the local population, but also with other Protestant movements. They have no interaction in any area. Moreover, they do not cooperate and do not interact with local authorities. Therefore, it creates a huge potential for the development of different conflict situations.

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Annex No.1 Questions for In-depth Interview with Representatives of State Bodies

(three respondents in each location)

Explain the main purpose of an in-depth interview to a respondent, and say that his / her participation will be confidential and anonymous.

1. Please tell us about your professional activities, what is your responsibility?
2. How is your work related to religious confessions?
3. Please tell us, under what circumstances, factors and reasons, does social interaction between young people of different religious beliefs occur?
4. What difficulties do young people of different religious beliefs face?
5. What role do religious leaders play in building relations between young people of different religions?
6. In your opinion, what is the nature of interaction between young people of different confessions in practice?
7. Does the state create platforms for interaction between young people of different religious beliefs? Is work being carried out to conduct joint events among young people of different religions, for example: charity activities, holding joint holidays? If so, what were the problems with the interaction?
8. Do you plan to conduct joint events with young people of different confessions? Yes/no? Why?
9. What do you think should be the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs?
10. How does ethnicity affect religious identity?
11. In your opinion, how does religious belief influence the building of relations between different confessions?
12. Please tell us examples of positive / negative interaction (conflicts, positive examples)?

Annex No.2 Questions for In-depth Interview with Representatives of Different Religious Confessions

(5 or more respondents in each location)

Explain the main purpose of an in-depth interview to a respondent, and say that his / her participation will be confidential and anonymous.

1. Please tell us about yourself (age, marital status, what do you do)? Field of activity? (what type, where do you work or study (specify) student of a madrasah or seminary)
2. In your opinion, how does youth behave to religion and how much does it practice it?
3. What religion do you consider yourself?
4. Please tell us how you became a follower of this religion?
5. Do you attend any lectures where you receive religious knowledge?
6. Do representatives of other religious beliefs live in your area?
7. How do you feel about members of other religious beliefs?
8. How do you interact with representatives of other religious confessions?
9. Please tell us, representatives of what religions do you interact with at all? How often do you interact?
- only once two times, - more than two times, - constantly
10. Do interactions occur in everyday life?
For example: work together, study, spend joint leisure time, community work days, etc.
11. Do you spend any holidays together, for example: Independence Day, May 9, Easter, Kurban Bayram, Nooruz? (to identify acquaintances, friends, neighbors of other religious confessions).
12. In your opinion, does the state create conditions for a peaceful and equal existence for all religions?
13. Have you ever been in conflict situations with representatives of other religious beliefs?
14. How do you assess your interaction with representatives of other confessions? (good, bad, no interaction, neutral)
15. What experience of interaction have you had with representatives of other religions? What are some of the issues that exist when interacting?

List interaction issues

16. Would you like to meet and learn about other religions?
17. Is there a need to create platforms for interaction from the state?
18. Have you ever contacted state bodies to defend your religious beliefs? Do you trust government agencies?
 - If yes, why?
 - If no, why?
19. Do your religious beliefs require a tolerant attitude towards members of other religions? Based on what religious principles (books, scholars, religious leaders, etc.) do you build relationships?
20. Does ethnicity influence religion choice?
21. Do you think a person is born with religion or is it a conscious choice at any age? And is this the impact on the part of the family and the environment?
22. How do you feel about people who have changed religion? Good, bad, neutral.
23. What is your vision of the interaction between young people of different religions?
24. Do you like living in Kyrgyzstan, do you consider yourself a patriot?
25. What role do religious leaders play in building relations between confessions?
26. Did you have conflicts when you changed your confessions?

Annex No.3 Questions for In-depth Interview with Experts

(2 respondents in Osh and Bishkek)

Explain the main purpose of an in-depth interview to a respondent, and say that his / her participation will be confidential and anonymous.

1. *Please tell us whether is religious freedom ensured in the Kyrgyz Republic?*
2. *In your opinion, what is the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs today?*
3. *Every year, adherents of various religious confessions are growing in Kyrgyzstan. Given such changes in the religious sphere, what policy should the state pursue?*
4. *What do you think about ethnicity and religious identity?*

5. *What is the nature (negative and positive) of the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs?*
6. *In what areas of public relations do young people of different religious beliefs interact?*
7. *How effective are the ongoing activities of state bodies and non-governmental organizations to create platforms for negotiations among young people of different religious beliefs?*
8. *What role do religious leaders play in building relationships between young people of different religious beliefs?*
9. *Do you think that youth of different religious beliefs have a vision of interaction?*
10. *What role do religious leaders play in building relations between confessions?*
11. *What do you think should be a constructive interaction?*
12. *Should the state create platforms for interaction between young people of different confessions? What is the format of interaction?*

Annex No.4 FGD Program

Session 1: Acquaintance

Session 2: Identity Molecule

Session 3: Conducting focus group discussion

Questions for Focus Group Discussion

1. Please tell us how you interact with representatives of different religions?
2. How often do you intersect with youth of another confession?
3. Have you had any common events with representatives of other confessions?
4. Do you celebrate any holidays with the youth of other confessions?
5. How do you imagine the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs?
Namely, in what areas is the interaction possible?
6. In your opinion, how to interact with each other even better?
7. What conditions should the state create for the interaction between young people of different confessions?

8. Are there any obstacles to the interaction between young people of different religions?
9. Have you contacted local administrative or law enforcement bodies on various issues?
10. Do you trust state authorities regarding the issue of youth interaction?
11. How do you see life in multi-confessional Kyrgyzstan?

6. The Influence of Kyrgyzstan’s Media Strategies on Preventing the Spread of the Ideology of Violent Extremism

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Annotation

Media strategies for the prevention of extremism can be defined as means of communication of government agencies involved in preventing the spread of radical religious ideology among the population of Kyrgyzstan, as well as methods of transmitting information on the Internet.

This work reflects the results of research conducted over a period of 6 months (from March 2019 to August 2019). The analysis of existing media strategies in government bodies (MIA, SCRA, SCNS), as well as three NGOs and civic activists was conducted, 300 respondents in the cities of Uzgen, Bishkek and Aravan aged 16-24 years of both sexes were surveyed. The survey was conducted using the "snowball" method in order to identify youth involvement on the Internet. The research was conducted on the basis of qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as based on the results of previous research in the field of counteraction and prevention of extremism. The research showed high youth involvement on the Internet, which reflects the low efficiency of existing media strategies.

The main emphasis in the qualitative and quantitative research was made on the following components: identification, study, assessment, analysis and comparison of media strategies of Kyrgyzstan.

Abbreviations

SPS –	State Penitentiary Service
SCRA –	State Commission for Religious Affairs
SBMK–	Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan
MIA –	Ministry of Internal Affairs
ROC –	Russian Orthodox Church
NGO –	Non-Governmental Organization
GPO KR–	General Prosecutor’s Office of the Kyrgyz Republic
MM –	Mass Media
SB–	State Body
SMM –	Social Media Marketing

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Table 8 Analysis of Media Strategies of Organizations Dealing with Religious Issues in the Kyrgyz Republic

Introduction

Anglo-Saxon sources introduce the concept of violent¹⁴⁸ extremism, which is one of the most heated issues today. As of February 1, 2019, 550 people were convicted of terrorism and extremism acts in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁴⁹ This is confirmed by the data of the GPO of the Kyrgyz Republic¹⁵⁰: 110 criminal cases were initiated due to the participation of Kyrgyzstan citizens in the Syrian combat zone over the year of 2018¹⁵¹. Materials on the suppression of extremism were published in the reports of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, among which an active leader of “Hizb Ut-Tahrir al-Islami”¹⁵² was detained in the first half of 2019, and firearms and ammunition were found from other active members of religious extremist organisations. Terrorist groups are now actively using the latest information technology and particularly the Internet. Random citizens, young people who do not understand the danger of the situation are drawn into these processes. Therefore, Internet portals are the biggest potential threats (electronic mass media, radical movement web-sites, etc.)¹⁵³, including propaganda sources such as Internet forums, blogs, video hosting, social networks and instant messengers. According to the decision of the courts of the Kyrgyz Republic, 220 Internet accounts were blocked in 2018, as they distributed extremist propaganda materials¹⁵⁴.

According to the State Service for Execution of Punishment¹⁵⁵, since 2012 the number of people convicted of extremism and terrorism has grown 5 times. Various acts of radicalism nature

¹⁴⁸Violent Extremism is the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. (Manukyan A.R., Shkhagapsoeva M.Kh. - Violent Extremism and Individual Factors of Radicalization. // Psychologist. - 2016.– No. 6. –P.1-8. DOI:10.7256/2409-8701.2016.6.20852 URL: https://nbpublish.com/library_read_article.php?id=20852.

¹⁴⁹ The data provided by the SPS Press Service: <http://gsin.gov.kg/ru/presssluzhba/novosti/gsin-rabotaet-po-deradikalizacii-osuzhdennyh-za-terrorizm-i-jekstremizm.html>.

¹⁵⁰ The Prosecutor’s Office of the Kyrgyz Republic is a state authority that oversees the accurate and uniform implementation of laws and other regulatory acts of the Kyrgyz Republic (from the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On the Prosecutor’s Office of the Kyrgyz Republic”).

¹⁵¹Overviews of «AkiPress» for 04/25/2019: <https://svodka.akipress.org/news:1542955>.

¹⁵²Hizb Ut-Tahrir al-Islami is an international religious and political party recognized as banned in Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁵³Yuzhakova T.A., Lashin R.L. Prevention of the Ideology of Terrorism and Extremism in the Educational Environment and on the Internet // Review. NCPTI. 2013. No 3. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/profilaktika-ideologii-terrorizma-i-ekstremizma-v-obrazovatelnoy-srede-i-seti-internet>.

¹⁵⁴Statement made by the General Prosecutor Otkurbek Dzhamshitov at a parliamentary meeting dated 04/17/2019 Source: <http://kant.kg/2019-04-17/v-2018-godu-po-resheniyu-sudov-byli-zablokirovany-220-internet-akkauntov/>.

¹⁵⁵ The State Penitentiary Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic is a law enforcement and state executive body that implements state policy on the activities of the penal system. (From the Regulation on the State Penitentiary Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic).

pose a real threat to national security, since all its forms, regardless of motives, are aimed at changing the structure of society through fear and intimidation of people. The number of recruits hooked by extremist groups in Kyrgyzstan is growing. For example, less than 100 convicts of this category were serving sentences in the SPS institutions in 2012, and there are already 550 convicts in 2019.

According to domestic and foreign theologians and experts, the main reasons for the radicalisation of youth are, first of all, lack of awareness, lack of religious education, as well as socio-economic reasons¹⁵⁶. The most important factors for young people to join illegal armed groups are the low level of regional economic development and high unemployment rate among the population against the backdrop of demographic growth.¹⁵⁷

Since the level of youth radicalisation, according to the lieutenant colonel of the MIA KR – Manas Amanbaev¹⁵⁸, “is high in small cities of Osh region (Uzgen, Aravan), therefore, special attention in our work is given to the southern part of the country. Also, during the research, we compared the opinions of the youth in three cities.

The research topic is the study of existing media strategies in the Kyrgyz Republic to prevent extremism. The problem is urgent, because every day the number of young people who are being recruited through Internet “traps”¹⁵⁹ by radical groups is growing, and their recruitment tools are becoming newer and more sophisticated.

Research Methodology

The Research Purpose – determination of information and communication methods to counter the spread of the ideology of violent extremism on the Internet.

Achieving the purpose involves solving the following specific **tasks**:

- study of existing strategies on the Internet and media sphere implemented by SBs and NGOs;
- identification of the level of Internet growth in the Kyrgyz Republic based on previously conducted researches;

¹⁵⁶ Opinion of the member of the Council of Ulema of Kyrgyzstan, theologian Kadyr Malikov from the video bridge “How to Deter the Spread of Radical Ideology Among Muslims in the CIS”: <https://24.kg/obschestvo/75314/>.

¹⁵⁷ Yahyaev M.Y. Causes of Radicalization of Islam in the Modern World // Islamic studies. 2012. No. 2. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/prichiny-radikalizatsii-islama-v-sovremennom-mire>.

¹⁵⁸ Quotation from an interview with the research expert.

¹⁵⁹ Hacker attacks, spam and more.

Source: Information and analytical portal “polit-asia.kz”: <https://knews.kg/2019/04/12/onlajn-igry-i-mediaholding-kak-igil-verbuet-storonnikov-v-tsentralnoj-azii/>.

- compilation of a socio-geographical picture of Internet users in the Kyrgyz Republic based on a conducted survey and identification of comparative sections of media involvement of youth in Chui and Osh regions;
- study of the main media channels for propaganda of religious extremism based on existing secondary and statistical data.

The Research Object – media strategies to counter extremist propaganda in the Kyrgyz Republic, and their effectiveness.

The Research Subject – media strategy tools to combat the spread of extremism within existing media strategies.

Field work was carried out in March 2019. 300 people were interviewed using the survey method. The sample frame was compiled given sex and age- and territorial features of citizens living in the Kyrgyz Republic. The respondents' choice was made by means of the "snowball". A total of 157 women and 143 men were surveyed.

When developing the questionnaire and conducting the survey, as well as when analysing the data obtained, the methodological recommendations of the group mentor - Inga Sikorskaya and the trainer for statistical data processing - Rita Ismailova were used.

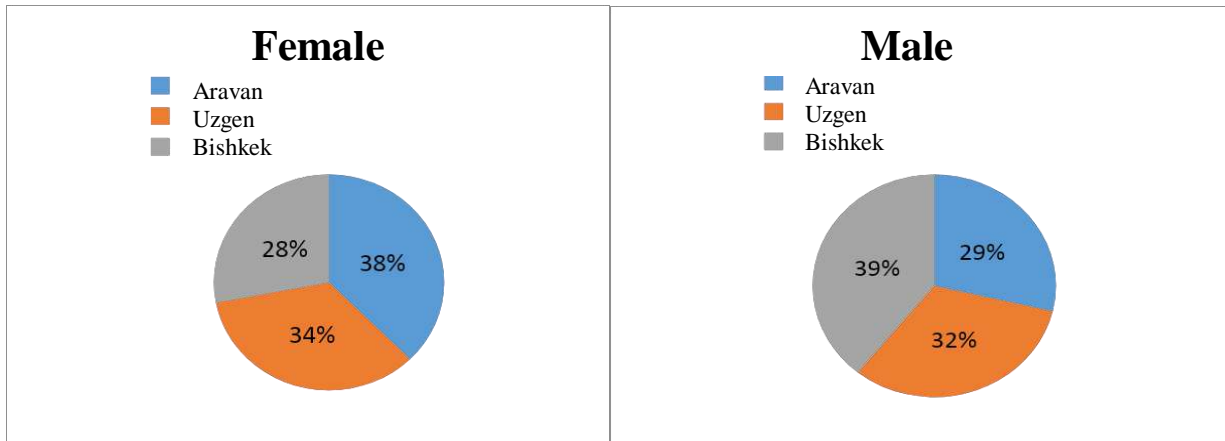
The questionnaire included questions about the Internet activity of young people from different regions of Kyrgyzstan, their awareness and understanding of extremist propaganda on the Internet and knowledge about methods of combating extremism.

The Research Geography: Osh and Chui regions, as well as the cities of Uzgen, Aravan and Bishkek. These localities have been chosen for several reasons. Firstly, it was in these regions that cases of youth recruitment were recorded. Secondly, the main content of the ideology of violent extremism is distributed in the Kyrgyz and Russian languages, and Kyrgyz-speaking and Uzbek-speaking residents predominate in the selected localities.

The Research Project Methodology: desk research, questionnaire, expert interview. Number of questionnaires: 300 (100 questionnaires per Aravan, 100 questionnaires per Uzgen and 100 per Bishkek)

Sampling: The age cohort of the respondents is youth from 16 to 24 years old, the sex characteristics of the respondents – 52% women and 48% men.

Diagram 33. Sex Characteristics of Respondents



The Research Question: *Is there an effective state media strategy to prevent the spread of extremism in Kyrgyzstan?*

Hypothesis:

- Media strategies minimize the spread of extremist information over the Internet.

Section 1: Analysis of Existing Media Strategies

An analysis of media strategies in Kyrgyzstan revealed that the strategies implemented by government bodies or non-governmental organisations represent action plans and the use of a specific set of media tools to prevent the spread of extremist ideology.

Media strategies should include:

- the concept of activities with specific goals, understanding of the target audience and its information needs, given the availability of Internet space for religious groups propagandizing extremist ideology;
- ways, means, methods, forms and types of communication between the authorities, mass media and civil society in the context of the fight against violent extremism on the Internet;
- tools to achieve the goals of the strategy (for example, media campaigns, media texts, mass media, media competencies, new media, social media, media communication, etc.).

Today, the majority of religious associations in Kyrgyzstan have public relations structures (press services, press secretaries, communication departments, external relations departments, etc.). Using these channels, they try to explain to the audience what propaganda of violent extremism is and what consequences this can bring and how to counter it.

One of the most important components of the research was to conduct in-depth interviews with experts. As part of this stage of work, 5 interviews were conducted with representatives of SBs and NGOs in order to identify the availability of media strategies, basic tools, events, goals and objectives of the respective organizations. Review of the governmental program to prevent extremism was also conducted. The research analyzed existing media strategies in the State Commission for Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan, the Iyman Foundation for the Development of Spiritual Culture, the School of Peacekeeping and Media Technology in Central Asia, and the Search for Common Ground international NGO, as well as public initiatives implemented by Internet bloggers. In the course of the analysis of media strategies, we identified the following pattern.

Analysis of Media Strategies of Organisations in the Religious Sphere in Kyrgyzstan

Table9. Media Strategies of Organisations Dealing with Religious Issues in the Kyrgyz Republic

N o.	Organisation	Media Strategies (type, form, name)	Activities under Media Strategies (action plan)	Results Achieved
1	SCRA	There are elements of media strategies provided in the Action Plan of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on Countering Terrorism and	1. Formation of the State Confessional Council under the SCRA. 2. Creation of a current religious situation monitoring system, timely response to problematic aspects in the field of religion and working out adequate solutions and	1. A system of sustainable interaction between state bodies and religious leaders, organisations and civil society has been created. ¹⁶⁰ 2. A center for research of the religious situation

¹⁶⁰ The Action Plan for Implementation of the Concept of State Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Religious Sphere of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2015-2020

		Extremism for 2017-22.	recommendations for state bodies. 3. Publication of a scientific and analytical journal on the research of the religious situation.	in Kyrgyzstan has been established. 3. A platform for publication and divulgation of ongoing research on this topic. All interested parties promptly receive information about the ROs, about the results of social research, statistical data, conflict-generating points, problems, changes and estimates of the development of the religious situation.
2	MIA	There are elements of a media strategy provided in the Action Plan of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on Countering Terrorism and Extremism for 2017-22.	1. Monitoring religious educational institutions to identify the spread of radical ideologies in the content of curricula and in educational practice. 2. Databases and mechanisms for registering citizens involved in destructive, extremist and terrorist activities that threaten the state system of the country have been created.	Moderate religious doctrines are promoted through the religious education system, as well as preventing the spread of radical ideas. 2. A common database of persons brought to administrative and criminal liability for destructive, extremist and terrorist activities has been created in order to identify threats of public destabilisation and their introduction into bodies.
3	SCNS	There are elements of media strategies	1. In order to effectively counteract the spread of extremist materials in the	1. A mechanism has been created for quick response and blocking

		provided in the Action Plan of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on Countering Terrorism and Extremism for 2017-22.	Internet space of the Kyrgyz Republic, mechanisms have been developed by the competent state bodies that provide for extrajudicial blocking of websites containing religious extremist materials. 2. The structures, number and functional responsibilities of the units of the MIA KR, SCNS KR, SCRA KR whose powers include the fight against extremism and terrorism, have been optimised.	information resources of extremist and terrorist nature. 2. The effectiveness of response and interaction of state bodies at the national and local levels has been increased. Duplication of activities of state bodies are excluded.
4	SBMK	There are elements of media strategies provided as agreed in the Action Plan of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on Countering Terrorism and Extremism for 2017-22.	1. Field research has been conducted. Preparation of a scientific and analytical base, publication of guidelines. 2. A methodological base for information campaigns and program of events (media plan) has been developed to promote a constructive discourse on religion in mass media and social media aimed at preventing religious radicalism.	1. Objective information about the current religious situation in the country, which allows timely response to challenges, to prevent conflicts, to predict the development of the situation has been obtained. The scientific and analytical base for the training of specialists, advanced training of representatives of the academic community, civil society, clergy and government agencies has been expanded. 2. An alternative information field is being formed with the aim of promoting moderate religious

				views that do not contradict the principles of a secular state.
5	ROC	There are elements of a media strategy consistent with the Action Plan of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on Countering Terrorism and Extremism for 2017-22.	1. Programs and necessary methodological support for trainings of schoolchildren and teachers on the prevention of conflicts among young people on religious grounds and on the development of spiritual safety skills of citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic have been developed.	1. Trainings to increase tolerance and reduce the number of conflicts on religious grounds, etc. have jointly been conducted.
6	Iyman Foundation for the Development of Spiritual Culture	There is a media strategy, and it is planned to update it.	1. Reduction of extremist and radical trends in religion by creating conditions for raising the level of education of representatives of the clergy. 2. Development and publication of textbooks in order to increase the levels of education of representatives of the clergy.	1. 100 imams have been trained on site, scholarships are being paid. 2. Textbooks for the clergy have been published (11 books), seminars for imams have been held.
7	School of Peacekeeping	Media strategy is aimed at working with traditional mass media and journalists. “Reducing Intolerance in Traditional Mass Media of Kyrgyzstan as an Early Warning of Extremist Propaganda, and	1. Constant monitoring and analysis of the media sphere, studying the frequency and level of intolerance affecting the spread of extremist propaganda; publication of monitoring reports; 2. Development of recommendations for mass media, civil society and authorities;	1. Around 100 media specialists in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were trained by the beginning of 2019; 2. 500 textbooks in Kyrgyz and Russian languages entitled "How to Overcome Extremist Propaganda in Media" have been issued and distributed

		Building Capacity to Quickly Respond to Materials Containing Radical Discourse through Media and Communication Strategies”.	<p>3. Preparation of training materials and conducting trainings, training programs and video lessons, as well as textbooks in Kyrgyz and Russian languages for journalists and students of mass communications faculties of Kyrgyzstan;</p> <p>4. Conducting media campaigns to raise awareness (2 media campaigns including SMM have been organised);</p> <p>5. The research “New Media Culture and Information Literacy as an Early Warning of Youth Radicalisation” has been conducted and recommendations for implementation have been developed.</p>	<p>among journalism departments at universities;</p> <p>3. 5 video lessons have been developed;</p> <p>4. Six training syllabuses have been developed for organisations involved in countering online extremism.</p>
8	Search for Common Ground	Social Media for Deradicalisation: A Model for Central Asia	<p>1. The development of positive narratives through social media campaigns to create opportunities for the population to effectively respond to the propaganda of violent extremism.</p> <p>2. Conducting professional media campaigns on social networks aimed at the destruction of extremist ideologies among young people.</p> <p>3. Conducting inclusive campaigns by 50 youth activist</p>	<p>1. The research “Media Channels, Meanings and Images Leading to the Radicalisation of Youth of Kyrgyzstan” has been conducted, and a single action plan for the development of media campaigns has been released.</p> <p>2. One professional media campaign (3 videos, 22 visual content) has been developed and conducted.</p>

			leaders in the regions of Kyrgyzstan.	<p>3. A practical guide has been developed for organising and conducting social media campaigns on social networks to prevent the propaganda of violent extremism.</p> <p>4. The guide has been distributed among NGOs and universities.</p>
9	Civic Engagement: Minutkadlya dushi Instagram Page	There are developments on the media strategy of Internet bloggers (Abdualim Sydykov).	<p>1. Open seminars, training meetings have been conducted.</p> <p>2. An effective system of communication with the audience have been organised: regular exchange of messages on social networks and access to live broadcasts.</p> <p>3. Submission of information through content: own photo and video materials, quotes, pictures and links</p> <p>4. Availability of large audience from different countries and regions.</p> <p>5. Communication with mass media, research groups, analysts and historians.</p>	<p>1. 2 two-hour training meetings have been held with the subscribers of the account, it is planned to do this regularly.</p> <p>2. There are 10 or more requests to Direct¹⁶¹ received every day, live broadcast 2-3 times a week.</p> <p>3. Recording, maintenance and editing is carried out by the blogger himself. Each publication gains from 50-100 saves.</p> <p>4. It is planned to expand the audience, the main focus is on “likes”. Goal – 1000. Today, the number of subscribers to this account is 27 000, the</p>

¹⁶¹ Direct – a function of Instagram social network which allows to send and receive messages, photos, videos and audio.

				audience reach is up to 21 000 per week. Most users are from Bishkek, Moscow, Osh, Almaty and Uralsk.
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Based on the data presented above, it can be concluded that the measures taken by SBs and NGOs only partially correspond to the goals and objectives of the Governmental Program of the Kyrgyz Republic on Countering Terrorism and Extremism (2017-2022), the priority areas of which are:

1. Improving the activities of state and non-state bodies in the field of the prevention of extremism and terrorism;
2. Improving the practice of special state and law enforcement agencies to prevent and suppress manifestations of extremism and terrorism;
3. Improving legislative mechanisms and cooperation in the field of countering extremism and terrorism.

The analysis of the above media strategies has shown that measures taken to counter extremism are largely preventive and analytical. These include the introduction of the subject “History of Religious Culture” into the curriculum of educational institutions, the support and active participation of NGOs in research activities, the participation of SB representatives in trainings, seminars and conferences conducted. However, among all government agencies only the SCNS has the media strategy to prevent the spread of the ideology of extremism on the Internet, which blocks Internet sites of a religious extremist nature. On the part of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, a significant contribution to the National Media Strategy is the introduced Cybersecurity Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2019-2023¹⁶². This Resolution contains paragraph 5.6 “Formation of Unified Approach to Ensuring Cybersecurity in the Public Sector of the Kyrgyz Republic”, which includes: strengthening a supervisory policy in the field of processing personal data, creating a state body with the authority to process this data, conducting a regular audit of cybersecurity. Considering the objectives of this paragraph, gaps are also noticeable: one focal point is not enough to ensure the

¹⁶²The Cybersecurity Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2019-2023
<http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/15479>.

cybersecurity of the entire country, the interaction of other bodies and the adoption of joint decisions are necessary. There are few measures to ensure cybersecurity in the public sector, since the audit and processing of personal data cannot entirely contribute to ensuring security; perhaps the availability of cybersecurity specialists in each SB would be more effective in achieving the common goal of preventing extremism and ensuring national security. The creation of an educational center for employees of government agencies would also have the desired effect.

Touching upon external communications, which are the third group¹⁶³ of interaction on religious communications, they consist of several types: Inter-Confessional Relations, Public Relations (PR) and Government Relations (GR).

The main communication channels include communication with the population through mass media and information posted on official websites. For example, the Muftiyat’s official website regularly publishes news, articles, reports on activities undertaken and the activities of the clergy participating in the discussion of various pressing issues on the agenda of conferences, etc.¹⁶⁴

Recently, social media (blogs, micro blogs, social networks, multimedia resources) have become a particularly significant and effective channel of relations between religious leaders and the public. In that way many theologians, including Chubak Azhy and Kadyr Malikov have gained popularity due to active media campaigns.

Considering the actions of civic activists as part of media strategy, one can also consider the experience of successfully implemented projects of other countries, such as the USA and the Russian Federation. Successful media strategies of these countries can be adapted to our realities, taking into account regional characteristics.

During a two-day training in the Koy-Tash village, organised by the International Alert as part of this research project, the representative of the Orthodox Church, Father Ilya, noted that in Russia there is a service called “Father Online”, which allows priests to get in touch with society.

Initially, this service appeared on the social network VKontakte, later the project got official accounts on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Odnoklassniki, and the official website www.batyushka.online was also created.

¹⁶³From scientific article by Zhelnovakova M.F. - The System of External Religious Communications in Russia.

¹⁶⁴ From an interview with the project coordinator of the Iyman Foundation for the Development of Spiritual Culture – Zhanargul Isakbaeva.

This project is non-profit and non-state. “Father Online” helps to solve many problems, including enhancing religious education, provides not a distorted but high-quality information about religion.

The advantage of this resource is that people can directly contact representatives of the church, and the church can act as a responsible person in resolving disputes, give comments, recommendations and conduct events.

The experience of the program created with the support of the US State Department - “ViralPeace” is interesting as well, the purpose of which is to undermine the ideology of the attractiveness of violence and extremism via the Internet and social networks, as well as countering the exchange of messages of extremist content. Within the framework of this project, seminars and master classes were held in Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and the Philippines, where participants learned about the tools and methods to counter the spread of the ideology of extremism in social media resources. This project is also non-official and is not trying to impose the right method to counter extremism. ViralPeace has got accounts on Facebook and Twitter, and offers a non-standard approach to fight against terrorism by connecting shared tools of logic, humor, religious arguments in order to counter and prevent the spread of extremist ideologies.

Speaking about the local channels of communication between religion and society, we can give an example of an account on the Instagram social network called “Minute for the Soul”, as well as “Islam Nuru”. Both accounts are very popular among young people, this is evidenced by the number of their subscribers (26.8 thousand and 302 thousand) who regularly ask questions of interest to them through personal messages and receive answers from the administrators of these groups - bloggers who preach Islam. There is also a variety of information submission tools: photos, video materials, comments, exchange of opinions, etc.

These accounts are gaining momentum and perhaps soon the momentum of the aforementioned international projects will be reached.

Section 2: Indicators of Youth Online Activity

According to the estimates of a research¹⁶⁵ conducted by the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan, the Internet is expected to grow strongly in Kyrgyzstan over the next five years. The mobile Internet market will be driven by increasingly faster speeds, improved 4G connectivity and emergence of 5G. The number of Internet users is increasing significantly compared to previous years, which opens up new opportunities for extremist groups. For example, the total number of Internet users in Kyrgyzstan is 2493400 people as of March 31, 2019.¹⁶⁶ The availability and relative cheapness of the network attract various groups of citizens of Kyrgyzstan, including able-bodied youth.

Based on the above estimates, the mobile Internet will cover new territories, attract more users, the vast majority of which are young people. This also indicates a high risk of recruitment by terrorist groups, as this will open up new opportunities for the spread of extremism on the Internet. Modern technologies are one of the strategic factors contributing to their active use by terrorist organisations and their supporters to solve a wide range of tasks, including recruitment, financing, propaganda, training of performers, incitement to commit acts of terrorism, as well as the collection and dissemination of information for terrorist purposes.

According to data for 2017, 59% of the population of Kyrgyzstan actively use the Internet. In the course of our survey in three regions of the country it was revealed that 94% of the total number of respondents use the Internet regularly.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, the vast majority of the respondents were aged 16-18 years (Aravan-53%, Uzgen-37%, Bishkek-13%). It is at this age that young people begin to show interest in religion, spiritual guidance, and due to a lack of information, this most often leads to self-education: going to a mosque, reading articles on the Internet, viewing photos and video materials published on social networks, and as a result it forms one's own idea of religion. However, in such situations, the sources of obtaining information are crucial, how accurate and qualitative they are; in the opposite case, young people run the risk of forming their judgments on the basis of inaccurate materials, which leads to misunderstanding. The goals of using the Internet also play an important role. There is a lot of websites and applications in the Internet space that have a certain focus. The commitment of website users is formed depending upon that.

¹⁶⁵ Research “Media Preferences of the Population of Kyrgyzstan” Soros Kyrgyzstan, M-Vector, USAID: <http://bizdin.kg/static/media/pdf/Otchet-media-issledovaniia-rynka-media-KR-2017.pdf>.

¹⁶⁶ According to internetworldstats.com.

¹⁶⁷ See the Respondent's Answers by Regions Diagram in Annexes.

An equally important goal of using the Internet is the ability to communicate with relatives, friends and acquaintances through social networks. The audience of individual social networks is growing steadily from year to year. Most often, Internet users use social networks, which is one of the common ways of communication. So the question: “Where do you get information from?” was answered by 62% of respondents in Bishkek as “from social networks”. This answer was indicated by 46% of respondents in Uzgen, and in Aravan - 41%.

Social networks attract users with entertainment opportunities. Each web resource, pursuing a special purpose, is distinguished by the individuality of the services provided, on the basis of which the audience of the website is formed. Regardless of gender, age and place of residence of users of social networks, the main reason for visiting such websites is communication (69.6%).¹⁶⁸ Users appreciate this method of communication for a relatively quick and inexpensive way of communication even with people from other countries. The average duration of a visit to social platforms varies from person to person, which is influenced by many factors, one of which is the type of locality. In general, regardless of age and gender, the majority of users of social networks spend up to 2 hours. It should be noted that the longer the visiting time, the higher the likelihood of information absorption from the wrong sources. It was also revealed that the use of social networks could be assumed for terrorist purposes. There are many closed pages where people, creating pseudonyms for themselves, recruit other people.

In the course of the research, while analysing the preferences of social networks and instant messengers, it was revealed that the majority of young citizens of Kyrgyzstan prefer the Facebook platform rather than Instagram and VKontakte.¹⁶⁹ A total of 670 000 Kyrgyzstanis are registered in this network, the male part of the users prevails over the female part and makes up 52.2% of the total, youth from 18-24 made up 47.8%. The gender characteristics of youth registered on Facebook show 76 000 men and 66 000 women.

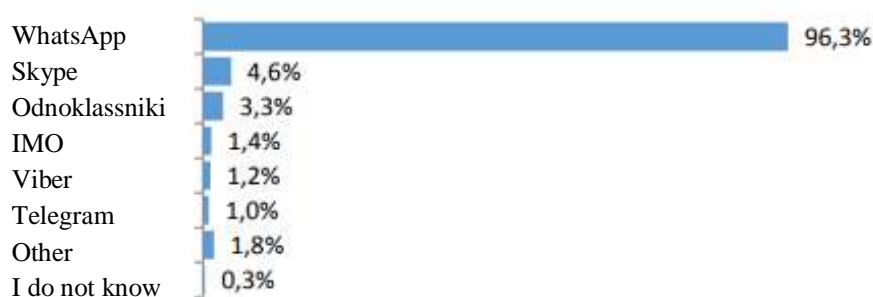
Regarding messengers: the vast majority of young people use the WhatsApp application. This application, being a relatively new way of communication, is gaining more and more audiences in Kyrgyzstan, especially among instant messengers. Messengers provide a convenient and easy way to communicate with friends and are in second place according to the preferences of young people. In

¹⁶⁸From the Research “Media Preferences of the Population of Kyrgyzstan” Soros Kyrgyzstan, M-Vector, USAID.

¹⁶⁹ Statistics from the studio of Svetlana Margolis. Facebook dashboard data: <https://www.facebook.com/svetlanastudios/photos/a.428182727299754/2102856663165677/?type=3&theater>.

messenger applications, users can share files while having access to the Internet and regardless of locations. Much less often, Internet users visit news sites, entertainment and film web resources, and also receive information by mail. The Russian service Mail.ru is used most often among the mail sites, the second most popular is Gmail, which attracts 22% of users of mail sites. This is what our respondents' preferences look like.

Diagram 34. Most Frequently Visited Instant Messenger Web-Sites and Applications



Picture 1.9 Most Frequently Visited Instant Messenger Web-Sites/Applications, N=753, %¹⁷⁰

According to Manas Amanbaev, Lieutenant Colonel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, most of the recruited youth are concentrated in the southern regions, namely in the villages of Aravan, Uzgen and in the Suzak region. This is evidenced by the indicators of the share of users of the global network of northern regions, which is higher than in the southern part of the country, which may be explained by the fact that 80% of the residents of Bishkek are active Internet users. However, our survey has shown that the number of Internet users is the same in Bishkek and Aravan, and only in Uzgen it is 1% lower. Since the Internet, in addition to the means of communication, plays an educational role, it can be concluded that young people in all three regions receive answers to questions of interest through open sources on the Internet.

The reasons for this sampling are also indicated by previous researches conducted on this topic.¹⁷¹ The main causes are:

1. The susceptibility of radicalisation of youth in the districts of Osh region after the 2010 June events.

¹⁷⁰ “Media Preferences of the Population of Kyrgyzstan (8th wave)” Soros Kyrgyzstan, M-Vector, USAID B., 2017 p. 48.

¹⁷¹ Analytical Report “Meanings, Images and Media Channels Promoting the Radicalization of the Youth of Kyrgyzstan”, created as part of the project “Social Media for Deradicalization in Kyrgyzstan: A Model for Central Asia”.

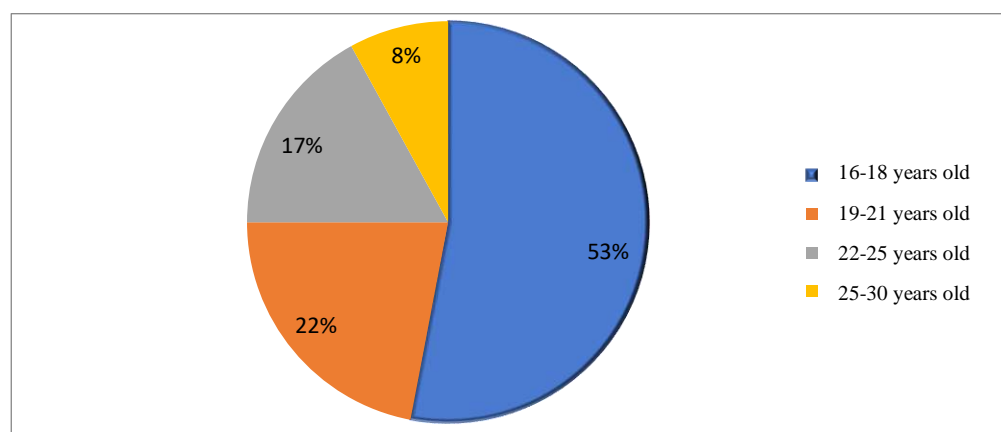
2. Outbreaks of protest unrest among young people in the Zheti-Oguz region in 2014-2015, relative to the work of the Kumtor gold ore mill.
3. Departure of youth in combat zones in the Middle East from the above areas.
4. Departure of youth in labor migration (Russia and Kazakhstan).

Sex and Age- and Territorial Features of Internet Users of Research

The research found that the older the respondent, the lesser likelihood that he uses the Internet. So, the older generation is less likely to use the World Wide Web rather than people aged 14 to 34 years. It can be assumed that the youth's commitment to communicate on social networks, as well as their desire to follow global trends in new technologies, was the outcome of such result. In addition, the need for frequent visits arises from communication on social networks and the need to search for information.

Sampling by age is oriented towards young people aged 16-18 (Aravan-53%, Uzgen-37%, Bishkek-13%). Respondents with the age group of 19-21 (Bishkek-24%, Uzgen-19%, Aravan - 22%). Older people were also interviewed.

Diagram 35. Age Characteristic of Respondents

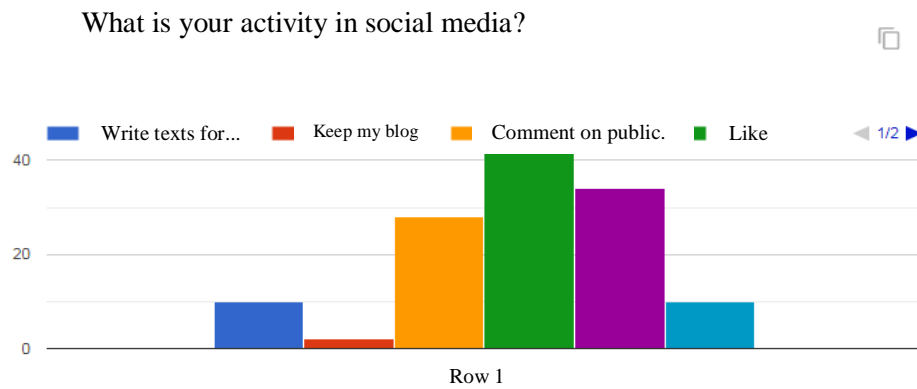


Women predominated in the sampling of the southern regions (Aravan-59%, Uzgen-54%, Bishkek-44%), they were more open to communication.

The questions regarding activity on social networks were answered by the majority of respondents from the three regions out of the proposed answer options: write texts, keep a blog, comment, like, share information, and of those who answered inactive, chose the option click “like”

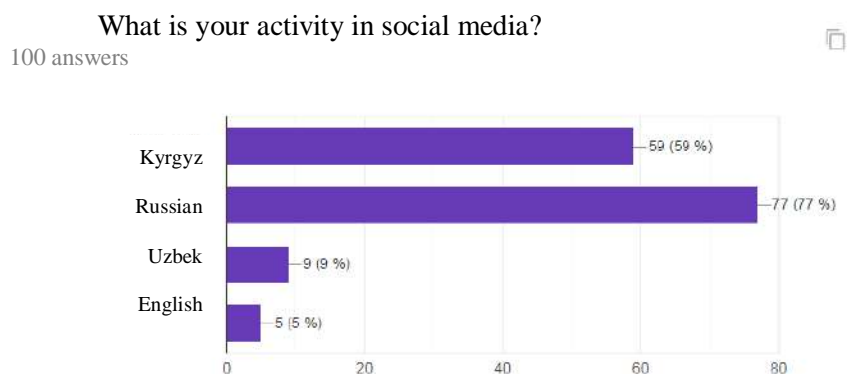
button. In our opinion, passivity of some respondents suggests that people are afraid to take their initiative, write about their thoughts, attitudes in life, attitude towards current events.

Diagram 36. Social Media Activity



After reviewing literature and scientific articles on recent publications, most of them note that recruitment and signs of radicalism depend on the language of the content. So, the content of elements of violence is higher in the Kyrgyz-language and Uzbek pages rather than in the Russian-language sources.¹⁷² Therefore, the question of language preference was also included in the questionnaire, where the majority chose the option - Russian (Bishkek-81%, Aravan-82%, Uzgen-77%).

Diagram 37. Respondents' Language Preferences

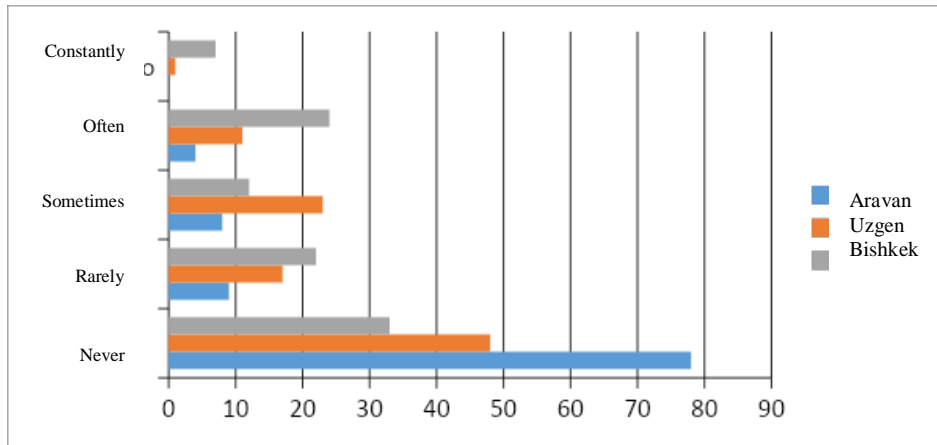


The questions of obtaining information of an extremist nature were interesting, since it was top of mind after gender and age data. After that most of the respondents in Aravan either stopped answering questions or answered negatively to all subsequent questions. Thus the question: “How

¹⁷² From the report of Indira Aslanova - “Countering Extremism: Experience of Creating Narratives in Kyrgyzstan”, presented at the round table “Capacity Building for Inclusive Prevention of Extremism and Terrorism”.

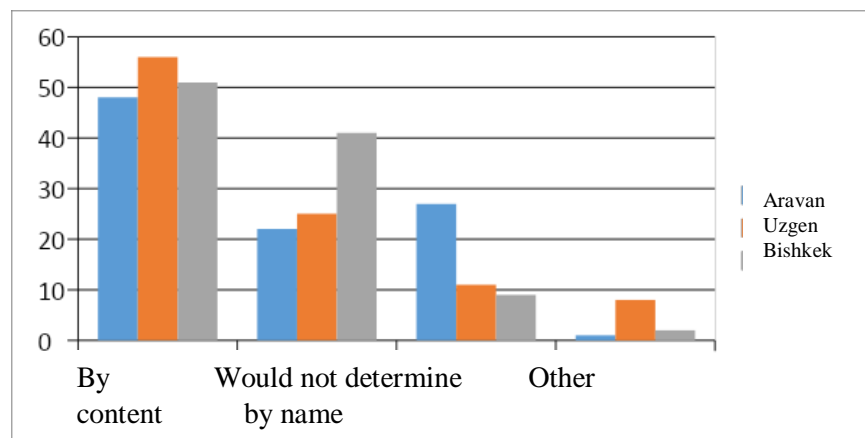
often do you read or receive information about violent extremism?”, was answered by the majority as “never” (Aravan-71.6%, Uzgen - 48%, Bishkek - 33%). It is interesting to observe that such response trend of a frequent occurrence in the capital compared to Aravan and Uzgen.

Diagram 38. Frequency of Receiving Information on Violent Extremism



The question of determining information of an extremist nature: “If you have/would have ever faced information on violent extremism, how would you define it?” was answered by the majority—depending on its content (Bishkek-51%, Uzgen-56%, Aravan-49, 5%). However, in Aravan 27% answered “they would not have identified it in any way”.

Diagram 39. Ways to Determine Violent Extremism



Answers to respondents' reactions in three regions are fundamentally different. In Aravan and Uzgen, the majority of respondents chose the option –“delete” (63% and 44%), while in Bishkek only 21% chose this answer option. Most respondents in Bishkek read such information (57%).

Diagram 40. Respondents’ Reaction to Information on Violent Extremism in Aravan

How do you react to information on violent extremism?

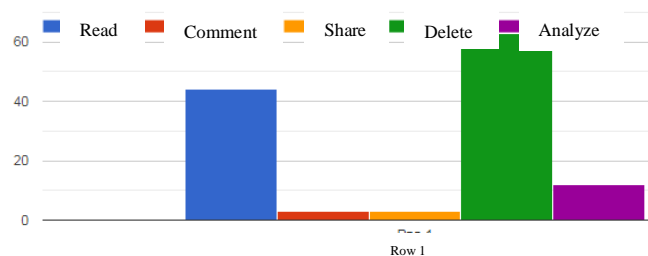
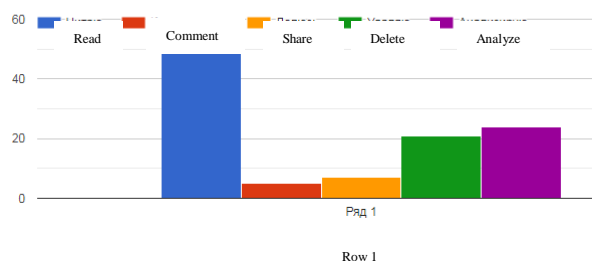


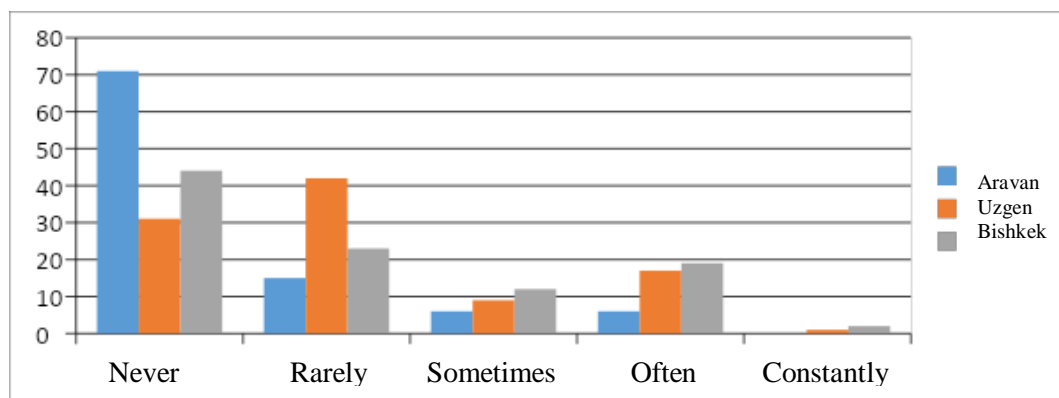
Diagram 41. Respondents’ Reaction to Information on Violent Extremism in Bishkek

How do you react to information on violent extremism?



An effective media strategy includes a number of tools that are aimed at providing the population with necessary information in order to prevent the spread of extremism and prevent its occurrence. The question in the survey: “How often have you come across information on methods of combating violent extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic?”, was answered by the respondents as “never” (Aravan - 71.6%, Uzgen - 31%, Bishkek-44%).

Diagram 42. How Often Have You Come Across Information on Methods of Combating Violent Extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic?



This speaks to the fact that existing media strategies and actions aimed at preventing extremism are not yet entirely effective. Since the majority defines information of an extremist nature by content, that is, by the method of opening files of this type, its acquaintance, and only then classifies it as radical. Only a few are familiar with the methods of combating extremism, which is also an indicator of weak communication strategy.

Conclusion

The topic examined by this research has not yet been carefully studied. Therefore, it requires a detailed approach to the analysis and formation of a unified state media strategy to prevent extremism in Kyrgyzstan. Having studied the foreign experience of the USA and the Russian Federation, in particular, the use of new tools and approaches to prevent the spread of the ideology of extremism on the Internet, and comparing the methods of state bodies and local NGOs, we have come to the conclusion that innovations in the media strategies of Kyrgyzstan are urgently needed. This may be expressed in support of the civil initiative and projects proposed by international donors and non-governmental organisations. The answers of the survey among the youth of Uzgen, Aravan and Bishkek showed that they get the basic information from social networks, and the content of extremist materials, as mentioned above, is determined by them after familiarisation. An effective state communication strategy would give a positive result by teaching young people to define radicalism in name only, be aware of the methods of fighting, and by teaching them the correct reaction to extremist information. However, there is another opinion. Thus, the representative of the Iyman Foundation for the Development of Spiritual Culture Zhanargul Isakbaeva says: “It’s better not to develop and not inform the youth and the younger generation about extremism, thereby not heightening interest in this issue. Otherwise, they will begin to search for answers to questions of interest on their own, perhaps on the same Internet, and stumble upon the wrong sources”.¹⁷³

Consequently, the decision regarding publicity and openness of the state media strategy for individual regions rests with the Government and government bodies. Our research shows the urgent need for its introduction.

¹⁷³ From an interview with Zhanargul Isakbaeva.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic:

1. To develop and implement a unified media strategy that includes effective interaction between state bodies and departments, non-governmental organisations, various religious denominations and civic activists.

To Security Council:

2. To introduce amendments to the newly introduced cybersecurity strategy in Kyrgyzstan, namely to include a clause on training of current employees, or to attract new cybersecurity specialists to state bodies and religious denominations (SCRA, SBMK, ROC);

To ROC and Muftiyat:

3. To Support and interact with projects of international donors and NGOs on religious communications issue using information technology;

To NGOs and interested parties:

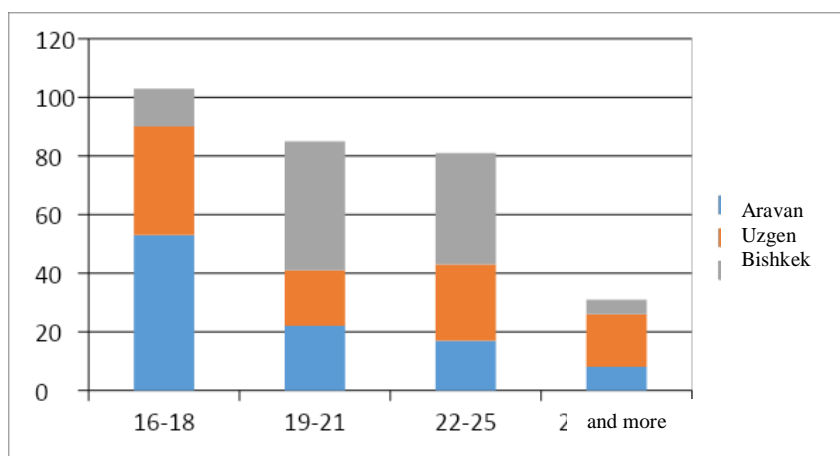
4. To participate and work closely with state bodies, religious associations and mass media in activities to prevent and counteract the ideology of violent extremism.

List of Used Literature:

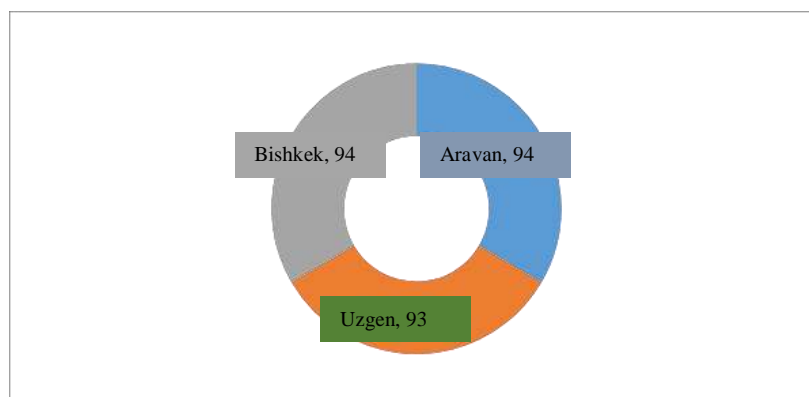
1. Analysis and assessment of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Countering Extremist Activities”, Article 19;
2. Analytical Report “Meanings, Images and Media Channels Promoting the Radicalization of the Youth of Kyrgyzstan”, Search for Common Ground;
3. The Report by Indira Aslanova - “Countering Extremism: Experience of Creating Narratives in Kyrgyzstan”;
4. The Research “Media Preferences of the Population of Kyrgyzstan” Soros Kyrgyzstan, M-Vector, USAID;
5. Manukyan A.R., Shkhagapsoeva M.Kh. - Violent Extremism and Individual Factors of Radicalization // Psychologist. - 2016. - No. 6. - P. 1 -8.;
6. Scientific article by Zhelnovakova M.F. - The System of External Religious Communications in Russia;
7. The Action Plan for Implementation of the Concept of State Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Religious Sphere for 2015-2020;
8. The Order of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic dated September 20, 2017 No. 414-p (On Approval of the Action Plan for Implementation of the Program of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on Countering Extremism and Terrorism for 2017-2022)<http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/en-us/215948>;
9. The Cybersecurity Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2019-2023 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/15479>;
10. Statistical Digest of the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic - Crime and Rule of Law in the Kyrgyz Republic (2015);
11. Digital Development Assessment - Kyrgyzstan, National Institute for Strategic Studies of the Kyrgyz Republic, State Committee of Information Technologies and Communications of the Kyrgyz Republic, the World Bank (2017).

Annex 1. Respondents' Answers Diagram

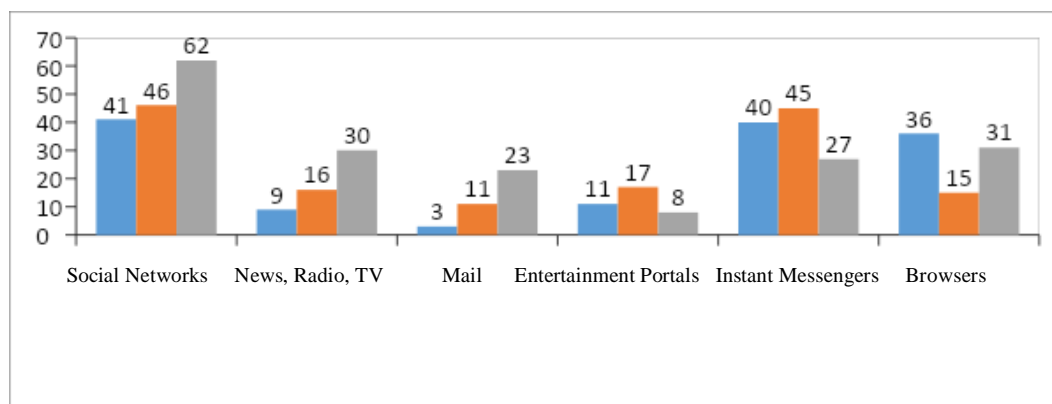
Answers to the question of questionnaire no. 2: Age



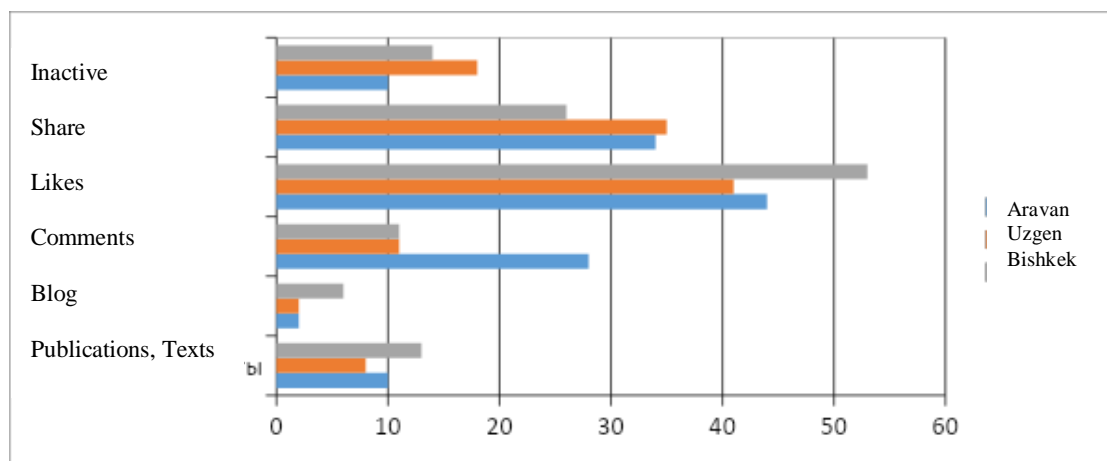
Answers to the question of questionnaire no.3: Do you use the Internet?



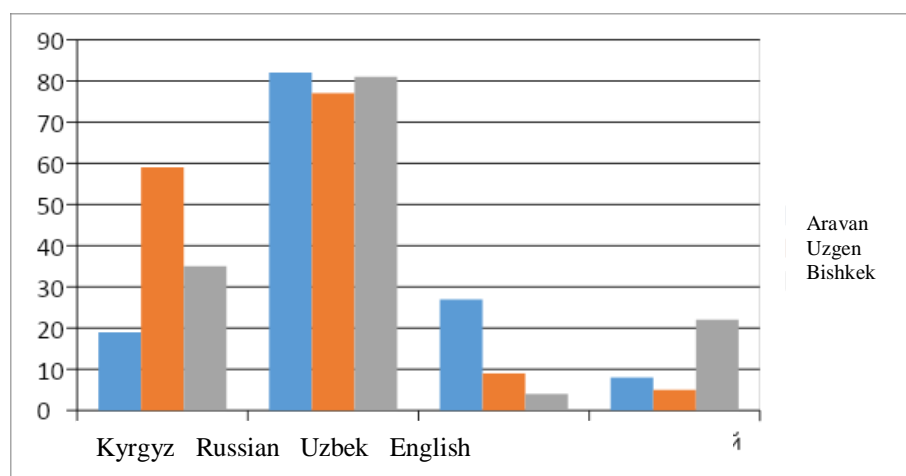
Answers to the question of questionnaire no. 4: Where do you get information from?



Answers to the question of questionnaire no. 5: What is your activity on social networks?



Answers to the question of questionnaire no. 6: What language do you prefer in your feed?



Answers to the question of questionnaire no.7: How do you react to information on violent extremism?

