

Coverage of Femicide Cases in Kyrgyz Online News

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by

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DECLARATION

Herewith I declare that I clearly understand §11 of the Academic Regulations and that the submitted paper is accepted by the OSCE Academy in Bishkek on the understanding that it is my own effort without falsification of any kind. I declare that I am aware of the consequences of plagiarism and/or cheating.

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ABSTRACT

This master's thesis examines the discursive representation of femicide in the online news media in the Kyrgyz Republic based on feminist media theory and using the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as an analytical framework. The empirical data includes news coverage of three cases of femicide Burulai Turdalieva, Aizada Kanatbekova, and Aizirek Eralieva, in the form of 15 articles from different news outlets and interviews with 4 practicing journalists. Key findings revealed dominance of police voices in these news, where femicide is portrayed as isolated incident, using language that subtly shifts blame on the victim, while excusing perpetrators via jealousy narratives, which reinforce patriarchal norms. Interviews with journalists contextualised the findings and shed light on discursive practices in covering femicide cases. These areas of concern can be improved without restricting media freedom through such means as adopting thematic framing, citing diverse sources, and gender-sensitive trainings.

Keywords: Femicide, Gender-based violence, Online News, the Kyrgyz Republic

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ABBREVIATIONS LIST

CEDAW	- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CDA	- Critical discourse analysis
DV	- Domestic violence
FCDA	- Feminist critical discourse analysis
GBV	- Gender-based violence
GBVAW	- Gender-based violence against women
IPV	- Intimate partner violence
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organization
MIA	- Ministry of Internal Affairs
UNFPA	- United Nations Populations Fund
UNICEF	- United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Femicide, an extreme form of gender-based violence against women, is a pervasive and persistent problem in the world, including in the Kyrgyz Republic. According to UN Women (2024), around 85 000 women and girls were killed intentionally in 2023 worldwide, equivalent to one death every ten minutes (UN Women 2024). In majority of the cases of femicide, women are killed by someone they know, most often by their intimate partners and family members. In the Kyrgyz Republic, dozens of cases of femicide are reported annually; around 300 women became victims of femicide in the country from 2010 to 2023 (CABAR 2024).

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women identifies gender inequalities, patriarchal structures, and societal stereotypes as root causes of gender-based violence (CEDAW 2017). As an international human rights treaty, CEDAW obliges states to eliminate discrimination against women across all sectors, including the media. The media's role in addressing the root causes of GBV is significant because it has dual power of amplifying the female voices and reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes such as portraying women in limited traditional roles that make them subordinate and portraying men as masculine and powerful (ibid). At the same time, the CEDAW repeatedly raised concerns about how mass media reproduced stereotypes around women and their social roles (Díaz García and Tamayo Olea 2017). It is important that mass media representations of the cases of violence against women do not reproduce harmful stereotypes or narratives that put blame on GBVAW victims, because people who were not directly exposed to GBV form their opinions about these events through media (Sela-Shayovitz 2018). Therefore, examining media representations of femicide is essential to assess whether media coverage aligns with international norms and contributes to reducing gender-based violence.

This duality of the media's role has been acknowledged by the scholarly community studying media representation of GBV, too. For example, Sutherland et al. (2019) found that femicide and violence against women news coverage is extensive and this

visibility has both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages come when the problem gets more public attention and leads to more help-seeking among victims of violence (Colagrossi et al. 2023). Disadvantages are associated with *how* these cases are covered. A substantial body of feminist media scholarship showed that news coverage on cases of violence against women often sensationalize them, engage in moral evaluation of women's behavior, diminish male perpetrators' responsibility, and treat such news as isolated incidents detached from broader social problem (Berns 2004; Taylor 2009).

This ambivalence of the media's role has been similarly noted in the Kyrgyz Republic. For instance, feminist and human rights activist Begayim Zamirbek told about how mass media acts as a vehicle to amplify GBVAW cases and put pressure on judicial and law enforcement bodies for justice (Tynaeva 2024). For GBV survivors in the Kyrgyz Republic, turning to mass media is the last resort when they have no other choices left than publicising their cases in order to get protection from violence that the state and police fail to provide (ibid). This has been a case for the survivor of gender-based violence, Asel Nogoibaeva, for instance, who suffered from brutal attacks from her former partner and despite numerous police reports, she finally achieved protection and justice only after her case received a wide public attention due to extensive news coverage in 2023 (Turgunbaeva 2023). At the same time, while the news reports increased public debates on the problem of GBV in the country, the way such cases are portrayed by the media has been questioned. For example, media expert and journalist Anna Kapushenko criticised the mass media of the Kyrgyz Republic for insensitive reporting on GBV cases (Lee 2022). The media expert called out Kyrgyz media for showing women in migration mostly in vulnerable positions (ibid). She criticised the Kyrgyz mass media for constantly portraying women as weak. Similarly, Dzardanova and Uralova (2022) in their policy analysis assessing response measures of the state, civil society, and international actors in the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan highlighted that mass media play an important role in forming the general discourse and opinion about the issue (Dzardanova and Uralova 2022, 7). At the same time, the mainstream media, mostly state ones, were observed to explicitly promote patriarchal norms, showing violence against women as normal and a legitimized form of their treatment/punishment (ibid).

Amid this expert criticism, scholarly research has sought to examine the representations of GBV cases in the news. Prior research on media representation of violence against women in the Kyrgyz Republic highlighted gender biases and stereotypical portrayals of male and female homicides in newspapers (Ayhan and Nabieva 2025). Their main findings showed that men are more visible in crime news, but are represented mostly in traditional masculine roles, while female homicides were underreported and minimized in narrative framing (ibid). This differential treatment of female and male homicides by the newspapers imply perpetuation of deeply rooted patriarchal norms that shape societal attitudes toward gender and violence in the Kyrgyz Republic (Ayhan and Nabieva 2025). These findings echoed earlier CABAR investigation (2022), which found that women are under-reported in the Kyrgyz news media, are mentioned and interviewed less than men, while their marital status and age are mentioned more often than men's (CABAR 2022). Despite these findings, the existing scholarship on the representation of GBV in the Kyrgyz media remains under-researched.

Although femicide and GBV are global problem, most of the highly cited works related to the femicide representation in the news were published in the United States based on local news, which makes their findings not fully generalizable to countries with different socio-political contexts (Aldrete 2023, 3298). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a media analysis that is sensitive to local cultural expectations, social taboos, and political context. Moreover, the Kyrgyz Republic remains an underresearched area for studies on media representation of violence against women. Given that a few number of works focusing on femicide representation specifically in Kyrgyz online news are publically available, this study addresses this gap contributing to both local understanding and the broader literature on media, gender, and violence.

Statement of the Purpose and Research Questions

The main purpose of this thesis is to analyse how cases of femicide are covered in the online news reports of the Kyrgyz Republic. In particular, the study will examine how three high-profile cases of murder of women were portrayed in the online news and explore reasons behind such representations with the help of interviews with 4 Kyrgyz journalists.

The research is also driven by the criticism the Kyrgyz online news media face for how they report on the violence against women, as well as the need to find out whether this criticism reflects the actual practices in news coverage.

Deepening the understanding of how mass media represent GBV cases and thus enriching the scarce literature is also aim of this thesis. The following research questions will guide the inquiry:

Research Question 1: How does Kyrgyz online news coverage represent femicide cases and how these representations reproduce or challenge patriarchal norms?

Research Question 2: How do Kyrgyz journalists' practices and perceptions of social norms shape the femicide representation in the online news?

Background: Domestic Violence and Femicide Statistics

In order to understand the scale of the problem, it is necessary to look into available data and statistics on violence against women in Kyrgyzstan. Official and independent rates of violence against women show that the number of cases is growing in the country, which require more efforts to eradicate the issue. Official statistics on violence against women in the country originate from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic. However, this statistics do not treat violence against women and girls separately from general domestic violence numbers. For the year 2024, the internal affairs bodies of the country registered 17,316 cases of domestic violence in the Kyrgyz Republic. 13,104 cases were registered in 2023 at the official population of the country of 7,281,800 people. It means the number of cases increased by 4,212 cases or by 32.1% in 2024 compared to the previous year (Ministry of Internal Affairs 2025; National Statistical Committee 2025).

As for the femicide rates, which is not yet a district legal category in the Kyrgyz Republic, the data on murdered women is only available under domestic violence category of official statistics. The available statistics does not directly provide information on the number of women affected, but present data on the issuance of temporary protection orders to women, men, and minors. Out of total 14,362 protection orders issued to individuals affected by domestic violence in 2024, 13,434

were issued to protect women, 621 men, and 307 minors (148 were boys and 159 were girls) (Ministry of Internal Affairs 2025), which means approximately 94.7% of the total protection orders were issued to women and girls.

31 fatal cases of domestic violence were reported for the year 2024 by the MIA and no gender information was given. But, at the same time, given that 95% of the people who suffered from the domestic violence were women and girls, it means that the majority of those who were killed would also be females. This can be confirmed by the independent journalist investigations, which found that around 300 women were killed in the Kyrgyz Republic from 2008 to 2010 (Kapushenko and Khasanova 2021). In 38% of these cases, women were killed by their intimate partners, in 16% by their acquaintances or friends, and only in 11% by complete strangers (ibid). At the same time, women were murderers themselves only in about 10% of the cases.

The statistics demonstrate that the femicide and domestic violence affecting women disproportionately are not isolated issues. Today, they are part of the broader pervasive problem of violence against women in the country that require progressive change.

Background: Media Landscape in the Kyrgyz Republic

Understanding the structure and ownership of the Kyrgyz news media, as well as current state of the media and press freedom in the country is necessary analysing how femicide and GBVAW cases are reported. Thus this section aims to provide an overview of the media landscape in the country.

There are variety of news agencies – state-owned, state-affiliated, independent, donor-funded, private, commercial, and other types in Kyrgyzstan. There are 2,740 registered media entities, including print, television, radio and internet-based platforms (Azattyq 2025). The state media entities include major television channels like OTRK, KTRK Music, TV EITR, which have the largest audience among all types of media.

Besides television, print and radio media, there a number of online internet-based news agencies, which are of particular interest for this research due to the widescale digitalization. According to Dumont et al. (2023), the biggest news portals in terms of

the readership include AKIpress.org, Azattyk.kg, 24.kg, Kaktus.media, Turmush.kg and others. Azattyk.kg is owned by the United State Agency for Global Media and functions as the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's branch in the Kyrgyz Republic (Dumont at al. 2023, 11-12). Another big online news agency 24.kg is owned by Asel Otorbayeva, while reported influence by former lawmaker Janybek Bakchiev is denied (ibid). Kaktus Media was launched by journalists Dina Maslova and Narynbek Idinov, founders of former Zanoza.kg news agency which was known for independent investigative journalism. These online news portals are relatively more independent from the government compared to television and print media, except Azattyk, which belongs to the U.S. government.

Alongside an overview of major online news agencies and their ownerships, it is equally important to understand the current state of the media freedom and freedom of the press in the country. Among the recent developments is adoption of the new media law in August 2025 that requires all media entities, including online platforms, to register with the authorities. This law grants the state officials more powers to approve and revoke licenses, tightening state control over the press (Reuters 2025). The law limits foreign ownership of the media entities to 35 percent and imposes fines for spreading false information. Tightening of the state control over the media in the Kyrgyz Republic is also marked by global rankings. For example, the Kyrgyz Republic lost 24 spots in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index of the Reporters Without Borders dropping from 144th to the 180th spot (Reporters Without Borders 2025). Once seen as an "island of democracy" in Central Asia for its free media, the Kyrgyz Republic is now ranked below neighbors Kazakhstan (ranked 141st) and Uzbekistan (ranked 148th). Similarly, the country's standing in the 2025 Freedom of the World by the Freedom House deteriorated in terms of democracy and freedom of expression (Freedom House 2025).

In summary, the Kyrgyz Republic's media environment is marked by growing government oversight, a shrinking space for independent journalism, and regulatory constraints that affect freedom of speech and media pluralism. This overview is needed to have an idea of the context within which the femicide reporting occurs in the Kyrgyz online media landscape.

CHAPTER 1.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the existing research on femicide, GBV and media. The chapter begins by introducing femicide as a severe human rights violation, alongside relevant legal frameworks and practices in the Kyrgyz Republic. It then turns to global research on the how femicide is represented in the media, before narrowing to the limited existing studies on news coverage of femicide in the Kyrgyz Republic.

1.1 Conceptualising Femicide

Previous research studied femicide across various disciplines such as sociology, criminology and forensics, public health, feminist and decolonial studies, as well as in law and human rights studies (Coradi et al. 2016). The concept of femicide is defined differently by different disciplines (European Institute for Gender Equality 2021). The concept of femicide first appeared publicly at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels in 1976. It was introduced by feminist scholar Diana E. H. Russel, who coined the term to name and highlight the killing of women specifically because they are female.

According to Russell's (1992) conceptualisation, femicide is a misogynistic killing of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women (Radford and Russel 1992). The term femicide was coined by feminists specifically to raise awareness of male-perpetrated violence against females. The term carries explicitly political weight and highlights the root causes of femicide in patriarchal system and gender inequality (ibid). Because of this gender inequality, the feminist theory pays close attention to the problem of femicide perpetuated by intimate partners (Taylor and Jasinski 2011). Feminist theory links femicide to oppressive patriarchal system that disproportionately affects women, where social constructions of genders and power imbalances are central to understanding the causes of violence against women (ibid). Feminists view violence perpetuated by men against their female intimate partners as driven by their desire to control and exert

power, which is granted to men by the patriarchic system to sustain male dominance over women (Taylor and Jasinski 2011, 342).

In human rights studies, Russel's concept of femicide is also complemented with adding international human rights law dimension, treating femicide as a systemic violation of women's rights to life, security, justice and state's obligations to ensure protection of those fundamental human rights (Hefti 2022). In human rights studies, femicide is an issue of social and state accountability that requires comprehensive prevention, protection and reparation mechanisms.

1.2 GBVAW and Femicide in the Kyrgyz Republic

Due to limited research on femicide and its representation in the media in the Kyrgyz Republic, it is necessary to review previous studies on violence against women in the Kyrgyz Republic in general. This helps provide general context surrounding the situation with the violence against women in the country. The previous related research focused the violence against women perpetrated by intimate partners (Chernyak 2020), the role of culture in the justification and perpetuation of domestic violence (Childress et al. 2024), and the structural and legal barriers that prevent survivors of domestic violence from seeking help in the Kyrgyz Republic (Childress et al. 2022).

The findings of the study on intimate partner violence against women, based on the national demographic and health surveys conducted in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2012, revealed that high levels of marital control and low levels of women's autonomy are main reasons of women's victimization perpetrated by intimate partners (Chernyak 2020, 7). At the same time, older women and women with more children have higher vulnerability to intimate partner violence, while women who earn as much as their partners or more are less likely to be victimized by their male partners (ibid).

The findings of the study on the role culture in the justification of domestic violence revealed that patriarchal customs, immense pressure put on women to save the marriage, stigma of divorce, low status assigned to women, wide acceptance of violence as natural, and fear of retaliation were major reasons that perpetuated domestic violence (Childress et al. 2024). The findings were revealed from 83 expert interviews with professionals in the criminal justice, public health, education, and

social welfare sectors who work with abuse victims daily. The study highlights the powerful role of culture in the experiences of the domestic violence victims (ibid).

The findings of the study on why survivors of domestic violence do not seek professional help revealed that there are several reasons for that: financial dependence on the abuser, stigma and shame of seeking help, few crisis centers and rigid acceptance criteria for temporary protection, the normalization and societal acceptance of abuse, a lack of property rights for women, and distrust of formal services (Childress et al. 2022). The legal barriers to seeking help included insufficient sanctions for abusers, unclear provisions and inadequate enforcement of law, a low likelihood of prosecution, poor procedures, stereotypes around survivors, and revictimization during investigations, and protection for abusers who work in positions of power (ibid). The state, including law enforcement and justice systems, continue to view and treat gender-based violence largely as cultural, traditional and private matter, which leads to poor programming as well as inadequate administrative and criminal sanctions (Dzardanova and Uralova 2022).

The causes of femicide in the Kyrgyz Republic come from the same structural, cultural, and institutional conditions that were identified in studies of domestic and intimate partner violence: patriarchal customs that reinforce women's subordinate positions in the society, widespread domestic violence, and poor enforcement of the laws (Open Society Foundations 2022). Most of the victims of femicide in the Kyrgyz Republic were killed by their male intimate partners over the motives like "punishment for not fulfilling their traditional domestic roles" and men's control (ibid). At the same time, the judicial system in the Kyrgyz Republic shows systemic failures in preventing femicide. Despite the big number of registered cases of domestic violence, less than 5% of cases make it to the court hearing. The punishment often includes minimal fines that are covered by the family budget, which is criticised to basically punish victims themselves and not serve as an adequate restraining factor (Open Society Foundations 2022). Thus, femicide in the Kyrgyz Republic remains a culmination of patriarchal norms, a result of cultural justification of the violence against women, and institutional negligence.

1.3 Femicide in News Coverage

Prior research on the coverage of femicides and overall violence against women revealed distorted portrayal of violence and victims' experiences. These representations often reproduced misconceptions about domestic violence by generally presenting it as isolated incidents rather than portraying as a larger social problem (Bullock and Cubert 2002). Certain frames used by media convey certain understanding of the violence to audience (ibid). Therefore, it is important to portray violence as a social problem, however such portrayal of violence appears rarely (Gillespie et al 2013, 239).

Prior studies revealed that journalists treat police as legitimate sources of information whose views are neutral and fact-based and do not need to be balanced with other sources and voices (Meyers 1997). However, police statements are not always neutral and can present victim-blaming notions (Meyers 1997, 94). Bullock (2007) identified that most newspaper coverage of domestic violence fatalities in Utah (USA) were police framed. She defined police frame in news reporting on DV as "using a no-frills, fact-oriented approach that tended to focus on the who, what, where, when, and how of the crime" (Bullock 2007, 46). The 1-year analysis of coverage of the domestic violence deaths by newspapers in Utah revealed that most of the news articles relied heavily and sometimes exclusively on the information provided by police, courts and other official sources (ibid). As a result, the coverage focused on the role of patriarchal institutions in domestic violence cases and ended up being reported as isolated incidents that the police and courts are designed to handle rather than a part of a broader social issue (Bullock 2007, 46).

Another important pattern observed in femicide news reporting is tendency to put the blame on the victim. The media often portray violence against women focusing on victim's actions, choices or inaction, which contribute to their victimization (Berns 2004). According to Meyers, victim-blaming is the main barrier to relevant social change, because it shifts attention from the true root cause of the GBV as a social problem (Meyers 1994). Furthermore, in her book *News Coverage of Violence against Women: Engendering Blame* (1997), Meyers discusses "good girls/bad girls" dichotomy in the news media, where female victims conforming to traditional patriarchal gender norms or "good girls" were portrayed as the ones deserving more

sympathy while others who do not conform those norms or “bad girls” are portrayed as less deserving (Meyers 1997).

The prior research also found that news often sensationalize the violence against women to attract attention through highlighting unnecessary details, using graphic and provocative language, and disproportionately focusing on high-news-worthy stories (Sutherland et al. 2015). Sensationalism in news about violence against women could be seen in exaggeration, emphasizing unnecessary details, presenting unverified information, conjecture and speculation (Planinic and Ljubicic 2022, 72). Sensationalism in GBV news coverage is criticised for the misrepresentation of the reality of GBV and contribution to harmful public perceptions of the issue through portraying such cases as exceptional and sensational incidents, not as a systemic issue.

Myths and misconceptions around femicide and GBV often get reproduced in the media, as prior studies showed. Here, it is also important to identify what are those common myths. The common myths are that the victims provoke the violence (Berns 2004), violence occurs to certain women from specific social backgrounds, perpetrators are monsters or otherwise normal men just pushed beyond their limits (Sutherland et al. 2016). Another myth is that sometimes violence can be justified (violence is not justifiable and aggressors have a choice not to use violence). The myths also include the belief that the VAW is a private matter or mutual dispute, violence occurs due to external factors like alcohol, drugs, or loss of control (ibid). Identification of the myths and misconceptions helps pinpoint them in the news reporting. It is essential because myths normalize violence, and if media reproduces them, it affects the way the public understands both the victims and perpetrators, as well the whole violence.

1.4 Femicide in Kyrgyz News Reporting

Previous research that studied how femicide is represented in media in the Kyrgyz Republic focused on newspapers and online media products. Recent quantitative content analysis of male and female homicide news reporting during the year of 2021 in two Kyrgyz newspapers has shown the differentiated representations where male homicides were covered almost three times more often than female ones (Ayhan and Nabieva 2025). Authors argue that homicide news reporting is gendered and the mass

media influence how people perceive these gendered roles. The findings revealed that Kyrgyz newspapers portray male homicide victims and perpetrators as “centered agents of action and violence” (Ayhan and Nabieva 2025, 10), which serves to reinforce associations of masculinity with aggression and patriarchal norms deeply embedded in Kyrgyz society. At the same time, female victims were represented frequently through their relational roles emphasizing their marital status. Study also highlighted that the media ownership and political influence influence how the gender and violence are represented; commercial outlets report stories with no details and context emphasizing drama. As for the motives for killing, “alcohol” and “conflict” were cited by the newspapers most as primary “causes” of homicides (ibid).

Another study focused on the news agencies and television, using qualitative critical discourse analysis as a method to find out discursive representation of violence against Kyrgyz female migrants in Russia (Ibraeva et al. 2015). The key findings of the analysis of 35 news and television video materials gathered from the Kyrgyz Republic and Russia in 2012-2013 revealed: 1) media framed violence against female migrants by their male compatriots as patriotic and masculine, legitimizing their violent actions as renderers of justice against ethnic “deviants,” 2) female migrants’ representation in the selected materials changed over a year from immoral to sympathetic, while male migrants’ images oscillated between patriot and criminal (ibid). This study is important because it shows media framing of gendered violence within ethnic and nationalist discourses.

While these studies attempted to study the topic of the media representation of the violence against women, some gaps remain to address. For example, the first quantitative content analysis (Ayhan and Nabieva 2025) looks into the male and female homicide reporting frequency, but lacks the depths and discursive analysis explaining what normalizes femicide. The second study, Ibraeva et al. (2015), on the contrary, offers discourse analysis of patriotism and violence, but their findings do not translate directly to the domestic Kyrgyz context, because they focus on Kyrgyz migrant community in Russian Federation. It leads to the conclusion that there is a lack of qualitative research looking into how femicide appears in the Kyrgyz news. There is a gap in understanding of how media narratives either challenge or reinforce the structural roots of gender-based killing in Kyrgyz society.

1.5 Content of Media Guidelines for Responsible Reporting on VAW

Based on the studies that found distorted and harmful representations of GBV and femicide cases in the news reporting, numbers of organizations developed guidelines for journalists to practice responsible, gender-sensitive, and trauma-informed news coverage of the violence against women globally (UNFPA 2022; Journalists against Violence against Women 2021; Warren et al. 2024; OAITH 2021; Our Watch 2019; IFJ 2014). The evidence-based guidelines are aimed to promote responsible, ethical, inclusive, and safe reporting on VAW, sensitive to diversity and equity. Most of the guidelines are similar in content and recommend things to do and avoid in reporting.

For example, among those repeatedly appearing recommendations are to avoid directly or indirectly shifting blame on the victim or survivor and avoid overall judgemental language use in the news reports (IFJ 2014). Journalists are recommended to avoid depicting violence, survivors/victims, and perpetrators in an inadequate and stereotypical manner. Journalists should chose the word ‘survivor’ instead of ‘victim’ (IFJ 2014). Journalists should avoid making the perpetrator invisible, passive portrayals and portrayals diminishing perpetrator’s actions should be avoided. The news must not remove perpetrator agency from the account, for example instead of “the attack occurred” write “the man attacked.”

Journalists are recommend to avoid minimising, trivialising, diminishing and romanticising violence by presenting it as an expression of love, a consequence of jealousy, or a result of domestic/private dispute. The newsrooms covering VAW should use internationally accepted definitions of violence against women, make it clear that the violence against women occurs due to unequal power relations between men and women.

Working journalists are recommended to avoid sensationalizing the violence by showing violent acts in detail in all types of media - text, audio, video (UNFPA 2022). Instead, the news on femicide and VAW should be put in the context of a social problem, not an isolated incident, to link to gender inequality, misogyny and prior violence (OAITH 2021).

The journalists are also recommended to have experts voices in their reporting on femicide and VAW. The news about femicide and violence against women should

avoid using voices in law enforcement system as the only voices of authority in GBV (Warren et al. 2024). The voices from law enforcement system should come among voices from relevant experts to contextualise information to place it within the context of violence in the community. Besides useful context like statistics on GBV and social background, many guidelines suggest including calls-to-action such information about locally available support services (UNFPA 2022).

Journalists reporting on cases of femicide are recommended to put femicide in the context of the story of prior violence, although it was not reported, because femicide is always the final and most brutal form of violence against a woman (UNFPA 2022). In cases of femicide that followed by perpetrator's suicide, it is recommended to avoid presenting the crime as a "tragic/ unfortunate ending to a love story" (UNDP 2021). It is also important to avoid equating violence with a private conflict, argument, domestic/marital problems.

In short, journalists should avoid reproducing gender myths, avoid use of sensationalist and victim-blaming language, name clearly the violence, avoid minimising violence, cite experts and not only authorities in law enforcement and justice system, and do not present violence as an isolated incident but a pattern of broader social problem. Reviewing the guidelines are essential for knowing what standards and best practices exists regarding responsible reporting on GBV and femicide. Guidelines also help identify flawed areas of Kyrgyz news reporting on the issue.

1.6 Implications for the Thesis

The previous studies provide knowledge on such topics as femicide, violence against women and media representation of the issue from global perspective and within the Kyrgyz Republic. Global studies on how violence against women is represented in the mass media revealed that victim-blaming, sensationalism, and episodic framing are key areas of concern (Bullock and Cubert 2002; Meyers 1994, 1997; Berns 2004; Sutherland et al. 2015). Studies on the domestic violence and IPV in the Kyrgyz Republic revealed structural, cultural, and legal barriers that influence women's vulnerability (Chernyak 2020; Childress et al. 2022, 2024; Open Society Foundations 2022). Research on media portrayal of femicide and violence against women in the

Kyrgyz Republic has mainly used quantitative analyses of newspaper coverage (Ayhan and Nabieva 2025) or focused on specific context such as female Kyrgyz migrants in Russia (Ibraeva et al. 2015), making in-depth qualitative examination of how femicide is represented in Kyrgyz online news media under-researched.

Previous research also confirmed the important role mass media play in representation of the violence against women and femicide, as well as victims, and public perception of the gendered roles. Prior research highlighted the importance of sources cited, language, and social context in the news about GBV and how the news reporting may reproduce harmful stereotypes and victim-blaming narratives. Since prior relevant studies focused on how femicide and GBVAW are represented in print and television materials, the digital news space remains an underexplored research area. Furthermore, few studies examine the problem through feminist theory perspective. These gaps point to the relevance and timeliness of the present study.

CHAPTER 2.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in Feminist Media Theory (FMT) to examine reporting of femicide in Kyrgyz online news. FMT analyses power dynamics in media production, viewing media as a site for contest for constructing the truth. FMT provides a critical framework for examining how power relations are constructed, contested, and reinforced through media practices and representations (Steiner 2014). Feminist Media Theory advocates for application of feminist philosophies, concepts, and logics to all stages of the media processes, including hiring, production, and distribution (ibid). The theory helps understand how the media talks about ideas about ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’, which are often constructed to benefit patriarchal systems. This chapter disposition is as follows: the section 2.1 provides an overview of the feminist media theory and section 2.2 discusses theoretical underpinnings of Michelle Lazars’ Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, which is a part of FMT.

2.1 Overview of Feminist Media Theory

Feminist media theorising dates back to the 1970s, when the second wave of the feminist movement was ongoing in the United States. First feminist media theorists were concerned about sexist representation of women in television, advertisement, movies and other visual media. Among the first and most influential theorists is Laura Mulvey and her concept of ‘male gaze’ (1975), which was coined to criticise sexual objectification of women by men in the media (Mulvey 1975). She argued that women in visual media were most of the time shown as passive objects to be looked at, admired, or desired, rather than as fully developed characters with agency, while men are shown as active subjects who move the story. Mulvey called it “to-be-looked-at-ness”.

Another foundational figure in FMT, theorist Gaye Tuchman, popularized the concept of ‘symbolic annihilation’ to criticise how media makes women invisible or annihilates them through omission, trivialization and condemnation (Tuchman 1978). In other words, Tuchman argued that women are less hired by the media, media portrayals diminish women’s importance by focusing on their looks or domestic roles rather than their professions and intellect, and media judge women who do not

conform to traditional patriarchal roles. Her work, *The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media*, paved the way for later feminist theorists to explore how media representation intersects with other identities.

Later scholars turned attention to the internalized objectification. Rosalind Gill (2007), who conceptualized postfeminist media culture, argues that in contemporary media culture, women are no longer just portrayed as passive objects of male desire but are increasingly expected to actively monitor and present themselves as attractive and desirable. She argues that this shift from objectification to self-objectification is about constant self-surveillance of females that became normalized (Gill 2007). Gill's concept of postfeminist sensibility highlights that sexualization and femininity are often framed as choices or signs of empowerment in media, however at the same time they operate as disciplinary mechanisms that enforce unattainable ideals of beauty and behavior (ibid).

Among the modern feminist media scholars, Linda Steiner (2014) advocates for applying feminist principles in all stages of media production starting from hiring journalists to production and distribution of content. She criticises conventional journalist "objectivity", arguing that it often masks male-centered views. She also challenged the dominant view within the feminist media theory that hiring more female journalists would lead to gender sensitive media culture. Instead, Steiner advocates for self-reflexivity among journalists who should admit their other social identities that can influence reporting, highlighting importance of intersectionality with race, class, and sexuality.

Another influential feminist scholar Michelle Lazar (2005, 2007) made significant contributions to feminist media theory through her development of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). FCDA is a research paradigm that combines feminism with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Lazar's main argument is that sexism in the media became less obvious and took more subtle forms, which requires more nuanced approach to de-construct (ibid). Lazar (2007) claims that any work undertaken by critical academic feminists can be regarded as academic activism, which means raising critical awareness through research through its theorisation and analysis of gendered discourse practices.

The feminist media theory provides critical lens to analyse how femicide cases are reported in the Kyrgyz online news and deconstruct the discursive representations of crimes, victims, and perpetrators. For example, Mulvey's ideas will help reveal cases when victims are treated as passive objects with no agency. Gill's postfeminist sensibility allows for revealing subtle "choice" discourses and self-surveillance narratives that shift responsibility for women's safety on them, reinforcing victim-blaming narratives. Steiner's structural approach will help situate these representations within the necessary socio-political unique contexts of the Kyrgyz Republic. Most importantly, Lazar's feminist critical discourse analysis will be used as the main methodological framework for analysing the news items and finding out if the media narratives obscure systemic patriarchal violence and normalize gendered power imbalances. The following chapter explores how Lazar's FCDA works in practice.

2.2 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

FCDA works to demystify the relationships between power, gender, and ideology in discourse in texts and talks (Lazar 2005). "The central concern of feminist critical discourse analysts is with critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order or relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group, and disadvantage, exclude, and disempower women as a social group," according to Lazar (Lazar 2007, 145). Asymmetrical power relations in discourse in modern societies took more subtle forms and appear in different degrees and ways in different communities, therefore its aim as a method is:

"(...)to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities. Such an interest is not merely an academic deconstruction of texts and talk for its own sake but comes from an acknowledgement that the issues dealt with (in view of affecting social change) have material and phenomenological consequences for groups of women and men in specific communities" (Lazar 2007, 142).

Lazar identified five interlinked tenets or praxes of FCDA such as gender as an ideological structure, complexity of gender and power relations, discourse in the (de)construction of gender, feminist analytical activism, critical reflexivity as praxis (Lazar 2005, 2007).

Another thing important to understand about the FCDA is what is meant under power asymmetry and gender ideology. Lazar refers to Foucault's (1977) ideas of power, who sees power everywhere: in everyday relationships embedded in social practices and knowledge, shaping how we think, act, and understand the world (Foucault 1977). According to Lazar's conception, the power relations are a struggle over interests that are exercised, reflected, maintained, and resisted (Lazar 2007, 148). Explicit form of power or gender asymmetry includes physical violence against women, sexual harassment, and other actions that visibly demonstrate inequality or dominance (ibid). Subtle or invisible forms of power manifestations are discursive in nature, they work through language, norms, and social practices (ibid). And Lazar argues that while power maybe "everywhere", men and women experience it differently, and therefore, it is helpful to combine Foucault's idea of power with Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which focuses on dominance through consent rather than force. In modern societies, gendered norms are internalized and repeated in everyday talk and texts, making inequality seem "natural" even though it is a form of domination.

Furthermore, gender ideology is about ideas and beliefs of what women and men should be. This ideology is hegemonic because it dominates not by force, but by largely being consensual and acceptable to most in a community (Lazar 2007, 147). Lazar refers to Gramsci's (1971) conception of hegemony, where dominance is maintained through discourse that constantly reinforces certain assumptions (ibid).

In sum, Lazar's FCDA mixing feminist activism with CDA is aimed at exposing gendered power asymmetries and hegemonic ideologies subtly embedded in discourse. The FCDA, thus, works to demystify explicit and implicit mechanism sustaining patriarchal ideologies in media text and (de)constructing language within socio-political contexts. FCDA not only critiques normalized inequalities, but also aims to drive progressive social change for marginalized groups.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study uses qualitative research design. Prior studies on violence against women, femicide, and media representations mostly used quantitative approach. However, since these research asks *how* questions, meaning it is interested in finding out how media constructs narratives about femicide and how these narratives reflect gendered power relations in the society, qualitative design suits the most, because it allows in-depth explorations of discourses (Cresswell 2016) that cannot be captured through quantitative content analysis alone.

3.2 Data collection: Selection of Cases

Data for this study was collected in two ways. First was collection of news articles about 3 cases of femicide and second was conducting interviews with working journalists.

Before explaining how news articles were collected, it is necessary to explain why cases of Burulai Turdalieva, Aizada Katanbekova, and Aizirek Eralieva were chosen. The main reason for choosing these cases was because of the different dimensions of femicide and gender-based violence they involve: bride kidnapping, police inaction, and intimate partner violence.

Burulai Turdaaly kyzy was kidnapped for forced marriage and died inside the police station at the hands of her kidnapper in May 2018. This case became the loudest in terms of public outcry and news coverage in modern the Kyrgyz Republic, sparking nationwide debates on the violence against women. The case was selected for its ability to shed light on such topics as police negligence and normalisation of patriarchal norms.

Aizada Katanbekova, who was also abducted and murdered by abductor in April 2021, was all over the national news and the case immediately sparked widespread public outrage and led to dismissals in city police department. After she was found dead after three days of being missing, there were protests demanding dismissal of

officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Sultanalieva 2021; Open Society Foundations 2021). Intensity of the institutional failure make this case particularly important to analyse. Aizada's case triggered an undeniable public crisis that drew the media's attention to longstanding problems of systemic impunity (Human Rights Watch 2021, Radio Free Europe 2021). The first two cases might seem similar as both are results of fatal abduction. However, selection of both cases is necessary to compare if the media discourse evolved or remain stagnant within the period of these two cases, to see if public pressure altered the media discourse surrounding the systemic violence.

Aizirek Eralieva's case presents a recent widely covered case of intimate partner violence that ended with her murder. The man from Osh region identified as Aizirek's husband shot and killed her (Azattyk 2025). Her case was chosen for its potential to illustrate how news coverage frame IPV, which details are emphasized and which are omitted when violence is perpetrated by a male against a woman in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Choosing high-profile widely publicised cases was informed by Fairclough (1992), who recommends a data selection strategy that focuses on what he calls "moments of crisis" because of their potential to show up aspects of routine practices that otherwise might go unnoticed (Fairclough 1992, 230). These high-profile cases were widely covered by the local news agencies, therefore the sample allows to include different news outlets in to the analysis rather than selecting specific ones. The sampling strategy for news articles is presented in the following section.

3.2.1 Sampling Strategy for Online News Articles

To address the research questions, I chose to analyse all major online news outlets in the Kyrgyz media landscape that work without paywalls, that reported on three femicide cases. My goal is to capture discourses from a diverse set of media actors not preselecting particular news outlets.

Sampling timeframe for each case starts focuses on the moment the crime became publicly known (when the first news articles were published). This is done to capture the highest intensity and volume of media attention or the "peak coverage" period,

which allows the study to analyze the earliest discursive constructions of the victim, perpetrator and crimes.

After determining the cases and timeframe, keywords were generated using the full names of the victims in Cyrillic. These keywords were then used to systematically search the website search bars of major Kyrgyzstan-based online news outlets, as well as Google search functions, for all articles published about the selected cases. Only straightforward news items that directly reported on the events were included. Opinion pieces and re-posts were excluded. A total of 15 news items were collected, downloaded, and organized by case (see Appendix A) for discourse analysis.

3.2.2 Interviews

In addition to online news articles, the study incorporates semi-structured interviews with 4 journalists (see Appendix B and C). The aim of the interviews was to find out about the journalistic practices behind the news reporting. As Steiner highlighted, analysis of the texts is as important as the structures that produce them (Steiner 2014). This holistic approach combines micro-level examination of language and representation with the macro-level analysis of media production processes.

I used a judgment sampling to select 4 working journalists based on knowledge base and their experiences working as crime journalists in leading Kyrgyz online news agencies. Participants were selected based on such criteria as at least 5 years of professional experience as crime journalists. The first interview was conducted with an editor from one of the leading news agencies in the Kyrgyz Republic. Then the interview with a crime journalist of AKIpress news agency Altynai Djalmambetova took place, followed by separate interviews with Kaktus Media journalist Bermet Ulanova and [Sputnik.kg](https://www.sputnik.kg) reporter Aida Jumasheva, who previously also worked as a journalist of [24.kg](https://www.24.kg) news agency. All interviews were conducted online in Russian language via video conferencing tool Google Meet.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The texts were then translated from Russian to English by myself. The data collected from interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. This qualitative research method also interprets various aspects of the

research topic (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79). The key themes from the interviews were then included in the discussion of findings (see Chapter 5: Discussion of Key Findings). The interviews serve as data triangulation.

3.3 Analytical Framework

Feminist CDA will be used in this study to analyse how power asymmetries and hegemonic gender ideologies are manifested in the Kyrgyz news reportings. Since FCDA is part of the umbrella method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it is necessary to also understand what CDA looks into. CDA is interested in examining the relationship between language and power. In Fairclough's conception of CDA, it is an approach that views discourse as a social practice that maintains or challenges power relations and ideologies through language (Fairclough 1989). CDA is analysis of texts, discourse practice (process of text production, distribution and consumption) and discursive events (socio-cultural practice), which all form a three-dimensional framework. This is linguistic description, interpretation, and explanation (ibid).

But CDA alone is not enough, as Lazar explained, because it lack explicit feminist lens to systematically address gendered power asymmetries and ideologies (Lazar 2007). In analysing news coverage of femicide cases, CDA would be helpful to reveal general power imbalances, however it may not reveal more subtle things in GVB news coverage like victim-blaming or justification of action of male perpetrator rooted in patriarchal ideologies (Lazar 2007, 142).

Ontology and epistemology of FCDA is grounded in the social constructivism. For example, Lazar argues that gender is socially constructed through discourse and is an ideological structure that divides people into hierarchical categories (Lazar 2007, 147). Epistemologically, FCDA is a politically committed and reflexive stance aimed to critique and change patriarchal discourses. Thus, the methodology is explicitly political in line with feminist media theory (Steiner 2014), which views media texts as products of structural and ideological struggle for who defines the truth.

FCDA is operationalized into analytical tool through findings from Sutherland et al. (2015, 2016), which inform typical discursive patterns in news coverage of violence against women. These patterns are helpful in identifying which kinds of discourses

FCDA expects us to look for. Sutherland et al. (2016) studied how Australian media represent violence against women and children analysing 4,516 materials (newspapers, radio, online, and broadcast items), which were collected over a four-month period in three Australian states using a mixed-methods design combining content analysis and critical discourse analysis. Sutherland et al. (2016) findings revealed areas of concern: media reporting on VAW remains isolated and incident-based lacking social context. Sensationalism and victim-blaming in the news reporting also remain as areas of concern (ibid), while police remain as the dominant source of information, while voices of advocates, experts, or survivors are marginalized. Findings by Sutherland et al. inform overarching questions that operationalize the theory into four analytical questions to be posed to the selected news items:

- 1) Analysing representation of crimes;
- 2) Analysing representation of victims and perpetrators;
- 3) Analysing source attribution or whose voices dominate in narratives;
- 4) Analysing counter-discourses.

These analytical categories examine discursive construction or portrayal of the crimes, victims and perpetrators, particularly if victims are assigned any responsibility for their deaths and if perpetrator's actions were justified. The categories also look into the use of discursive strategies to trigger emotions or dramatize/sensationalize the events through providing irrelevant graphic details of the crime. Sensationalism is criticised by feminist theorists because it distracts from root causes of GBV and reduces it to isolated events. First and second categories allow to respond to the study's research questions 1 and 2 (see Introduction).

The third and fourth categories look into whose voices appear in the news coverage most, whether the voices of experts or human rights defenders are quoted, whether institutional failures are acknowledged or dismissed. The analysis will also include whether there are elements that challenge dominant patriarchal narratives in the selected news. Such counter-discourses may include police criticism or/and statements by activists or lawyers.

Codes to analyse the news were informed by findings of Sutherland et al. (2015, 2016). MAXQDA qualitative software program was used to organize texts. First, I uploaded all 15 articles (see Appendix A) into the software as individual documents. Then, based on the four analytical dimensions I created a codebook. Each code contained a definition. I systematically read each article and applied the codes to relevant text segments, marking patterns such as how victims were described, how motives are framed, which sources dominate in the narrative, and whether explanations reinforce or challenge gendered norms. MAXQDA was useful in organization of coded parts of texts and comparing repeated codes across the news articles. At the end, I reviewed all codes together to see what recurring discourses emerge and interpret discursive representations of femicide in Kyrgyz online news.

3.4 Limitations and Difficulties

There were several difficulties and methodological limitations that need to be acknowledged. For example, collection of news articles was time consuming because the names of victims were not always written in the news, especially in first reports. I had to trace down the early reports through “related content” links, which was time consuming.

At the same time, because some news agencies paywall old news articles and restrict access, I had to exclude these news agencies from research.

Arranging and conducting interviews were also challenging because of the tight schedules of the journalists. Interviews demand significant time for appointment, conducting, transcribing, and analysing. Of course I did not ask journalists directly sensitive questions such as whether they blame victims in their news articles, but still participants may censor themselves trying to give socially desirable responses instead of candid ones.

3.5 Self-Reflexivity

Qualitative research is an interpretative research, therefore the inquirer should make clear two important points: the past experiences with the research problem and how these experiences shape interpretations (Cresswell 2017, 299). Self-reflexivity is also important aspect of FCDA (Lazar 2007). Feminist researchers must constantly

question their own positions, thoughts, actions and assumptions to ensure the FCDA research aligns with its end goal of progressive social change (Lazar 2014, 192).

In this thesis, my past work experience in the Kyrgyz mass media and my feminist views inform the research. Because of my media background, I am well aware of the recurrent issues in the news reporting and socio-legal contexts of violence against women. The analysis in this thesis is guided by this awareness. Self-reflexivity is important for avoiding forcing analytical framework and ensuring interpretations remain grounded in textual evidence.

CHAPTER 4.

ANALYSIS OF COVERAGE OF 3 FEMICIDE CASES

This chapter presents observations from the textual analysis of news articles about three cases. Each case findings are presented separately in chronological order starting with the oldest case: Case 1: Burulai Turdalieva (2018), Case 2: Aizada Kanatbekova (2021), and Case 3: Aizirek Eralieva (2025).

4.1 CASE 1: BURULAI TURDALIEVA

Burulai Turdalieva was a 19-year-old medical student from Bishkek. She was stabbed to death by 30-year-old Mars Bodoshev, who kidnapped her for forced marriage, inside the police station on May 27, 2018 (see Chapter 3.2). The case was first reported by the news agencies starting from the day after the incident.

The following are the headlines of the news articles selected for analysis:

1. Bishkek girl stabbed inside police building in Chui region — Details (Sputnik 2018)
2. Killing of girl kidnapped for marriage. What is known? (Azattyk 2018)
3. ‘Groom’ stabs to death 20-year-old girl inside police station (Vecherniy Bishkek 2018)
4. Young man kidnaps girl, stabs her to death inside police building (Kaktus Media 2018)
5. Man kills girl inside Zhaiyl District Police Department and attempts suicide (24.kg 2018)

Across all three cases, the references to news articles will be put in square brackets [#] using the number corresponding to the headlines. The analysis involved a systematic examination of headlines, lead paragraphs, and body text to identify recurring patterns in the portrayal of the case, focusing on language use, narrative framing, and source attribution. Headlines and lead paragraphs are of special importance when analysing news, because journalists use inverted pyramid structure to highlight the most important in their opinion facts first, because this is what readers read first (Scanlan

2003). The most important information is the one that responds to so-called “Five Ws” - Who, What, When, Where, and Why (Purdue OWL 2008). This is also confirmed by researchers: “In print and online news reports, headlines play a particularly important role because they reach a considerably wider audience than those who read the articles. Headlines also provide a means for audiences to gauge the tone of the news report and may influence the way people read and remember it” (Sutherland et al 2016, 19).

The following next sections analyse discursive representation of the crime, the victim and the perpetrator.

4.1.1 The Representation of the Crime

All selected news articles referred to the crime as a fatal case of bride kidnapping. Bride kidnapping is directly mentioned in 1 news headline [2] using such words as “murder of the kidnapped girl for marriage” while in the bodies of all news articles such words as “kidnapping with the aim of getting married” [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] are written. One of significant features of the reporting of this case concerned the emphasis placed on the incident taking place inside a police station: four out of five headlines [1, 3, 4, 5] mention location, while 2 provided specific crime location “police station in the Chui region” and “Zhaiyl District Police Department”. The crime location is mentioned in bodies of all news stories in the data set.

Despite the fact that the precise location is central to the story, 4 out of 5 selected news stories [except 2] provide information from the police’s words only without giving alternative sources. Thus, the crime is portrayed as the Ministry of Internal Affairs bodies viewed it – a chronological description of what happened – as illustrated by the following news article excerpt:

“The tragedy occurred on May 27. According to the GUVV [Bishkek city police department], in late evening police received a report on the abduction of a young woman for forced marriage. An alert was issued to detain a Subaru Outback vehicle. The car was stopped at a checkpoint in the village of Sosnovka. 29-year-old B.D. drove the car and there were also two passengers in the car, 30-year-old S.A. and 20-year-old T.B. All three were taken to the Zhayil District Police Department.

Upon arrival, the officer on duty began to fill out the paperwork. T.B. remained in the reception room, and after a while, B.D. came in and closed the door from the inside. Noises and sounds of a struggle were heard from the room. The police broke down the door and found the girl covered in blood. The man also had knife wounds. According to preliminary information, B.D. stabbed the girl and himself.” [1]

Such reporting goes in line with what Bullock (2007) and other feminist theorists called “the law enforcement/legal system frame,” which makes the coverage isolated and episodic, not linked to broader issue of GBV. Previous research defines episodic incident-based reporting of VAW as a reporting that “tends to frame stories as disconnected, random events with little information or discussion about the social context in which violence occurs” (Sutherland et al 2016, 15). Such reporting creates depoliticized discourse where the role of gendered power relations that led to the violence is invisible, and in Burulai’s case it is evidenced by the lack of critical media coverage on systemic issues.

Structural causes of violence such as inadequate police protection, systemic impunity, and societal tolerance of bride kidnapping as a patriarchal practice are discursively marginalized in the media coverage of Burulai’s case. It is so because the social context is provided in two articles only [2, 4], which also include direct and indirect police critique.

Moreover, episodic framing of Burulai’s case discursively repositions the state as a neutral actor rather than a contributor to the harm. For example, police actions are described in the news through bureaucratic actions such as “the duty officer was processing documents”[1, 3, 4, 5] while Burulai was in a reception room. Thus, most of the news depict the decision to leave the victim alone in the reception room as a routine procedural action without any accompanying critical scrutiny. Only one [2] of the news stories in my data set mentions launching a criminal case into police negligence:

“The relatives of the victims accuse the police officers and demand that those responsible for the young woman’s death be punished. The Prosecutor’s Office has opened a criminal case under Article 316 (negligence) of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic” [2].

Meanwhile, the rest of the news coverage focuses on launching a criminal case for murder using legal language as evidenced by the following take from the news:

“A criminal case has been opened under Article 97, 'Murder,' of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the necessary forensic examinations have been appointed. An internal investigation has also been initiated” [3].

Despite the majority of the news being incident-based reports, few thematic framing of the case was also observed. Thematic reporting is providing the bigger picture by discussing or debating the issue of violence against women (Sutherland et al. 2016). It is evidenced by the following excerpt seen at the end of the news story:

“Why is it important? 22% of women in the Kyrgyz Republic were kidnapped for marriage, including 6% without their consent. Majority of the kidnapped girls get married to their abductors because of the fear of social judgement. In cases when women do leave, men not willing to be labeled as losers resort to desperate measures to keep a woman, even killing her. Police not always treat such incidents responsibly, failing to provide anonymity and safety of the complainant” [4].

Such social context allow to link the case to the national pattern of violence against women and social problem of bride kidnapping. The concluding statement “Police not always treat such incidents responsibly, failing to provide anonymity and safety of the complainant” [4] is a rare direct critique of state negligence within the online news reporting.

4.1.2 The Representation of the Victim

Burulai Turdalieva is referred in selected news articles as “a girl kidnapped for marriage” [1, 2, 3, 5]. She is also described as “20-year-old T.B.” [1, 2, 3] and labelled as “bride” in 2 news articles [3, 4]. The analysis of Burulai’s representation demonstrates a pattern of presenting factual information with no self-determined identity, aligning with Tuchman’s (1978) concept of symbolic erasure. For example, in all of the headlines, Burulai is portrayed in passive positions in relation to the crime. This erasure is also evident in the media’s identification of her neutrally by age and residence such as “20-year-old T.B.” [1, 2, 3] and “a resident of Bishkek born in

1998” [1]. The relational representation as “bride” limits her identity to a status determined by marriage and abduction, thereby obscuring her agency. Only one news article [2] assigns Burulai some agency through mentioning her academic achievements (“...finished Bishkek medical school”) and giving voices of her relatives. In two of the news [2, 4] from the dataset, Burulai’s resistance to the perpetrator is mentioned, “she was not going to marry the man who kidnapped her” [4].

Victim-blaming in the news reporting on violence against women is often criticised by feminist theorists. For example, Lazar emphasized FCDA’s role in de-constructing such discursive strategies that put responsibility to victims. In Burulai’s case, victim-blaming is not a recurring pattern, but is still an area of concern in [4]:

“She had no intention of marrying the man who had kidnapped her and was going to file a complaint. **This angered the ‘groom.’** He grabbed a knife and stabbed her.” [4]

Such a choice of words implicitly links Burulai’s resistance to triggering the stabbing, suggesting that there is a causal connection between her choices and the perpetrator’s violence. Such discursive strategies position the victim as partly responsible for the violence she endured and minimize the complexity of male-perpetrated violence by presenting the crime as a direct emotional response to the victim’s refusal to submit. This perpetuates the myth that violence is caused by female non-compliance.

4.1.3 The Representation of the Perpetrator

The perpetrator in Case 1 is discursively constructed through his role as the abductor and also identified with neutral words like “29-year-old B.D.” The perpetrator is mentioned only in 3 of the headlines [3, 4, 5] appearing as “young man” [4], “groom” [3], and “man” [5]. Many guidelines on responsible reporting on GBV and femicide recommend not making perpetrator invisible through passive language. In 2 headlines the perpetrator representation is passive [1, 2], while the headlines of 3 news articles show perpetrator actively [3, 4, 5]. In one news article [2], the perpetrator is represented as a driver of a public mini-bus “the final destination of which was located near the victim’s relatives’ house.”

In two news articles [3, 4], he is labeled as “groom”. Despite the fact that the word “groom” appears in quotation marks, it is a culturally positive term that assumes legitimate pre-marriage relationships and intentions. Such labeling should not be admitted in the context of illegal bride kidnapping practice and brutal murder even in quotation marks. Moreover, quotation marks create a mockery or disdain tone. In the context of brutal murder, the language used has playful connotations in a case where there should be an utmost seriousness.

4.1.4 Socio-Political Context

CDA scholars believe that textual analysis alone is not enough and social practice layer is as important to understand the discourse (Fairclough 1989). The reporting of Burulai Turdalieva’s case must be viewed within the tension between bride kidnapping/tradition and rule of law and overall high rates of violence against women (see Background: Domestic Violence and Femicide Statistics).

Kidnapping a person for the purpose of marriage is not allowed under the Kyrgyz criminal law namely the Criminal Code of Kyrgyz Republic, Article 172, Sharia or Islamic law, or by international standards of human rights (Kleinbach and Salimjanova 2007). In 2018 when Burulai’s kidnapping occurred, it was also illegal. Despite being criminalized since the 1990s, the bride kidnapping cases persisted. For example, the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Kyrgyz Republic reported opening 11 criminal cases into bride kidnapping in 2024 (Bengard 2025). In 2021 alone, 560 cases of kidnapping women for forced marriage were registered in the Kyrgyz Republic (UNDP 2022). Only 82 of the cases were forwarded to courts and 460 cases were terminated (ibid). The cases persist because of some perceive symbolic bride kidnapping as part of wedding traditions or as an alternative to singleness for young men when they are unable to pay the traditional bridal dowry (Lundberg 2021). Abducted girls often agree to marry because of the social pressure and stigma (ibid).

In political context, reporting on Burulai’s case must be viewed within the President Sooronbai Jeenbekov’s administration 2017-2020. The case exposed failures in law enforcement under Jeenbekov’s ruling.

4.1.5 Case 1 conclusions:

Analysis of coverage of Burulai Turdalieva's case showed that the police voices dominated across most of the news coverage. Most of the news articles were episodic portrayals of the crime, perpetrator and victim. Most of the news reproduced procedural legalistic language of the police, which shows the state's ability to manage catastrophic failures by controlling information. Structural critique is rare and important social context that would place bride kidnapping within the pattern of violence that women experience is lacking. Only one article from the data set [2] puts the case within the national statistics and legal framework. The area of concern in Burulai case's news reporting is linked to the use of the term 'groom' to portray perpetrator and subtle shift of partial responsibility for violence to the victim, which reinforces patriarchal ideology.

4.2 CASE 2: AIZADA KANATBEKOVA

Aizada Katanbekova, 27, was kidnapped on April 5, 2021 in Bishkek for forced marriage and was found dead on April 7, 2021 alongside the body of her kidnapper and murderer Zamirbek Tenizbaev (see Chapter 3.2). The story was already in the news as a kidnapping incident, meant the story had gathered a wide public attention prior to it being reported as a murder starting from April 7, 2021.

These are the headlines of the news articles selected for analysis:

1. Story of Burulai repeats in the Kyrgyz Republic: Kidnapped girl killed (Azattyk 2021)
2. Girl kidnapped by man in Bishkek found dead alongside him (Vecherniy Bishkek 2021)
3. Kidnapped girl found dead. Kidnapper also dead (Kaktus media 2021)
4. Girl kidnapped in Bishkek found dead, suspect also dead – Police (Sputnik 2021)
5. Bride kidnapping in Bishkek. Police found the bodies of a girl and a man ([24.kg](#) 2021)

4.2.1 The Representation of the Crime

In all news articles from the data set [1-5], the crime is referred to as “kidnapping of a girl” and “murder”. Kidnapping is directly mentioned in all the headlines, while killing is mentioned in four of them through formulations like “found dead” or “was killed” [1, 2, 3, 4]. In the bodies of the news articles, the act of killing is recurrently specified as “strangulation” with causal explanations such as “during a verbal altercation that escalated into a conflict” [2, 3, 4, 5]. The explanations are then followed by that the perpetrator “committed suicide” [2, 3, 4, 5]. The crime is systematically relexicalized in [2, 3, 4, 5] as a private “conflict” (verbal altercation) using euphemistic phrasing from police news releases without any contestation:

“According to the preliminary version, citizen T.Z., during a verbal altercation that escalated into a conflict, strangled the girl, and then committed suicide.”
[4]

Referring to the crime as “bride kidnapping” is explicit in two news articles [1, 5]: “the case is registered under Article 175: Kidnapping of the person with the purpose of marriage” [1] and “bride kidnapping in Bishkek” [5]. The other news articles in the data set imply bride kidnapping via “kidnapped girl” without legal or cultural specification. Discursively, the bride kidnapping in Aizada’s case is constructed in the media primarily as a criminal offense. This is confirmed by references in [1, 5] to criminal procedure, including launching of the criminal case under Article 175 of the Kyrgyz Criminal Code “Abduction of a person for the purpose of marriage”.

Another recurring discourse centers around the discovery of the bodies. In the selected news, discovery of bodies is portrayed as an intervention by an ordinary shepherd rather than as a result of active police search. It is evidenced by repeated formulations like “local shepherd reported,” “the car was noticed by the local shepherd,” and “only on April 7 he [shepherd] approached the car, saw dead bodies, and reported to police” [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]. The details of the crime location and timing further reinforce the media narrative of a preventable tragedy. All five news reports [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] describe how her body was found 3 days later in a field, framing the incident as a consequence of inadequate police response. For example: “Local shepherd reported that he saw this car in this location back on April 5 and 6, but did

not pay due attention because he thought the car was just stuck in mud. Only on April 7, the man came closer to the car and saw dead bodies inside, after which he immediately called the police.”

Overall, the crime is represented through procedural language that describes discovery of both bodies, ongoing investigation and forensic procedures. There is no evidence of use of sensationalist language in the news articles. While the events themselves are shocking, the media reporting is mostly factual and legalistic without use of graphic and gory description strategies meant to shock the reader.

As for the source attribution, 4 news articles [2,3,4,5] quote the press service of the GUVV [Bishkek city main police directorate] only. Only one news article [1] gives alternative sources.

4.2.2 The Representation of the Victim

The victim in Case 2 is explicitly mentioned in all five headlines. The victim is referred to through terms like “girl,” “the deceased,” “the kidnapped.” [1,2,3,4,5]. There are no other identities of Aizada appear in the selected news articles. The selected articles focus on her status of victim mostly. Recurring discourse across the data set constructs Aizada as vulnerable and helpless. It can be supported by a widespread reference to CCTV footage that captured on video her physical imbalance against several kidnappers. For example: “the moment of the abduction was captured on CCTV cameras, which clearly show the details of the car” [1], “a man approached her... and grabbed her. After that, two of his accomplices approached and forcibly put the girl in the car” [3].

Bride kidnapping is referred in one headline [5], however the news body stays legalistic. There is no cultural justification of bride kidnapping in that article.

There is no evidence of victim-blaming found across the selected items in the data set. The media discourse frames her as the target of a crime and puts emphasis on police inaction rather than questioning her behavior or choices.

4.2.3 The Representation of the Perpetrator

Unlike the victim, the perpetrator in Case 2 is present in four out of five headlines as “man” [2, 5], “abductor” [3], and “suspect” [4] through passive constructions like “found dead alongside” or “kidnapper also dead” [2, 3]. An example of dominant referring to the perpetrator in the news is [3]: “abducted girl found dead, the abductor also dead”. The representation of the perpetrator is predominantly fact-based and legalistic (in 80% of the selected news items). Some biographical information appears in one outlet [1]. His actions (abduction, strangulation, suicide) are also reported factually. The perpetrator appears as a recidivist who was previously convicted in Russia and later deported for “theft, robbery and extortion” in [1]. This is the only case when the perpetrator representation carries some condemnatory weight as opposed to being framed factually like in all other articles from the data set. The remaining four news articles use anonymized initials T. Z. or kidnapper to represent the perpetrator.

There is a recurring media discourse surrounding the perpetrator’s suicide, which is presented neutrally as a fact of an endpoint to his violent actions with no symptoms of showing it as a result of tragic love. All five news articles reproduce police press release verbatim: “inflicted knife wounds to his own neck” [1], “committed suicide after strangling her” [2, 3, 4, 5] without emotional elaboration.

No empirical evidence shows justification or minimization of the perpetrator’s actions across the news articles. Rare relational details “knew her for four months” or “planned to marry her” from the words of the witnesses in [1] are used to present facts, but not to defend him.

4.2.4 Social Context

The news coverage of the abduction and murder of Aizada Kanatbekova must be viewed in the context of bride kidnapping similar to Burulai’s case (see Chapter 4.1.4). But it is also important to have in mind that this is not the first such highly resonant case directly involving police authorities, like it was with Burulai’s story. Perhaps, an important context here is also wide protests that took place both in Bishkek and Osh cities demanding accountability. Both police and the media operated under heightened public attention. Bakyt Matmusaev was sacked as the chief of

Bishkek police department along with dozens of officers who were punished for negligence (HRW 2024). However, Masmusaev was later acquitted. Political backdrop of the reporting must be viewed under President Sadyr Japarov's regime as his administration's early governance failure in protection of women (BBC News 2021).

4.2.5 Case 2 conclusions

The analysis of Aizada Kanatbekova's case revealed several recurring discursive patterns. First, the crime in her case is consistently framed through legalistic and procedural discourse with police coming as a dominant source of information in 4 /5 articles. While institutional language allows to avoid sensationalism and explicit victim blaming, at the same time it depoliticizes femicide, which is confirmed by the lack of important context in the news as well as patterns of privatizing the murder as "verbal altercation that escalated into a conflict." Such euphemistic formulations mostly coming from police press releases subtly soften the brutality of the act and hide the asymmetrical power relations within the issues of bride kidnapping and femicide.

In most of the selected news articles, the police press releases are reproduced without significant changes and without social context that would situate the case within the broader national issue of violence against women. Episodic or incident-based police-style reporting is criticised by the feminist scholars for shifting attention away from the structural causes of violence (Bullock 2007).

At the level of victim representation, Aizada is discursively constructed primarily through her victimhood and vulnerability. There is no explicit or more hidden victim-blaming narratives in her case's news coverage, but at the same time such reporting erases her agency and presents her as "that kidnapped girl." Passive construction of women in the news as inherently vulnerable only reproduce patriarchal norms that normalize helplessness as a feminine condition. The perpetrator is also discursively obscured appearing mainly through passive constructions and legal labels like "suspect" or "kidnapper."

Moreover, dominance of police voices in most of the selected news articles and rare appearance of alternative voices such as relatives, expert voices, human rights

defenders or advocates also reinforce institutional discourse that does not view femicide as a systemic issue.

All together it can be concluded that even when seemingly fact-based reporting without graphic details or victim-blaming narratives can inadvertently reproduce conventional ideologies. Such reporting does not contribute to recognition of GBVAW and femicide as a systemic issue that require prevention.

4.3 CASE 3: AIZIREK ERALIEVA

38-year-old Aizirek Eralieva was killed by her intimate partner (husband) on May 26, 2025. They lived in Kara-Kulja district of Osh region, south the Kyrgyz Republic. The first news reports on her case appeared online from May 28.

The following headlines are from the news articles selected for analysis:

1. Woman beaten to death after meeting with her former classmates. Her husband detained (Kaktus Media 2025).
2. Man shoots his wife Kara-Kuldja (Vecherniy Bishkek 2025)
3. ‘Preliminary version: jealousy.’ Man shoots his wife after school reunion (Azattyk 2025)
4. Dragged on the ground tied to a horse and shot. Woman killed out of jealousy (24.kg 2025)
5. Woman who attended class reunion shot dead, Interior Ministry of Kyrgyz Republic confirms (Sputnik 2025)

The analysis of the Aizirek Eralieva case focuses on three core themes: how the crime was represented, how the victim was represented and how the perpetrator was represented.

4.3.1 The Representation of the Crime

Of the news stories in the Case 3 data set, a dominant discourse constructs the crime as a marital tragic incident triggered by the man’s jealousy, not as an intimate partner violence. The crime is referred as “shooting a woman to death” in [2, 3, 4, 5] headlines often linked to the trigger of a school reunion [1, 3, 5]. Four stories narrate the murder of Aizirek as triggered by “jealousy”[1, 3, 4, 5] mostly without

challenging the patriarchal undertones. Furthermore, the representations of the location emphasize domestic nature of the violence as majority of the selected news articles describe the incident occurring at home after the school reunion in Kara-Kuldja village: “after school reunion celebration, the married couple returned home, then a quarrel occurred which ended with the murder of the woman” [2, 3, 5]. The location (home) and relative representations of the married couple treat the case as a marital/domestic incident. No contestation over co-living appears across selected news, it is unequivocally “their home”. An example of dominant discourse is ‘Preliminary version: jealousy’: Man shot his wife in the Kyrgyz Republic after school reunion” [3].

Another recurring discourse around the crime representation concerns sensationalism. The sensationalism is apparent in three headlines [1, 3, 4], which exploit unconfirmed social media rumours to shock readers: “Dragged tied to horse and shot. Woman killed out of jealousy” [4] and “Woman beaten to death after meeting former classmates. Husband detained” [1]. Horse-dragging discourse originates from social media rumors, which were denied in [2, 3] news stories’ bodies as false by police and family.

Using phrases such as “beaten to death” or “dragged by horse” evoke strong emotional reactions. Such words, especially placed in headlines, put shock value first and highlight extra-ordinariness of the event. Such headlines mostly to entertain the public by providing shocking spectacle to achieve maximum audience engagement known as clickbait (Car and Ravbar 2021, 140). Sensationalist headlines in the news is not professional journalistic standard and the reader may become alienated from the case being reported perceiving it as fictional (ibid, 141).

As for the source attribution, police is heavily cited like in case 1 and 2. There is also minimal to no social context except [3]. The coverage of Eralieva’s case remains fact-based and legalistic.

4.3.2 The Representation of the Victim

Across the news headlines from my data set, Aizirek Eralieva is labeled as “wife” in three news from the data set [1, 2, 3], while in the bodies of all stories her relationship with the perpetrator is represented in terms of marital ties.

A recurring discursive pattern across the selected news stories links Azirek's murder to her participation in the school reunion using causal formulations like "after meeting former classmates" [1] or "after school reunion celebration, the married couple returned home, after which a quarrel occurred" [2, 3, 4, 5]. In other words, Aizirek's choice of attending a party is discursively constructed as a trigger for husband's jealousy and violence, subtly implying infidelity justifying retaliation. Such framing perpetuates patriarchal myths placing some responsibility to the victim for her own death. Of course, such formulations come from the police statements, but media can re-contextualise those statements, statistics on domestic violence are not banned in the Kyrgyz Republic. Social background in Case 3 is a rare occurrence [except in 3]. Four stories verbatim repost police statements without scrutiny perpetuating victim responsibility myths. Previous research has noted that one of the primary barriers to substantial social change is the way the media sustains the misconception that women are responsible for men's use of violence and that women can play a role in prevention by modifying their own behaviour (Taylor 2009).

Another representation, not recurring but important, is representation of the victim through domestic roles and moral qualities. In [3], she is described as a devoted mother with virtue, innocence, and domestic dedication: "(...)everything was fine. They lived well, too. The woman didn't even leave the house; she looked after the cattle. They have five children." Feminist scholars argue that this "good woman" framing can serve a double function: it protects the victim from blame but also reinforces narrow expectations of femininity (Meyers 1997; Sutherland et al. 2016). Here her validation comes not from the belief that the violence against women is inherently unacceptable but because she adhered to stereotypical gender roles. Her sister's testimony quoted in [3]: "She did not hold anyone's hand, she did not walk arm in arm, and did not dance with anybody. My sister did not do anything that could have caused jealousy." This implicitly accepts the idea that certain female behaviors *could* justify male jealousy. As Sutherland et al. (2016, 12) argue, such discursive strategies subtly reinforce victim-blaming myths even when the explicit intention is to defend the victim.

4.3.3 The Representation of the Perpetrator

The perpetrator in Case 3 is present in headlines of three selected news and appears as “husband” [1] and “a man who shot his wife” [2, 3]. In the bodies of all stories [1-5], the perpetrator is explicitly referred to as a husband of the victim, as well as “40-year-old A.B.” and “suspect.” The perpetrator is discursively constructed as a “jealous husband” in [1, 2, 4, 5]. The problematic area of such representation of the perpetrator as jealous links the causes of violence to psychological condition of the perpetrator. Such presentation mitigates the responsibility of the perpetrator presenting him as a violent man unable to control his emotions. Such discursive construction subtly suggests that the violence was in response to other people’s actions, not fully his own responsibility. The following is an example of such formulation:

“A 40-year-old man has been arrested in the Uzgen district of the Osh region on suspicion of murdering his wife. This was reported to Kaktus Media by the Osh regional police department. Law enforcement officials suspect the murder was motivated by jealousy. They believe the man killed his wife after she attended a high school reunion, out of jealousy over a former classmate. ‘A.B. beat and then shot his wife,’ the police department stated.” [1]

The motive of jealousy is formulated clearly by the police. However, only one news article [3] from the data set challenges this narrative through included of expert opinion. In particular, education expert Asylbek Joodanbekov is quoted in [3] saying that jealousy is a manifestation of male insecurity, low level of education, and social normalization of men’s possessiveness over women:

“I see two main reasons for the problem: in our society, male insecurity, social distrust, and low level of education prevail. Men are very jealous because they are insecure. The second reason is possessiveness over women is normalized in the society. Unfortunately, there are many cases of possessiveness towards women and their endorsement in Kyrgyz society. Therefore such negative things happen.” [3]

Overall, such discursive representation of the perpetrator as “jealous husband” individualizes intimate partner homicide as an emotional exception rather than

manifestation of patriarchal possessiveness. And by leaving police narratives uncontested, the news agencies risk normalising violence and perpetuating myths that excuse male control as situational rather than structural.

4.3.4 Social Context

The news coverage of Aizirek Eralieva's case must be viewed within the victim-blaming debates that erupted on Kyrgyz segment of social media, especially Threads, and emerging cancel culture. Her case became newsworthy also because of the bloggers like Baurzhan Abdumalikov and Aibek Ulanov, whose victim-blaming posts on social media led to their arrests (Osmonalieva 2025). Their arrests were widely discussed and covered in the news. Local social media influencers spoke up openly denouncing victim-blaming and cancelled the bloggers for their posts.

4.3.5 Case 3 conclusions

Analysis of the news articles covering the case of Aizirek Eralieva revealed a pattern of news agencies' narrative that reinforce patriarchal norms in reporting intimate partner violence. The murder was predominantly constructed as a jealousy-driven home incident where attendance in the school reunion was a trigger. Such kind of news reporting risks individualizing the violence, especially when no link to broader societal issue of domestic violence is given and when police statements are reproduced without critical scrutiny. Sensational headlines using unverified rumors like horse-dragging prioritise shock over accuracy, while legalistic, episodic framing sidelines broader social discussions of gender-based violence.

The victim portrayed as a wife whose actions triggered violence subtly imply partial responsibility for her own death, reinforcing harmful myths surrounding victim-blaming. The rare "good woman" depictions of Aizirek appearing in [3] in her defense also in a way reinforce the stereotype that female validation depends on the adherence to patriarchal norms of behavior, suggesting that women who meet patriarchal expectations of "good woman" can avert violence.

The perpetrator is presented as a jealous figure whose motives are framed as uncontrollable psychological outburst triggered by other's actions. Media reporting risk ending up reinforcing patriarchal excuses for male rage by leaving police provided narratives uncontested.

4.4 Alternative Ways of Covering Femicide Cases

Prior studies on media representation of violence against women revealed problematic areas of reporting and also presented alternative ways of how the analysed stories could have been better presented or framed (Sutherland et al. 2016). In the reporting of Burulai Turdalieva's case, the journalists focused on murder inside police station, while such serious problems like bride kidnapping as a form of violence against women were overlooked or rather presented as isolated incident. Alternative way of reporting could be citing multiple sources, not only police, especially given that police appears in this story as a wrongdoer. These news could benefit at least from providing social background to contextualise the violence within the issue in the community or providing expert voices.

In news coverage of Aizada Kanatbekova, the areas of concern were similar to Burulai's case: lack of social context, fact-based reporting, dominance of police voice, and showing victim in weak positions. Alternative ways of reporting on Aizada's case could be putting emphasis on the repetition of Burulai's case, providing root causes of GBV, providing relevant background information, citing experts.

Aizirek Eralieva's case showed that sensationalism and victim-blaming remain concerning moments of news coverage. Many journalist guidelines on gender-sensitive reporting recommend avoiding putting blame on victims, avoiding making excuses for perpetrator's violence, and provide information that could help potential victims of IPV (such as crisis center information). It was important to contextualise the case within intimate partner violence problem, given high rates of domestic violence in the country. Perhaps, the most suitable headline for Aizirek's case could be "Man shot and killed his wife in Kara-Kulja" without providing irrelevant details like "out of jealousy" or "after she went to class reunion" or graphic details of killing.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

While the previous chapter explored the discursive representations of femicide in the selected news stories, this chapter aims to summarize these observations into broader key findings and discuss them from the feminist perspective. The analytical findings are also triangulated with insights from interviews with 4 Kyrgyz journalists. Key themes include police voice dominance, marginalization of social and structural context, perpetuation of myths and victim-blaming, and sensationalism.

5.1 Police Voice Dominance

Prior studies on the representation of violence against women in the news media found the tendency of heavy reliance on police sources (Bullock and Cubert 2002, 490). Dominance of police voice in such news articles results in giving just facts; “a no-frills, fact-oriented approach that tended to focus on the who, what, where, when, and how of the crime” (Bullock 2010, 46). Such reporting treats violence against women as a legal situation and only describes how the homicide occurred with no offering of the context of why such crimes are part of a wider social issue. Such way of reporting is criticised by feminist theorists for marginalizing broader structural explanations to the issue that indicate that the intervention is vital. Following Lazar (2007), this reflects the legitimization of patriarchal authority through institutional discourse.

Dominance of police discourse was evident in the cases I examined. Police voices dominate in most of the news articles and most of the time, law enforcement bodies come as exclusive source of information in three cases. The news coverage of the cases were based mostly on factual information from the police, which resulted in patriarchal institutions (police) becoming the definers of the events, given that the official police releases were reproduced by the news agencies uncritically. For example, in Burulai’s case, even though the location of the crime is central to the story, 3 out 5 news articles from the data set cite police only without critical scrutiny. In Aizada’s case, most news articles focus on police’s chronological sequencing of the kidnapping and the discovery of the bodies, providing minimal context on the prevalence of structural issue of bride kidnapping. In Aizirek’s case, the media reproduce police releases with “jealousy” motives largely uncriticized, which constructs a particular interpretation of the event as the “truth” and naturalizes patriarchal explanations for violence against women. Here, Surette (2007, 37-42) calls

police authorized knowers granting them unchallenged authority to define and explain events. Police explanations appear complete despite inadequacies. However, portraying violence against women from the criminal justice lens reinforces patriarchal institutional agendas in coverage.

Some responses from the interviewed journalists mirrored Surette's concept. For example, crime reporter Altynai Djalmambetova explained that most of the news related to violence against women come from official sources such as "law enforcement bodies and non-governmental human rights organizations." She also noted that police releases often go unchecked by journalists:

"If the information comes from official bodies such as the police or the prosecutor's office, we do not verify it because it is already an official press release that they have verified and released. They provide brief, dry, factual information. They do not add anything of their own, they have a presumption of innocence since every person has rights, even a suspect in the murder of a woman has rights."

According to the journalist often the information comes from social media, but again verified through the police. The social media posts made by survivors themselves, or relatives of victims, or eyewitness videos often serve as initial triggers for a news story. However, the crime journalist emphasized that "relatives are not always the final source of authority," because victims' families may "exaggerate the facts" in order to demand harsher penalties, while suspects' families will "close their eyes somewhere, hide, or even invent something" trying to defend the suspect. Therefore, verification from authorities is needed, said Djalmambetova.

Another editor who wished to remain anonymous and is further referred to as an interviewee X or editor confirmed Djalmambetova's words. Interviewee X said "even when information is received from non-official sources, verification is done through police or courts." In cases when the video evidence of violence or abuse obtained by journalists obviously shows the crime, then the comments from law enforcement bodies is obtained.

Another journalist Aida Jumasheva shared that "in principle, anyone can be a source of information, from relatives and neighbors to eyewitnesses or acquaintances."

However, she noted that journalists must seek confirmation from official sources “like Ministry of Interior or GUVVD [city police department]” before publication in cases of crime. She explained that “a journalist should have three sources to confirm the information,” but at the same time she responded “confirmation is typically obtained from official sources.” This response reinforces the observation that, even when the news is triggered by reports from non-official actors, officials like law enforcement bodies function as the gatekeepers of truth in media discourse, which contributes to the privileging of police narratives and the marginalization of alternative perspectives.

At the same time, there were cases when interviewed journalists demonstrated their awareness about the necessity to critically engage with official narratives and move away from simply reproducing police-driven explanations. For example, journalist Bermet Ulanova said that journalists from her newsroom treat carefully the police releases concerning violence against women:

“We receive some press releases about incidents of violence against women. But the issue is that the rhetoric of these press releases usually mentions that it was a family quarrel driven by jealousy and so on. We worked for a long time to explain all our colleagues that such things should not be written. Of course, I can not claim that I knew from the beginning that this is unacceptable. I did not know before that certain things, and certain words could lead to further normalization of violence. But after numerous trainings, reading materials, and guidelines we started moving away from it. We try to look after what information we present.”

This response shows that journalistic intervention can disrupt the police discourse that largely dominates in the coverage of three cases. However, the previous journalists’ responses treating official police releases as verified facts show that reporters choose legal formality over deeper investigation. The control over the core narrative is voluntarily given to the patriarchal institutions like police. It, in turn, makes the reporting cautious, adhering to legal conventions like the presumption of innocence, but at the same time produces a narrative that is “brief, dry, and fact-based” or surface-level crime summary.

5.2 Marginalization of Social and Structural Context

Previous research on portrayal of femicide and violence against women in the news revealed an invisibility of the social context in which the violence occurs. Sutherland et al (2016, 48) claim that this can be done “unintentionally by omitting necessary information and/or by providing explanations for the violence other than gender inequality and the abuse of power.” In the analysis of three femicide cases, the incapacity to portray bride kidnapping, police accountability, or intimate partner violence as serious social problems that need intervention was observed. For example, in Burulai’s case, police negligence is rarely critiqued and evidence-based explanations for societal tolerance of bride kidnapping were scarce. In Aizirek’s case, the most of the discourse centers around her attendance to the school reunion celebration and the followed jealousy of her husband. The implication of this discursive representation could be that the victim should not have gone there and interacted with her former classmates.

In all three cases that I analysed, the crime is discursively constructed as an isolated private incident, not a part of broader violence against women. From the interviews with journalists, I could gain some insights that help understand why the online news coverage often fails to put femicide and gender-based violence against women in the socio-political context. One of the reasons could be that the journalists do not often consult with gender experts or human rights defenders when covering the cases femicide and violence against women. For example, it is a rare occasion for crime reporter Altynai Djalmbetova to cooperate with gender experts who could help contextualise the GBV when preparing news articles:

“With experts, I had no contact as such. Neither with psychologists. That is because I think that in the Kyrgyz Republic there are no good professionals who could expand on reasons why the cases of femicide occur, or why there are so many cases of domestic violence. We have few specialists in the field, therefore only human rights defenders deal with it.”

Perceived expert shortage leads to no consultations and thus no deeper analysis of structural causes of violence.

Journalist Aida Jumasheva also shared the cooperation with experts is done “occasionally depending on the case.” She said, “we consult with the human rights organizations from time to time. We cooperate with them in a sense that they provide or tell about the cases of domestic violence or homicide. We can also consult with them on how to present certain information in order not to harm relatives of victims.” Thus, “occasional” ties to human rights organizations happen for case sourcing or avoidance of harm, but not structural critique.

As per journalist Bermet Uralova, the cooperation with gender experts occurs periodically, mostly when a special series are prepared for publication. For example, her news agency cooperated with experts when preparing a special series of news materials about protection of girls, upbringing of boys, and fighting gender-based violence:

“We do not have a signed memorandum on cooperation. But there are some experts and specialists who try not to refuse us comments. If we contact them and ask their opinion regarding certain issue and ways of their solutions, they can in contact with us and share their opinions. We collect different views and publish them. We even check experts, because even they could be wrong.”

Periodic consultations with experts implies routine crime reporting skips this step, explaining why routine stories on violence against women lack structural context. Combining my analysis of news articles with insights from journalist interviews shows that rare expert input is a main newsroom habit causing this unintentional omission of necessary information (Sutherland et al. 2016, 48).

5.3 Perpetuation of myths and victim-blaming

Prior research highlighted that media often explicitly or subtly shift blame from perpetrators to victims and perpetuate certain myths around victims (Berns 2004). Such representations were also identified to some extent in the news that I analysed. For example, victim-blaming appeared subtly in Burulai and Aizirek’s case coverage. In Burulai’s coverage, her refusal to marry the abductor is framed as provoking the stabbing: “She had no intention of marrying the man who kidnapped her and was going to file a complaint. This angered the groom. He grabbed a knife and stabbed her.”

In Aizirek Eralieva's case, her participation in school reunion is framed to trigger the violence and husbands jealousy, "A woman was beaten to death after meeting her former classmates." The news coverage focused on Eralieva's actions and choices that consequently led to her murder. Such portrayal can be explained by the existing binary gender order (Lazar 2007), where men are aggressive and dominating by nature, while women are submissive and emotional.

Even in rare cases when such representation is challenged, such as through presenting the voices of the victim's relatives, it reinforced myth about victim worthiness that depends on her adherence to conventional feminine norms. Aizirek Eralieva's sister defended her by saying, "She did not hold anyone's hand, did not walk arm in arm, and did not dance. My sister did not do anything that could have caused jealousy." Perhaps, I can argue here that the implication of such representation of her as a "devoted mother" who "never even left the house" validate her only via her ideal submissiveness, further reinforcing patriarchal expectations about women's behavior. Such representation echoes what Meyers (1997) identified as good deserving girls and bad unworthy girls, sustaining myths that justice is reserved for 'worthy' women only.

Furthermore, the discursive construction of the crime in Aizirek's case as a male anger driven by perceived infidelity can be interpreted as a form of perpetrator justification. Justification of perpetrator's actions serves to reinforce patriarchal myth that male rage and possessiveness are excusable or natural when challenged by female autonomy (Papa, Kouros, and Lambe 2024). Such formulation also attributes causal force to his emotional state, e.g. jealousy as if it were a mitigating circumstance. It confirms Berns' (2004) reasoning that the media is used to portray men's violence as reactive, situational, or emotionally driven, not as a result of systemic gender inequality.

In conversations with journalists, I observed a pattern of all four referring to victim-blaming as a social or mindset problem characteristic of the Kyrgyz society. Because they perceive the Kyrgyz social "mindset" as biased toward victim-blaming, the journalists do not view their role as only reporting facts, but also as managing public judgment. In this regard, societal victim-blaming is an unavoidable constraint on editorial choices, forcing journalists to make ethical calculations about what details

to include or omit. In other words, societal victim-blaming is a major factor that influences what journalists choose to publish.

For example, the interviewee X said, “Unfortunately, in our society because of our mindset, there are certain prejudices. For example, if a drunk woman is reported killed by partner, then most of the people will think that she deserved it, because she was alcoholic. But the problem here is that she was murdered, not that she drank. Therefore, putting such details in the news article is wrong.” The editor warned that publishing details perceived negatively by society feeds prejudices that the victim “deserved it” due to mentality biases. For the editor, such details are irrelevant; what matters is “who killed her and what penalty they will face.”

Journalist Altynai Djalmambetova, for her part, explained that they try to portray victim as “good people” to humanize them and counter blaming:

“In the case of Aizirek, did you see what happened? Some bloggers started insulting and offending the honor and dignity of this deceased woman. They came up with all sorts of things about her. This was the case when it was necessary to show that she was a decent woman never committed infidelity or any other indecent behavior. And this had to be pointed out. And I put in my materials with reference, of course, to her classmates, her family and friends, that this woman was a very decent person. And she did not deserve it at all. I think that in such cases, it is necessary to point this out.”

This statement shows good intentions, but problematic journalistic strategy: the journalist seeks to fight victim-blaming and protect the honor of the deceased, but the discursive representation of the victim still relies on patriarchal notion of female virtue. The discursive practice (e.g. journalist’s word choices) remains constrained by patriarchal expectations.

Per journalist Bermet Uralova, journalism should do more than just informing because of victim-blaming tendency in the Kyrgyz society:

“Just informing is not enough in our society today, because many people do not understand that beating wife is not normal, that kidnapping a woman for forcing her to marry you is not normal, that beating a child is not normal, that

raping a girl is not allowed even if she is wearing a short skirt in the evening. If the report states that the girl was raped at a certain time of day, in a certain place — that is it. People start with speculating that there is a nightclub nearby, that she was returning from there, she was probably wearing a skirt, and etc. But people do not understand that her rights must be inviolable regardless of anything. That is why I think we still need to explain things to people.”

Uralova views journalism as normatively interventionist: it has a responsibility to counter harmful social narratives and educate the public about rights and moral norms. Uralova acknowledges that presenting facts alone is insufficient in a society where cultural interpretations of women’s behavior are heavily gendered.

Journalist Aida Jumasheva also thinks that victim-blaming persists in the Kyrgyz society and is the reason why many victims prefer keeping silence: “Because we still have this mindset to hide the abuse because people fear being judged, ‘What will people say?’ or ‘God endured it, he commanded us to endure it.’ Even women not always support other women. Societal press is a big problem.”

5.4 Sensationalism

Prior research revealed that the media tend to sensationalise the news reports concerning violence against women. Examples of such portrayals were also found in my text analysis, where violence against women were sensationalised, with shock and spectacle being highlighted at the expense of structural context of violence. Such observations were spotted mostly in Aizirek Eralieva’s case study. The news headlines used graphic and emotive formulations such as “beaten to death over jealousy” or “dragged tied to a horse and shot”. These details were denied by police and relatives. Such representation is mostly made for shocking the readers, but its implication is that it transform femicide into a spectacle turning attention from conditions that enable intimate partner violence. Turning back to Lazar (2007), such discourses only fuel normalization of patriarchal ideology. Although such sensationalist headlines may be defended as a means of attracting public attention to the problem, from feminist perspective sensationalism depoliticises femicide when it is portrayed as a detached,

random, private conflict between specific individuals that are exceptions in the society they live in.

In order to understand why journalists sensationalize femicide and present it as random, disconnected events rather than as a social problem, it was necessary to examine their views on the femicide (or GBV in general) and on the role of the news coverage in public awareness and social change. Because according to Lazar's (2007) core premise, discourses are produced within social practices and belief systems, meaning that journalists' understandings and beliefs directly shape how such cases are reported.

For example, journalist Jumasheva defined femicide as "killing of woman because of her sex and gender," however the journalist's response showed her unawareness of the deeper gender dynamics and misogynistic motives (Radford and Russell 1992) such as hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership:

"We cover murder of women and children openly in the news. However, I can not tell that these are exactly femicide cases, because we do not see that a woman or a girl were killed only because they are female. There is no proof that the killing was specifically femicide. In the Kyrgyz Republic as an eastern country, killing of women and girls happen because of different motives like husband's jealousy or drunk fight or domestic quarrels."

The journalist's description of murder of women happening due "jealousy or drunk fight or domestic quarrels" rather than underlying cause suggests that this limited understanding of the problem affects the discursive practice that isolates these events. At the same time, Jumasheva believes that "journalism plays a big role in prevention of crimes, but it must be conducted together with the law enforcement bodies." This perspective, while reflecting local reporting realities, aligns with the conventional patriarchal understandings of both the femicide and media's role in social change.

As per another journalist Djalmambetova, femicide sounds too loud and its direct use in the news about killing of women is generally avoided: "I use the term "femicide" very rarely, only when someone else says that word. For example, when deputies [members of Kyrgyz parliament] say that, or someone from the Ministries or others. Because I think femicide is a very loud accusation." At the same time,

Djalmambetova also views the role of the media in the Kyrgyz Republic as helping to solve the problem through raising awareness:

“Journalism must help solve the problem by raising awareness, however just reporting such news is also good, because once the issue is made public, then it will stay on the public’s radar. It is also important for journalists to always follow up so that the law enforcement bodies and authorities did not forget that the women’s rights must be protected. Journalists help in solution of such problems like domestic violence when they report on the cases, help in bringing reforms in law enforcement, judicial, and state bodies.”

Treating femicide as “loud accusation” means the journalist perceive the term as politically sensitive that explicitly blames perpetrator or society. The interviewee X acknowledged practical constraint such as the limited capacity of newsrooms, which influences the reporting on femicide and gender-based violence cases. The editor noted that media outlets cannot afford to follow every case from the first reporting to the court’s decision due to lack of human resources. It in turn forces journalists to focus their attention only on the most “resonant cases.” In other words, practical constraints push the newsroom to prioritize stories that attract public interest, reinforcing selective and sensationalized coverage.

According to the responses from Bermet Uralova, it is common practice when the journalists just report on the events rather than presenting them thematically and contextualizing. They only write about the events:

“In general, it is necessary to explicitly say that it is not normal and condemnable. But we often do not do that when we give news. We just write about the violence. But when we write longreads, we add commentaries from lawyers, human rights defenders, psychologists and other specialists who work with survivors.”

In sum, journalists’ responses imply that they do not treat femicide as a systemic social problem rooted in gendered power relations, but as isolated events.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Implications

The observations and discussion of key findings from the previous chapters shed light on how femicide cases are discursively constructed and represented in Kyrgyz online news. The findings from analysis of three cases, Burulai Turdalieva, Aizada Kanatbekova, and Azirek Eralieva, together with the interviews with practicing journalists highlighted areas of news reporting on gender-based violence against women that can be strengthened and key priority areas to change. This concluding chapter discusses implications of these findings.

In line with the previous research, the findings also revealed that the police voice is dominant in all three cases. The dominance of police voices has important ideological implications: it reinforces institutional authority while marginalizing the social and structural dimensions of violence against women. It legitimizes patriarchal frameworks in which women's deaths are understood primarily through the lens of isolated personal relationships rather than systemic inequalities. Presenting women's experiences in a thematic way is crucial for transforming the national dialogue and building support for measures aimed at positive change. Interviews with journalists showed journalists' treating police as "authorized knowers", granting them unchallenged authority to define and explain events.

Explicit victim-blaming and related misconceptions were not widespread across the studied news articles, and were observed mostly in Aizirek's case. However, the news agencies seem constrained by discursive practices that allow reproduce myths about the causes of violence and subtly shift blame from the perpetrator to victim, perhaps unintentionally. Causal representation of the victim's actions (linking victim's actions to the violence) continues to distort the reality of women's lived experiences. Interviews with journalists showed that perceived social bias toward victims (victim-blaming) affects their editorial choices. Because of victim-blaming among their readers, journalists treat such news carefully and present only facts, which confirms the findings that most reports are incident-based with no contextualisation of GBV.

Furthermore, the findings showed that while most of the coverage of three selected cases presented the incidents in non-sensational manner, they overwhelmingly fail to report the social context in which men perpetrate violence. But still the use of

sensational headlines and unnecessarily graphic portrayal of the violence remains an area of concern as such observations were seen in Aizirek's case. The implication of sensationalist and exaggerated portrayals of violence is it that they shift focus from structural issues and perpetrators' responsibility to the spectacle of female suffering. In interview with journalists, it was revealed that routine reporting on violence against women largely omits inclusion of social context and consultation with experts dealing with GBV occurs only for special materials and longreads.

While my findings show above-mentioned areas of concern, I believe that there are ways to improve them other than limiting the media's freedom. For example, by adopting thematic framing. This can be achieved through sharing experiences and trainings. In the interview with Bernmet Uralova, it was observed that initially the newsroom was less aware of how to treat and present GBV cases both ethically and legally. But after numerous trainings, the awareness among the newsroom reporters gradually increased and they try to teach and correct each other whenever the guidelines on reporting femicide and GVB become available.

Another way of improvement is mixing attribution of sources to avoid citing only police. As Jumasheva mentioned in the interview, each journalist must have 3 sources of information. However, the analysis reveal police voices are dominant voices and in most of the time, the only source of information. Reaching out gender experts, lawyers, human rights defenders, sociologists, or psychologists to gather contextual information could be done once in a certain time and be reproduced in each news article on the violence against women.

Conclusion

The online news sites in Kyrgyzstan do not just report on crime news like femicide, an extreme form of gender-based violence against women, they participate in social construction of the issue within the broader community. As the findings of this study showed, the news reports reproduce patriarchal representations of femicide. The critical discourse analysis of three cases of femicide from feminist theorists' lens provided examples of how language chosen to portray victims, perpetrators and crimes contribute to perpetuation of harmful myth, revealing missed opportunities for transformative coverage. In Burulai, Aizada and Aizirek's cases, dominant police

voices framed their killings as isolated incidents of personal conflict, lexical choices (like causal link of victim's actions to violence against her) subtly linked the victim's actions to their fates, and incident- or fact-based reporting minimized the GBV's gendered roots. Overall there is an underlying message suggesting that femicide is a random not societal or gendered issue but a tragedy affecting certain unlucky individuals only.

The findings from textual analysis were triangulated with the help of interviews with working journalists, which revealed that dominance of police voices appears because police are treated as authorized knowers whose statements are true and do not require any verification. But law enforcement authorities may lack gender sensitivity or provide incomplete stories that focus solely on the procedural aspects of a crime. Journalists also helped understand why social contexts are largely missing in the news; the journalists contact gender experts or human rights defenders rarely, mostly for long-read stories.

Another interesting insight from the interviews with journalists was related to how they see societal victim-blaming as a structural constraint that forces them to act as ethical gatekeepers: in order to avoid victim-blaming among their readers, news reporters intentionally try to portray victims as decent women and devoted mothers. However, despite good intentions, this approach creates a paradox that reinforces the notion that a woman's right to safety depends on her adherence to traditional gender norms.

Yet, the Kyrgyz news media has capacity for change through citing diverse sources, thematic framing of violence against women, and training on gender-sensitive reporting. Journalists can transform the news into a powerful tool for accountability if they shift from passive reproduction of police narratives that deconstruct the patriarchal roots of violence and assert that the right to life for women in Kyrgyzstan is absolute, inviolable, and entirely independent of any societal belief or traditional gender norms.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. List of Empirical Data

Case	Headline and link	Date
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Burulai Turdalieva	Bishkek girl stabbed inside police building in Chui region — Details (Sputnik 2018) <u>Бишкекчанку зарезали в здании милиции в Чуйской области — подробности</u>	May 28, 2018
	Killing of girl kidnapped for marriage. What is known? (Azattyk 2018) <u>Убийство похищенной в целях вступления в брак девушки. Что известно?</u>	May 29, 2018
	‘Groom’ stabs to death 20-year-old girl inside police station (Vecherniy Bishkek 2018) <u>"Жених" насмерть заколол ножом 20-летнюю девушку в отделении милиции</u>	May 28, 2018
	Young man kidnaps girl, stabs her to death inside police building (Kaktus Media 2018) <u>https://kaktus.media/doc/374995</u>	May 28, 2018
	Man kills girl inside Zhaiyl District Police Department and attempts suicide (24.kg 2018) <u>В РОВД Жайыльского района мужчина убил девушку и пытался покончить с собой - 24.KG</u>	May 28, 2018
Aizada Kanatbekova	Story of Burulai repeats in the Kyrgyz Republic: Kidnapped girl killed (Azattyk 2021) <u>В Кыргызстане повторилась история Бурулай: похищенную девушку убили</u>	April 8, 2021
	Girl kidnapped by man in Bishkek found dead alongside him (Vecherniy Bishkek 2021) <u>Девушку, похищенную мужчиной в Бишкеке, нашли вместе с ним мертвой</u>	April 7, 2021
	Kidnapped girl found dead. Kidnapper also dead (Kaktus media 2021) <u>Похищенную девушку нашли мертвой. Похититель тоже мертв</u>	April 7, 2021
	Girl kidnapped in Bishkek found dead, suspect also dead – Police (Sputnik 2021) <u>Похищенную в Бишкеке девушку нашли мертвой, подозреваемый тоже мертв — ГУВД - 07.04.2021, Sputnik Кыргызстан</u>	April 7, 2021

	Bride kidnapping in Bishkek. Police found the bodies of a girl and a man (24.kg 2021) https://24.kg/proisshestvija/189105	April 7, 2021
Aizirek Eralieva	Woman beaten to death after meeting with her former classmates. Her husband detained (Kaktus Media 2025). https://kaktus.media/doc/524579	May 28, 2025
	Man shoots his wife Kara-Kuldja (Vecherniy Bishkek 2025) В Кара-Кульдже мужчина застрелил жену	May 28, 2025
	‘Preliminary version: jealousy.’ Man shoots his wife after school reunion (Azattyk 2025) «Предварительная версия: ревность». В Кыргызстане мужчина застрелил жену после встречи выпускников	May 29, 2025
	Dragged on the ground tied to a horse and shot. Woman killed out of jealousy (24.kg 2025) https://24.kg/proisshestvija/330606	May 28, 2025
	Woman who attended class reunion shot dead, Interior Ministry of Kyrgyz Republic confirms (Sputnik 2025) Посетившая встречу одноклассников женщина была застрелена, подтвердило МВД КР - 28.05.2025, Sputnik Кыргызстан	May 28, 2025

APPENDIX B. Interview Questions for Journalists

1. How is the issue of femicide covered in Kyrgyz online media? How do you usually obtain your information?
2. What terminology do you use when reporting on the killings of women (e.g., “femicide,” “domestic violence,” “family dispute” etc.), and what criteria guide your choice?
3. When publishing news about a murdered woman, do you consider it important to include details about her personal life or family status (like mother, wife)? How do you decide which details are relevant to the story and which are not?
4. Do you collaborate with experts (e.g., psychologists, human rights organizations, specialists in gender-based violence) when preparing your materials?
5. What is the role of the media in covering such topics? Is it enough to simply report the fact of the killing, or should journalism also help address the problem through awareness-raising? (For example, should an article include statistics on violence, contact information for support centers, or analysis of systemic causes?)
6. How do you assess the impact of your reporting on public perception of femicide and gender-based violence against women in the country?

APPENDIX C. Consent Form

Interview Participant Consent Form (English)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview for my master's thesis on media coverage of femicide in the Kyrgyz Republic. Below are the terms of participation:

- Participation in the interview is completely voluntary. You may decline to participate or stop the interview at any time without providing an explanation.
- If any question makes you uncomfortable, you have the right not to answer.
- The interview will be audio-recorded only with your consent. The recording and collected data will be used solely for research purposes and will not be shared with third parties.
- Your anonymity is guaranteed. Your name, position, and organization will not be mentioned in the thesis without your explicit consent.

By confirming below, you agree to participate and allow your responses to be used for the research.

Participant name (or "anonymous" if preferred): _____

Signature (or "anonymous" if preferred): _____

Date: _____

Форма согласия участника интервью (Russian)

Благодарю за согласие принять участие в интервью для моей магистерской работы по теме медийного освещения фемицида в Кыргызстане. Ниже указаны условия участия:

- Интервью является полностью добровольным. Вы можете отказаться от участия или остановить интервью в любое время без объяснений.
- Если какой-то вопрос покажется вам неудобным, вы в праве не отвечать.
- Интервью будет записано на аудио только с вашего согласия. Аудиозапись и полученные данные будут использованы **исключительно** для исследовательских целей. Аудиозапись не будет передаваться третьим лицам.
- Анонимность гарантируется. Ваше имя, должность и организация **не будут** упоминаться в дипломной работе **без вашего отдельного согласия**.

Подтверждая ниже, вы соглашаетесь на участие и на использование ваших ответов в исследовании.

Имя участника (при желании можно указать «анонимно»):

Подпись (при желании можно указать «анонимно»): _____

Дата: _____