Student's perception of gender equality, stereotypes, and women in sports

Gulmiza Askarbekovna Seitalieva[1,1]

[1]International University of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

Abstract. The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic from May 5, 2021, as well as all previous ones, enshrined the equality of rights and freedoms of men and women. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan had real experience of gender equality during the USSR. However, the positive experience of the past and the constitutional and legal consolidation of gender equality today cannot solve the problem of discrimination against women's rights in society and the family. The government's loyalty to the active dissemination of Islamic values, low GDP, and unemployment have led to an increase in domestic violence against women. More than 10 thousand women annually turn to crisis centers, because of domestic violence, polygamy, bride kidnapping, and underage marriage. Involving women in sports could significantly increase women's self-confidence and improve their physical and therefore mental health. If the feminization of sports is happening all over the world, then in Kyrgyzstan patriarchal values with corresponding gender stereotypes put a woman before an existential choice - family or career, family or sport. The study is aimed at finding out what students think about gender equality in its socio-political, economic, and cultural aspects.
Keywords: gender equality, women's rights, gender stereotypes, women in sports, self-confidence, self-esteem, physical health, mental health.

Introduction

The globalization of world processes confronts national states with the need to join forces to solve the most pressing problems of our time. Achieving gender equality in the countries of Central Asia is a key factor in achieving sustainable development in all other spheres of human life, ranging from eliminating all forms of poverty, hunger, ensuring food security, healthy lifestyles, quality education for all, access to justice, access to all resources, preserving the ecosystem for sustainable economic growth and strengthening global partnerships to create a better future for all humanity. A very important role in achieving the goals is played by the legislation of national states, international organizations, the media, the entire education system and sports, family, the work of local communities, overcoming negative stereotypes, and the activity of citizens themselves.

Just changing the consciousness of the people can solve the problem of achieving gender parity in all spheres of life. This is especially important for young people. It is our youth who will make existential decisions tomorrow. Since young people associate their success with the ability to achieve material livelihoods, they must understand how the problem of gender

[1] Corresponding author: gulmiza@gmail.com

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equality and overcoming negative stereotypes is connected with the economic prosperity of the entire society and the self-realization of each individual.

This research aims to clarify students' perceptions of gender roles, stereotypes, and attitudes. How do they see the possibility of realizing gender equality under the dominance of patriarchal values of Kyrgyz culture? To study how sports can impact women's self-confidence so that they can actively participate in social-economical, political, and cultural development.

The tasks:

- To analyze the role of politics in achieving gender balance;
- To consider basic cultural norms and gender stereotypes;
- To analyze the state of education and gender characteristics of choosing a profession.
- To analyze the role of higher education in achieving gender balance and economic independence of women;
- To analyze the role of Sports in increasing the self-confidence of girls and women;
- To analyze how self-confidence helps to defend women's rights.

Research Methodology

The theoretical research is based on analysis of the legal framework ensuring gender equality in the Kyrgyz Republic. The latest statistical data from the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, data from the collection "Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic 2018-2022" were analyzed in sections: "Students of educational institutions of higher professional education by specialty group and gender (at the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year)"; "The number of teachers in educational institutions of vocational education by gender (at the beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year)"; "Current business entities. Number of heads of business entities by gender and type of economic activity (as of January 1, 2023)"; "Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"; "Women in Parliament"; "Women in leadership positions (as a percentage of the total number of managers)."

Qualitative studies and reports from international organizations on gender issues and development were analyzed [3, 6, 9, 12, 22, 24]. The literature on gender issues, feminism, discrimination of women's rights, and gender stereotypes was selectively analyzed [1, 10, 25] as well as the literature on Women and Sports. The European Commission has developed a special document "Gender Equality in Sport Proposal for Strategic Actions 2014 – 2020" [8]. The main goal of this document was to create a reliable platform for Gender Equality in Sports. It provides detailed recommendations for implementing this goal at the sports organizations and National state level.

The Kyrgyz Republic adopted a Special Program in 2017 – "The Government Program "Sports Kyrgyzstan" for 2018-2022" [21]. There are three specialized laws on Physical Culture and Sports in the Kyrgyz Republic. Among them: "On physical culture and sports", "On national sports", and "On Paralympic sports". However, none of these documents talk about gender balance in sports. These laws and programs are designed as if the issue of discrimination against women's rights in sports has either been completely resolved or as if women do not exist in sports at all. This situation applies to elite and mass sports, national sports, and Paralympic sports.

At the same time, all documents emphasize the extreme importance of the development of physical culture and sports for the population. Physical culture and Sports are defined as a socio-cultural and pedagogical phenomenon. It "preserves and develops the most important component of the nation's gene pool - health, socialization the personality, forming not only physical perfection, but also nurturing spiritual and moral qualities, expands the boundaries of human capabilities through sports of the highest achievements" [21]. The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Physical Culture and Sports defines its goals: "The legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic on physical culture and sports is aimed at the comprehensive development of a person, the establishment of a healthy lifestyle, the formation of the need for physical and moral

improvement, the creation of conditions for practicing any types of physical culture and sports, the organization of vocational training and ensuring proper prevention of diseases, harmful habits and offenses, preventing the use of prohibited substances and methods, fostering patriotism, developing and strengthening friendship between peoples" [14].

Russian-language literature on the philosophy of sports, feminization of sports and modern trends in women's sports was analyzed [11, 13, 27, 29]. The importance of sports for women and girls, for unlocking their potential and growing self-confidence, and reducing anxiety, is studied by authors: M. Lochbaum, M. Sherburn, C. Sisneros, S. Cooper, A. M. Lane, and P. C. Terry [16]. M. Anthony, B. Rosario [17]. R. Jewkes, R. Morrell, J. Hearn, E. Lundqvist, D. Blackbeard, G. Lindeggerg, M. Quayle, Y. Sikweyiya and L. Gottzén [23]. T. Scheadler and Audrey Wagstaff [28]. Y. Uyar [32]. Recently, more literature has begun to appear on the philosophy of sports and women, on the causes of gender inequality: Angela Schneider [2], Colleen English [4,5], Travis Scheadler and Audrey Wagstaff [26], Rachel Jewkes and others [23].

To conduct the study, questionnaires were compiled containing 20 questions on the topic: "Gender equality and economic independence of women in the context of Kyrgyz culture." The survey took place in two stages. In the first stage, students of the International University of Kyrgyzstan (IUK), the National University named after Jusup Balasagyn and Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University were surveyed. In the second stage, the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University named after B. Elzin, and the State Technical University named after Ishenaly Razzakov were joined to these universities. A focus group discussion was held with medical students of the IUK.

Another research was conducted on the topic: "Socio-psychological impact of Aikido on women's self-confidence and perception of their rights". It was a study among instructors of the Aikido Federation of the Kyrgyz Republic about gender issues and increasing self-confidence and self-esteem among girls and women through Sports and Aikido. This article also includes some results of that research.

Results of the survey and focus group

According to the National Statistical Committee, 227,582 students were studying in 2022, representing 3.2% of the total population of the Kyrgyz Republic (7,037.6: 51% women, 49% men). Of these, 118,226 (52%) are female students and 109,356 (48%) are female students.

For this study, only university students in Bishkek were surveyed. In total, 117,092 students study at universities in Bishkek, or 51% of the total number of students in the Republic. Of these, 60,389 (52%) are girls and 56,703 (48%) are boys. Young people from all over the Republic come to study at universities in Bishkek, many of which have the status of National or State universities.

The percentage of female and male students varies depending on the major. Female students are more represented in natural sciences, education, social sciences, culture, art, service sectors, technology and food production.

Male students are more represented in such specialties as: jurisprudence, economics and management, healthcare, agriculture, architecture and construction, computer technology and information technology, chemical technology and biotechnology, reproduction and processing of forest resources, materials science, metallurgy and mechanical engineering, electronics, radio engineering and communications, computer technology and information technology, automation and control, technosphere safety, environmental management and hydrometeorology.

The vast majority of men are represented in the following specialties: geology, exploration and development of mineral deposits, energy and power engineering, instrument engineering, information security, geodesy and land management, transport equipment and technology. A purely male specialty is military education. Here male students make up 100%.

The survey was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, 231 students took part, at the second - 85 students. Of these, 65% and 69% were girls at the first and second stages, and 35% and 31% were boys, respectively, at the first and second stages. On average, the number of female respondents was 67%, males - 33%. This difference indicates the greater activity of girls, as well as the specificity of the choice of professions by girls and boys. Greater coverage of universities in Kyrgyzstan, especially such as Technical, Agricultural Academy, and Medical Academy, may give other results. The figures also confirm the conclusions of the National Statistics Committee that gender parity has been achieved in the education system, especially in higher education.

The age category of respondents varies from 17 to 22 years. A smaller number of respondents were between 23 and 26 years old. This also reflects the socio-cultural characteristics of our region. Most children of this age study at universities with the support of their parents. It is extremely rare for students to pay for their studies on their own. Most students work outside of school, but only to earn pocket money. For those who work full-time, there is a correspondence course. Sometimes there are age groups of students there, but also very rarely.

Religion based identity

For the modern generation of Kyrgyzstan, among many identities, identity based on religion is very important, although the bearer of, for example, Muslim identity does not always consistently comply with all religious requirements and rituals. In Kyrgyzstan, since Independence, the number of believers has been growing exponentially, capturing an increasing number of young people. Nevertheless, university youth from secular universities are distinguished by a greater degree of freedom and the ability to think critically. Among the respondents, 74% had a Muslim identity, 5% Christian, 13% called themselves agnostics, 6% - atheists.

In general, the results are consistent with the official representation of the named identification categories. After the collapse of the USSR, most representatives of Slavic nationalities left Kyrgyzstan. New generations of Russians prefer to enroll in Russian universities, where they are welcomed with open arms. They issue quotas, allocate a budget, pay a stipend. Others go abroad. Those who would like to stay in Kyrgyzstan choose the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University. Not surprisingly, only 5% of respondents have a Christian identity.

Among those surveyed, 13% of respondents called themselves agnostics. By this term, young people understand a commitment to a scientific worldview without denying or emphasizing God. While atheism is correctly understood as the complete denial of God. It is surprising that despite total identification as a Muslim, there are still 6% of young people who completely consciously support atheism. Also, some students called themselves deists, Tengriists. Others support the idea of God, but at the same time do not identify themselves with any religion.

Gender issues

To answer the question: “How do you assess the level of gender equality in Kyrgyz society today?” The following answers were suggested: low, medium, high. 65% of respondents answered that the level of gender equality in Kyrgyz society is average. This means that everyone is aware of the problem and agrees that gender parity needs to improve. Also, 28% of respondents chose the answer “low”. Only 7% of respondents agreed that the level of gender equality is high.

Question about gender stereotypes “Are there gender stereotypes in our society that “a man is a breadwinner, and a woman should be a housewife”? was one of the key issues. The prevalence of gender stereotypes was confirmed by 85% of respondents and only 13%

responded that they do not exist. There were also responses that the older generation adheres to gender stereotypes. However, the results of the focus group and further communication with students confirmed that young people themselves are susceptible to gender stereotypes. "Since the country's independence, there has been a resurgence of conservative gender norms. Stereotypes promoted by the state, media, and other actors portray women as primarily mothers and wives, and research indicates that these ideas have influenced thinking among Kyrgyz women and men. Women's presence in public sector roles has also diminished, largely due to the erosion of subsidized childcare facilities. CEDAW has drawn attention to the negative implications of these stereotypes for women's empowerment, to gender-based violence, and harmful practices, such as child marriage and bride kidnapping" [12, XI].

The questionnaire contained two questions that were very similar in content. From the author's point of view, the patriarchal values of Kyrgyz culture and Islam have much in common in the perception of gender equality. Moreover, before conducting this research, I constantly identified them. Therefore, the students' answers were somewhat unexpected.

To the question: "Do you think that the patriarchal values of Kyrgyz culture hinder the implementation of gender equality?", on average, 59% of respondents answered yes, 21% - no, 20% of respondents find it difficult to answer.

To the question: "Do you think that Islam hinders the realization of gender equality?", on average, 32% of respondents answered yes, 48% - no, 19 - difficult to answer. From the point of view of modern youth, Islam is less of an obstacle to gender equality than Kyrgyz culture. It turns out that the main obstacle to the realization of gender equality is our culture. Constant sermons by Muslim priests about the high position of women in Islam found their response in the minds of youth.

Then the answers to the next question are not consistent with young people's understanding of Islam. To the question: "Do you think a woman in a hijab is the best wife and mother?", on average, 15% of respondents answered yes, 63% - no, and 22 - found it difficult to answer. In one of my early studies, when asked why young girls wear the hijab, participants answered that it was because they wanted to get married earlier. The true Muslims prefer girls in hijab [24, 25].

Socio-economic and political block of issues

To the question: "Do you think young people realize the importance of combating any form of discrimination against women's rights for the socio-economic development of society?" - the answers were received: yes, they are fully aware - 6%, aware to some extent - 71%, not aware - 12%, difficult to answer - 11%. Most respondents understand the connection between the socio-economic development of society and gender equality. However, their answers below indicate that eliminating gender inequality depends on awareness of this inequality, and not on the socio-economic success and political activity of the woman herself.

To the question: "Is a woman's economic independence and her high level of education important for her self-realization and benefit to society? - answers were received: on average 84% - yes, 7% - no, and 9% - difficult to answer. The overwhelming majority of respondents believe that a woman's economic independence and her high level of education are very important for women's self-realization. However, the question remains open. "What is more important for a woman – her economic independence or a high level of education?" Therefore, there was a need to reformulate this question when conducting subsequent research on this topic.

To the question: "Does the level of political activity of women affect the achievement of gender equality in our society? - answers were received: on average 68% - yes, 17% - no, 15 - difficult to answer. Here, too, the majority of respondents agreed with the importance of women's political activity. However, answers to subsequent questions showed that women

themselves do not show much desire to get involved in politics, as they have the prejudice that only a man can achieve success in a political career.

To the question: “Who in our society achieves great success in business and entrepreneurship?” - answers were received: women - 15%, men -85%. When it comes to business, most respondents associate business with big business. Big business in Kyrgyzstan involves men.

The National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic provides statistical data on economic entities: small, medium and large enterprises. Data for 2023 on the number of heads of business entities by type of enterprise show that small businesses are run by 8,461 (31%) women and 19,209 (69%) men. Medium-sized enterprises are managed by 1,981 (47%) women, 2,272 (53%) men, large enterprises are managed by 741 (39%) women, 1,179 (61%) men [31, 253].

According to the statistics committee: “In 2022, a decrease in the share of women employed in small enterprises compared to 2018 was observed in almost all types of economic activity. The largest share of men employed in small enterprises in 2022 was in the mining sector - 95.0%, construction - 86.5%, electricity, gas and steam supply (supply) - 85.7 percent, agriculture, forestry and fishing - 81.7%, water supply, cleaning, waste treatment and secondary raw materials - 78.5%, manufacturing (industry) - 76.7%" [31, 253].

Kyrgyzstan continues to remain an agricultural country. Therefore, the vast majority of enterprises are peasant (farm) enterprises - 356,743 entities. Here, the number of female managers is only 73,952 (21%), while the number of male managers is 282,791 (79%) [29, 254]. Among individual entrepreneurs, 131,713 (36%) are women and 231,404 (64%) are men [31, 254].

In all sectors, male leaders outnumber female leaders. There are many reasons for this. First of all, the effectiveness of gender stereotypes. Most women prefer to take care of the house and children. The numbers confirm this. The number of employed people in Kyrgyzstan is 2,581.1 million people. Of these, 996.9 thousand (39%) are women and 1,584.2 million (61%) are men. The majority of workers, namely 68%, have secondary education. Employed people with higher education make up only 22%. The total number of university students is only 3% of the total population at the moment [31, 268].

When answering the question: “Is there discrimination against women’s rights in business and entrepreneurship?” respondents believe that there is discrimination in the field of business and entrepreneurship - 53%. Only 25% answered no discrimination. 22% of respondents find it difficult to answer.

To the question: “Who in our society achieves great success in politics?” respondents answered that success in politics is achieved by men - 90% and only 10% of women. When answering the question: “Is there discrimination against women’s rights in politics? respondents believe that there is discrimination in politics - 59%, no - 20%, and 21% find it difficult to answer.

The students' answers reflect the current situation in our political system. After the 2002 elections, women accounted for only 6.7% of deputies in the Kyrgyz Republic Parliament (Jogorku Kenesh). By 2005, the Parliament was solely composed of men. The adoption of a mandatory gender quota of 30% in the revised Election Code in 2007 and 2011 helped improve women’s representation in elected office at national and local levels. In 2017, women accounted for 19.2% parliamentarians in the Jogorku Kenesh. Despite a considerable increase in female political representation, the number of women in office has not yet reached the 30% threshold identified by the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) as critical for effective participation in decision-making [12, XII-XIII].

Domestic violence

However, the highest percentage of discrimination, from the respondents' point of view, occurs in the family. To the question: “Is there discrimination against women’s rights in the family?” 66% of respondents answered yes, 18% no, 16% find it difficult to answer. This is also noted in the Kyrgyz Republic Country Gender Assessment, Asian Development Bank. “Domestic violence is widespread in the Kyrgyz Republic. Based on government figures, an estimated 23% of all women aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence at least once. This rises to 28% for married or formerly married women, with 4% reporting exposure to sexual violence and 14% to emotional abuse at the hands of their current or former partners. Of those experiencing abuse, only 39% had sought assistance. Evidence from women’s nongovernment organizations in the country suggests that the actual numbers are far higher as the majority of domestic violence cases go unreported” [12, XII].

Focus group: stereotypes in action

During the focus group, both girls and boys believed that a man must be the breadwinner of the family. A dispute arose between the students: “Are the girls ready to support their husband if he loses his job?” All the girls replied that they were ready, but only for a very short period. They concluded: “If a man systematically does not earn money, or does not earn enough, then why such a husband?”

Most of the girls also answered that they would get divorced and try to rebuild their lives. At the same time, even three children will not be an obstacle for them. The group included girls in hijabs. They also actively insisted that if a man cannot provide for his family, he should be divorced, even despite the children. Some girls said that they would not work if their husband is able to provide for them. They receive education in case they suddenly have to support themselves. But they would like to spend their future salary not on the family budget, but only on themselves. The girls argued that it is Islam that prescribes that everything a woman earns should be spent only on herself.

The guys present agreed that man should be the breadwinner and support his entire family. However, the girls’ position that they should leave their husband if he is unable to provide for the family came as a shock to them.

Even though Kyrgyz youth believe that they have freed themselves from gender prejudices, focus group discussions showed that they continue to think in terms of gender stereotypes. After the focus group, many students expressed gratitude for discussing gender issues. All focus group participants may think more seriously about what they expect from family life.

Solving the problem of discrimination in Kyrgyzstan

Respondents were asked the question: “What, in your opinion, could be ways to overcome discrimination and achieve gender equality in Kyrgyz society?” the answers are proposed: “Targeted state policy for the implementation of women’s rights”; "Economic independence of women"; “Level of education of women and men”; “Overcoming gender stereotypes”; “It all depends on the women themselves.”

The answer that received the largest number of responses was: “The level of education of women and men” - 33%. The lowest is “Economic independence of women” – 8%. The questions received approximately the same percentages: “Overcoming gender stereotypes” – 22%, “Everything depends on the women themselves” – 20%. The answer “Targeted state policy to realize women's rights” scored 18%.

Respondents were also asked: “What steps, in your opinion, need to be taken by the government, public organizations, and citizens to improve the situation with women’s rights and achieve gender equality?” and the proposed answer: “Adoption of new laws”, “Working with the population on gender equality through the media”, “Introducing courses in schools and universities on gender equality”, “Education in the family on the principles of gender equality”,

"Self-education to overcome gender stereotypes: "a man is a breadwinner, and a woman should be a housewife."

The question "Education in the family on the principles of gender equality" generated the greatest number of respondents' agreement. It scored 43%. In second place is the answer: "Self-education to overcome gender stereotypes: "a man is a breadwinner, and a woman should be a housewife" - 20%. "Adoption of new laws" - 15%, "Introduction of courses in schools and universities on gender equality" -12%. The smallest percentage went to the answer: "Working with the population about gender equality through the media" – 10%.

The overwhelming number of respondents to the question: "Is it worth achieving gender equality in our society?" 75% are confident that it is worth achieving gender equality. At the same time, 12% of respondents do not consider it necessary to raise this issue. 13% of respondents chose other.

Many survey participants, as well as focus group participants, expressed gratitude for the coverage of gender issues. This suggests that teachers very rarely, or do not at all, discuss with students the problem of gender inequality, discrimination against women's rights, and discrimination against human rights in general.

Number of teachers in educational institutions of higher professional education. Women – 7355 (61%), men 4684 (39%). From 12,039. According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, "The composition of teachers in the vocational education system of the republic was also characterized by a gender imbalance. At the same time, at the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year, women predominated among teaching staff in primary (more than 51 percent), secondary (about 73 percent) and higher professional education (more than 61 percent)." [31, 150].

Since women are the most interested parties in achieving gender parity, they could discuss gender issues with their students. This would have a great effect in educating the next generation to realize gender parity in our society. However, this does not happen. A possible reason why teachers do not address the topic of gender equality is their own stereotypes against feminism. From a personal conversation with some female teachers, they misunderstand the term feminism and have a negative attitude towards it, and consider discussions about women's rights to be feminist.

The students themselves, for the most part, believe that "gender equality is important." One of the respondents gave a detailed comment: "In general, it is necessary to combat this problem, starting from the school desk. Introduce into the curriculum a subject such as "equality", if necessary. In the south of the country, there is a much greater need for this. The farther from the capital, the darker the people living there. I know from personal experience that the "rights and safety" of girls/women are in decline. From childhood, families are taught that a girl should be an "incubator" and obey her husband in everything. But I knew female friends who could reach heights, build a career, and take care of their families. They were able to move our country forward. But their parents decided otherwise. They were forced into marriage and no one could help them. In connection with this, at the moment, I know that they want to run away and get a divorce since they are humiliated in these families. They cannot even contact government agencies, since there a blind eye to such statements. It would be great to create a fund to help girls, a center where they could turn to psychologists. There's a lot more that can be described, thank you..."

A survey among student youth cannot provide a complete picture of the perception of gender and women's rights among all young people. It is also necessary to take into account that it is the sphere of education, especially higher education, that most correspond to gender parity. In Kyrgyzstan, in the field of education, including higher education, the right of girls and women to education is fully respected, except for the daughters of radical religious parents. Such parents either do not allow their daughters to attend secular schools and marry them off

early. So, on average, the ratio of girls and boys in upper secondary education is 56.7% to 50.2%. In universities, there is approximately the same ratio of girls and boys.

However, traditional stereotypes and patriarchal norms of Kyrgyz culture play an important role outside the university. According to the International Indicators on Gender Equality in the 2017 Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), Kyrgyzstan was ranked 85th out of 144 countries. According to all indicators - employment, poverty, decision-making politics, domestic violence, a woman suffers discrimination.

Woman and Sports

Gender stereotypes, deeply ingrained in people's minds, harm girls' and women's participation in sports. All relevant laws on physical culture and sports, as well as the "Sports Kyrgyzstan" program, also ignore the implementation of women's rights in the field of physical culture and sports, which means their right to health and self-confidence, which sport provides.

At the same time, the "Sports Kyrgyzstan" Program emphasizes the main problem in the field of physical culture and sports in the Kyrgyz Republic: "The current state of development of physical culture and sports is in a difficult situation, as evidenced by the low level of mass participation in physical culture and sports (13%), noted a decline in achievements in elite sports, low attractiveness of the sports sector for investment is observed" [21]. And this is below the norm - 15 percent. This indicator was defined by the World Health Organization as the minimum level of mass participation in physical culture and sports, ensuring the safety of the nation's gene pool in the "health component" [21].

Compared to Kyrgyzstan, the mass participation in sports in Kazakhstan is 25 percent, in Uzbekistan - 22 percent, in Russia 25 percent, and in England 40 percent [21]. It is quite obvious that if girls and women were supported in sports at the official level in Kyrgyzstan, the overall indicator of mass participation in sports would double.

In general, there are a lot of problems in sports in Kyrgyzstan. An analysis of the current situation showed that the greatest problems are related to health. The population lacks the habit of a healthy lifestyle, 80 percent of graduates have health problems, while upon entering school, the percentage of unhealthy children is 20 percent. This is a real scourge for state security, since "more than half of pre-conscription age youths do not comply with the norms and requirements for physical training of the program-normative foundations of physical education" [21]. 80 percent of premature deaths of citizens of Kyrgyzstan are associated with bad habits: smoking, alcoholism, unhealthy diet, obesity, and physical inactivity. Every year there is a rejuvenation of many "age-related" diseases. Among women: "80 percent of women of reproductive age have certain health conditions" [21].

Physical culture and sports have a very weak material and technical base. It is characterized by: "insufficient facilities, their non-compliance with international standards and requirements, uneven territorial distribution, lack of modern equipment and inventory" [21]. There is a high outflow of coaching and teaching staff due to wages that are below the consumer basket.

The gender homogeneity of sports in Kyrgyzstan hurts the overall performance of professional sports. Gender stereotypes and patriarchal Islamic culture create many barriers for women, especially for representatives of Muslim ethnic groups. Thus, the coach of our famous female wrestlers Aisulu Tynybekova, Aiperi Medet kyzy and Meerim Zhumanazarova - Nurbek Izabekov noted: "Since more than half of our population are Muslims, not only the participation of girls in sports, the opinion about the participation of women in wrestling was different. There are no such problems, for example, in athletics or judo. Sportswear for wrestlers is a little revealing. But over time, when our girls began to achieve success on the international stage, people's opinions changed. Aisulu Tynybekova also faced such difficulties. New athletes followed her and citizens began to support them" [30].

Despite the great obstacles for women in Kyrgyz sports, they achieved significant success thanks to their perseverance and strong character. The most titled are: Aisulu Tynybekova,

Aiperi Medet Kyzy and Meerim Zhumanazarova represent women's wrestling, Valentina Shevchenko - mixed martial arts, Daria Maslova - athletics.

Aisulu Tynybekova is Kyrgyz, Asian champion. She is an international master of sports in women's freestyle wrestling. She participated in the 2012 London Olympics, was multiple winners of international tournaments, winner of the bronze medal at the Asian Championship (2013), and silver medal (2014) among adults. She won bronze at the World Student Olympiad in Kazan (2013) and the XIV Asian Games (2014, Incheon, South Korea), as well as silver at the international Grand Prix tournament of Olympic champion Ivan Yarygin (2015, Russia). She won silver twice at the Asian Championships (2014 and 2015). She is an Asian champion at the Asian Championships among adults, held in Thailand - Bangkok (2016). She won gold at the licensed wrestling tournament in Astana and received a ticket to the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. She became fifth in the weight category up to 58 kg. [30]. So, Aisulu Tynybekova is a six-time Asian champion and three-time world champion in freestyle wrestling. For the first time in the history of Independent Kyrgyzstan, she brought the Republic a silver medal at the Olympic Games in Tokyo (2020).

Aiperi Medet kyzy became the Asian champion in freestyle wrestling at the age of 19. She is a winner of the 2020 Individual World Cup, the Asian Championship and the Asian Games, a participant in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, a bronze medalist at the 2021 World Championships in Oslo, and a gold medalist at the 2022 Asian Wrestling Championships. year, silver medalist at the 2023 World Championships in Belgrade. Winner of the Asian Wrestling Championship (Bishkek 2022), and champion of the XIX Asian Games (Hangzhou, 2022) [18].

Meerim Zhumanazarova is the champion of Asia. She has a silver medal at the international women's freestyle wrestling tournament in Klippan (Sweden), and a gold medal at the Asian Junior Wrestling Championship in Taichung. She won a bronze medal at the 2016 Asian Games. She is a World champion (2021), a World Cup winner (2020), and a medalist at the Asian Championships and Asian Games. She is a Master of Sports of the Kyrgyz Republic of international class in freestyle wrestling [19]. Meerim, like Aisuluu, brought the Republic an Olympic medal during the Tokyo Olympics (2020). She won a bronze medal.

Aisulu Tynybekova, Aiperi Medet Kyzy, Meerim Zhumanazarova, Valentina Shevchenko and Daria Maslova are a symbol of overcoming stereotypes and the possibilities of women to achieve great victories in sports. Every Kyrgyzstani today knows their names. Involving girls and women in sports would play a positive role in mass and elite sports in Kyrgyzstan and would contribute to the overall health of our citizens. “According to experts, attracting women to various sports makes competitions more diverse and spectacular, and makes women themselves more confident, and increases their ability for self-realization” [11, 17].

Previous studies “Socio-psychological impact of Aikido on women's self-confidence and perception of their rights” also showed that the development of Aikido in Kyrgyzstan is a very important social and health task for both men and women. Participation in Aikido can have positive effects on mental health, including reduced anxiety and improved overall well-being. It has a significant impact on the growth of confidence and self-esteem, including for girls and women.

Aikido also helps maintain a certain gender balance and promotes women's rights. Experienced coaching staff, especially those who advocate for gender equality, can serve as powerful role models, encouraging more women to participate and excel in Aikido. And finally, examining women's rights within Aikido can highlight progress and ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality in martial arts. Both men and women win in Aikido, as they gain tremendous experience in close communication with the opposite sex, which presupposes the exclusion of any harassment or disregard for rights.

Thus, sports are an important tool for creating all the conditions for a full and happy life of an individual. “It is important to keep women and girls participating in sports and exercise because sports have many benefits for men and women regardless of gender including

decreased social loafing later in life with a history of participating in team, rather than individual sports; improved respiratory and cardiovascular health; enhanced muscle and bone strength and reduced hip fractures, vertebrae fractures, and cancer diagnoses; reduced risk of Type II diabetes; decreased risk of depression; improved grades; and in children who participate in team sports, increased self-concept and self-esteem" [30, 2].

Conclusions

Many Central Asian countries are parties to international agreements and conventions obliging them to comply with the principles of gender equality. Therefore, achieving equality in gender relations is also linked to the fulfillment of international obligations. Kyrgyzstan adopted the National Strategy and NAP to achieve gender equality. These include: ending violence against women and girls; women's economic empowerment, quality education, vocational training and lifelong learning for women and girls; equality and increased access to rights and justice, increased participation of women in political life; promoting gender parity in decision-making; gender-responsive budgeting; changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes. Many Central Asian countries are parties to international agreements and conventions obliging them to comply with the principles of gender equality.

Involving more girls and women in sports will solve many problems associated with physical, reproductive and mental health. Sports achievements will help women raise their level of self-respect and self-esteem. High self-esteem and good health will create conditions for women so that they can make a contribution to all spheres of social life from the economy to politics and the prosperity of the national state. With equal opportunities for education and work, women can make significant contributions to their countries' economies [6]. Economic activity will contribute to GDP growth and poverty reduction. It is estimated that if only women in Europe and Central Asia could participate equally in the labor force, they would contribute up to US$1.1 trillion to the global economy. Women in South Asia, excluding India, will contribute an additional US$500 billion.10 Women's participation in the labor force can also help increase the gross domestic product (GDP) of national economies, thereby contributing to improved well-being for all citizens [6, 8].

The social activity of women will guarantee a reduction in violence and discrimination against women and better access to health care and education. Equal rights and opportunities help create a more just and harmonious society. The representation of women in the government, parliament (Jogorku Kenesh) and local Aiyl Okmotu will contribute to greater consideration of the interests of the entire population, including women and children.

Thus, including women in the political process and public life contributes to strengthening democracy and political stability in the country. It is important to achieve gender equality for sustainable development, from ending poverty and hunger to world peace.

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