

Research Article

Zhanara Akmatbekova, Aina Duishekeeva*, Nurzat Baizakova, Gulzina Amatova,
Hu Fangxin

The Role of Media in Building Social Tolerance in Kyrgyzstan's Ethno-Cultural Diversity

<https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2025-0054>

received October 4, 2024; accepted March 27, 2025

Abstract: This study investigates the extent to which Kyrgyz media influence public perceptions of ethno-cultural diversity and contribute to either tolerance or conflict. It identifies a significant correlation between media narratives and societal attitudes, demonstrating that the language, tone, and framing of media coverage can both foster inter-ethnic harmony and amplify social tensions. The methodology includes content analysis of materials from various media, such as television, online resources, and other media, from January to August 2024. The focus is on inter-ethnic relations, representations of ethnic groups, language and rhetoric of publications, and audience reactions. The study determined that the Kyrgyz media is dominated by materials aimed at supporting cultural diversity and inter-ethnic interaction, but there are also negative publications focusing on conflicts and migrant problems. Most of the positive materials focused on covering cultural events and ethnographic expeditions. A significant difference in content and influence between online media and television was noted: television is more inclined to neutral and positive coverage, while online media are more likely to focus on problems and conflicts. The study confirms the importance of the media in shaping public perceptions of ethnic and cultural diversity and emphasises the need to support positive and neutral materials that promote inter-ethnic tolerance in Kyrgyzstan.

Keywords: television, radio, control, inter-ethnic conflict

1 Introduction

Kyrgyzstan is a multinational country where ethnic and cultural diversity is an integral part of society. The media also reflects the linguistic diversity of a multicultural society (Sharshenova, 2024). The newspapers are published in Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, Uyghur, Turkish, and Korean, reflecting the linguistic diversity of the local population of Kyrgyzstan (Media Support Centre, 2024). The TV programme “We are Kyrgyz” of the National Broadcasting Corporation of the Kyrgyz Republic (KTRK) dwells on the culture and traditions, and achievements of ethnic minorities living in Kyrgyzstan. “Dostuk” online radio broadcasts in the languages of the ethnic groups living in Kyrgyzstan until 2020: in Dungan, Tatar, Uyghur, Polish, Ukrainian, and other languages; and broadcasted with the slogan “Our strength is in unity.” Every weekend, representatives of various diasporas living in Kyrgyzstan were invited to appear on the air. The main areas of programming on Dostuk online radio

* **Corresponding author: Aina Duishekeeva**, Institute of Journalism and Communication, Jusup Balasagyn Kyrgyz National University, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, e-mail: ainaduishekeeva5@gmail.com

Zhanara Akmatbekova, Nurzat Baizakova, Gulzina Amatova: Institute of Journalism and Communication, Jusup Balasagyn Kyrgyz National University, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

Hu Fangxin: School of Journalism and Communication, Luoyang Normal University, Luoyang, People's Republic of China

were educational programmes, accounting for more than 60% of the weekly airtime; music programmes, accounting for 37%; and literary programmes, accounting for about 3%. Radio Dostuk and Baldar FM stopped broadcasting in 2020 due to the pandemic and the optimisation of the organisational structure of KTRK radio channels (Duishekeeva, 2019). However, some programmes in the Dungan, Ukrainian, Polish, Tatar, and Uyghur languages continue to be broadcast on the Kyrgyz Radio KTRK network.

However, inter-ethnic interaction between different ethnic groups is still a significant problem, which makes it increasingly important to study public sentiment and tools to influence the audience through the country's most popular media. Determination of how the media covers ethnic and cultural issues will help to develop strategies to reduce ethnic tensions and promote mutual respect and peaceful co-existence between different ethnic groups (Sheryazdanova *et al.*, 2024). In the context of Kyrgyzstani multinational society, such research contributes to strengthening social cohesion and preventing inter-ethnic conflicts.

The media plays a crucial role in shaping inter-ethnic relations and social tolerance, particularly in diverse societies such as Kyrgyzstan (Mukambaeva *et al.*, 2023). Historically being a platform for inter-ethnic solidarity, it has increasingly become a tool for state influence, particularly under President Zhaparov's administration. Since 2020, restrictions on press and academic freedoms, alongside the adoption of a Russian-style "foreign agents" law, have signalled a shift towards authoritarianism (Daminov, 2024; Panier, 2024). Research highlights the media's dual function in fostering cohesion or amplifying ethnic tensions, with digital platforms both promoting and restricting tolerance (Dall'Agnola & Wood, 2022). The broader context of digital authoritarianism in Central Asia further underscores the role of media control in shaping public discourse (Kurmanov & Knox, 2022; Turemuratov *et al.*, 2024).

Inter-ethnic tensions in Kyrgyzstan, particularly between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, have periodically escalated into violent conflicts, most notably in 1990 and 2010. Studies attribute these tensions to historical grievances, economic competition, and political instability, with the media playing a significant role in shaping public perception (Rezvani, 2013). Soviet-era policies of national delimitation reinforced ethnic divisions, while weak governance has sustained these fractures. Recent research examines the evolving nature of inter-ethnic identity. Imyarova (2022) highlights the fluidity of ethnic identity in response to socio-political contexts, while Khamidov and Nolle (2024) challenge assumptions about religion's role in ethnic divisions, finding that Islamic religiosity among Kyrgyz correlates with greater acceptance of Uzbeks.

The role of the media in shaping inter-ethnic perceptions, particularly during periods of conflict, is also highlighted. Atykanova and Arzymatova (2022) and Matyakubova (2015) contend that in the aftermath of the 2010 Osh conflict, Kyrgyz media frequently depicted Uzbeks in a negative light, thereby reinforcing nationalist sentiments and justifying discriminatory measures. Concurrently, official state rhetoric sought to minimise ethnic divisions, thereby further hindering efforts at reconciliation. These observations are consistent with the earlier research by Tatischeva (2012), who emphasised the absence of balanced media coverage in Kyrgyzstan on inter-ethnic issues, leading to an "information vacuum" that hinders the formation of a nuanced understanding of conflict dynamics.

The aspects of cultural globalisation that have a significant impact on inter-ethnic relations, both negatively and positively (e.g., in promoting tolerance and introducing correct terms for persons of different nationalities, religions, cultures, and gender identities), are also noteworthy (Kawiana *et al.*, 2023; Limaj, 2022). The positive influence of the media in this context is mentioned by Sadykova *et al.* (2022) in a comparison of the situations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The positive and negative impacts of the media (among other instruments of influence on the Kyrgyz society through language methods) were discussed by Mambetaliev (2022), who analysed how the language used in the media exacerbated and dampened inter-ethnic conflicts and disagreements in Kyrgyzstan, created nationalist sentiments, and even provoked radicalism towards representatives of other nations and ethnicities.

The amount of research on the role of the media in shaping inter-ethnic relations is quite significant, but few have addressed the role of the media in shaping tolerance in society in the context of ethnic and cultural diversity, which determines the relevance and necessity of this study. In addition, it is worth mentioning that media policy regularly changes in line with international and domestic political changes, political decisions, and situational events, which leads to the need for regular and up-to-date research on such changes and innovations.

Thus, the study aims to analyse and evaluate the impact of the media on the formation of tolerance in the Kyrgyz society in the context of ethno-cultural diversity. The study hypothesised that Kyrgyz mass media has a significant impact on the formation of tolerance and respect for ethno-cultural diversity. The tasks were as follows:

- Analyse the content and impact of Kyrgyz media on inter-ethnic relations and tolerance.
- Evaluate the role of media in shaping inter-ethnic tolerance and develop recommendations for improvement.

2 Materials and Methods

According to the data provided by the BBC website (Kyrgyzstan Media Guide, 2023), as well as resources such as the analytical report by Kemp (2024) and a report by the United States Agency for International Development (2023), which compiled a detailed report on the use of different types and types of media as well as analysed the audience in Kyrgyzstan, the following TV channels were selected for the analysis: KTRK, Rossiya RTR, KTRK Balastan, KTRK Ala-Too 24, ORT (Channel 1), Mir TV, and Osh TV, as well as media and news websites of Azattyk Radio, Kaktus Media, Kabar News Agency, Sputnik News, Turmush, and Kloop, which were identified as the sources with the highest demand and influence on the Kyrgyz audience. The diversity presented makes it possible to analyse the real role of the media in shaping tolerance in society in the context of ethno-cultural diversity.

The data collection was based on an analysis of media ratings and popularity metrics, sourced primarily from Kemp (2024) and the “Media Consumption in Kyrgyzstan” (United States Agency..., 2023) reports. Additional data were obtained from official sources, such as channel websites, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and Twitter (X) channels, as well as from materials posted on these platforms.

The analysis included a study of the popularity of the media, the number and quality of publications on tolerance, inter-ethnic and ethnic hatred, ethno-cultural diversity, other related aspects, content analysis of the selected materials based on the subject matter, tone, sources of information used, involvement of experts, language and rhetoric, representation of different ethnic groups, the format of materials, editorial policy and media values, availability of case studies, and real-life examples on the stated topic. The reaction and its manifestations among the audience were measured using the average number of views, comments, reposts, and likes.

The research procedure included data collection, analysis of social discussions, and measurement of approval and engagement. Data on views, likes, comments, and subscribers of the selected media outlets were collected using VIDIQ’s online tools and official sources. The approval rate was calculated as the ratio of average number of likes to the average number of views, expressed as a percentage, using formula (1):

$$\text{Approval rate} = \frac{\text{Average number of likes}}{\text{Average number of views}} \times 100. \quad (1)$$

The engagement rate was calculated as the ratio of the sum of the average number of likes and the average number of comments to the average number of views, expressed in percentage, using formula (2):

$$\text{Engagement rate} = \frac{\text{Average number of likes} + \text{Average number of comments}}{\text{Average number of views}} \times 100. \quad (2)$$

The popularity rate of content on YouTube was determined using the average number of views per subscriber using formula (3):

$$\text{Popularity rate} = \frac{\text{Average number of views}}{\text{Number of subscribers}} \times 100. \quad (3)$$

For data collection and analysis, VidIQ software (browser extension applications for analysing key metrics of YouTube videos), YouTube's official analytics tools (primarily YouTube Analytics, the main tool for analysing channel data, which provides detailed information on views, subscribers, revenue, traffic sources, audience demographics, user behaviour, and so on), and other social platforms (number of views, reactions, reposts, comments) were used, and Excel was employed for statistical data processing and graphing.

The methodology used provides a comprehensive approach to analysing the role of the Kyrgyz media in constructing the specifics of the audience's perception of tolerance, cultural and ethnic diversity, and positive interaction with representatives of other nationalities.

3 Results

Ethnic and cultural diversity in Kyrgyzstan is a defining feature of its social structure, with groups such as Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Russians, Uighurs, and Dungans contributing to the country's cultural landscape. Historical and political shifts, particularly Soviet-era policies of social engineering, played a role in shaping inter-ethnic relations. These policies included industrial development, urbanisation, and the promotion of Russian as a lingua franca, fostering a shared Soviet identity while also generating tensions. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, economic instability and social restructuring exacerbated ethnic tensions (Lottholz, 2018; Podra *et al.*, 2020).

Examples of such political clashes, social unrest, and riots include the June 2010 inter-ethnic conflict in Osh (Lottholz, 2018), localised inter-ethnic conflicts such as the conflict in Iskra village, Chui district, Chui province, in 2007 between Kyrgyz and Dungans (Tokmakov, 2012); the conflict in Petrovka village, Chui region, in 2009 between Kurds and Russians (Papko, 2023); the so-called Bishkek riots of 2024, which resulted in clashes between local youth and foreign students (Human Rights Watch, 2024). At the same time, Atykanova (2022) notes that the media in Kyrgyzstan frequently either escalated the situation, as was the case with the 1990 Osh conflict, when it was the media that began to publish provocative messages with social and psychological content, or with the June 2010 events, when TV channels such as "Mezon TV," "Osh TV," and "DDD," as well as newspapers such as "Diydor," "Mezon," "Akhborot," and others were used by politicians to incite inter-ethnic conflict, or to silence the aspect of inter-ethnic conflict, focusing on another aspect of the problem (as happened, for example, during the 2009 conflict in the village of Petrovka, Chui Oblast, when the media focused on the inaction of the police in investigating a paedophile case).

Nevertheless, a shift in the media landscape towards a more controlled and cautious approach to reporting on inter-ethnic conflicts began to take effect after 2010. The Jalal-Abad riots of May 2010 are regarded as a significant example in this regard, given the role media narratives played in shaping public perception during this period. Initial reports, which largely echoed official statements emphasising law enforcement efforts, were later shown to be an oversimplification of a more complex situation, with independent analyses highlighting deep-seated ethnic tensions as a key factor in the unrest. A particularly illuminating case study is that of Ulugbek Abdusalamov, editor-in-chief of the *Diydor* newspaper. He was prosecuted for allegedly inciting inter-ethnic discord, reflecting the broader state strategy of regulating conflict-related media coverage. This shift underscores the evolution of the media's role, transitioning from a platform that, on occasion, served to exacerbate tensions to a more regulated space where, while maintaining a neutral tone, and it frequently avoids in-depth discussions of the root causes of ethnic conflict.

As of early 2024, inter-ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan present a mixed picture. While educational programs have promoted awareness and respect for cultural diversity, social and economic challenges such as poverty and unemployment continue to fuel tensions, particularly in the southern regions (Chupak, 2024; Suprun, 2024). Despite state efforts to prevent conflicts, sporadic inter-ethnic clashes still occur, underscoring the need for stronger social cohesion measures.

Social media significantly influences the media space of Kyrgyzstan, especially in the context of political and social conflicts. Following the 2020 elections and subsequent protests, the activities of the so-called troll factories, which use fake accounts to manipulate public opinion and attack opposition politicians and activists,

have intensified (Spytska, 2024). This increases polarisation in society and creates additional challenges for journalists and media experts (Turdubaeva, 2021). Despite these challenges, independent media in Kyrgyzstan continue to strive for transparency and objectivity. They are significant in informing the public and supporting democratic processes. International organisations, such as International Media Support (IMS) (2010), actively support Kyrgyz media in their pursuit of independence and professionalism by offering training and financial support. After the events of 2010, the state addressed the role of the media in fostering tolerance in society in the context of ethno-cultural diversity, but it is only possible to assess the actual implementation of the tasks set in this regard by analysing current trends in journalistic materials. According to the data provided by the BBC website (Kyrgyzstan Media Guide, 2023), the most popular medium is television, both public and private (there are more than a dozen private stations), with Russian and Russian-language networks registering huge audiences. Most radio stations are privately owned, and only a few broadcasts nationwide. The publishing sector, on the other hand, is suffering a decline in interest, and consequently in sales and financial capabilities. According to Kemp (2024), the Internet segment is substantial. As of the beginning of 2024, 5.35 million of the 8.08 million population are active users of the Internet, which is 66.3%, and Instagram is the most popular social media platform with approximately 1.6 million users. The biggest problem is the self-censorship of the media and the “arbitrary” blocking of websites due to anti-extremism legislation.

According to a global study by the United States Agency for International Development (2023), at the end of 2023, social media was the main source of information for the population, while print media received the lowest ranking (Figure 1).

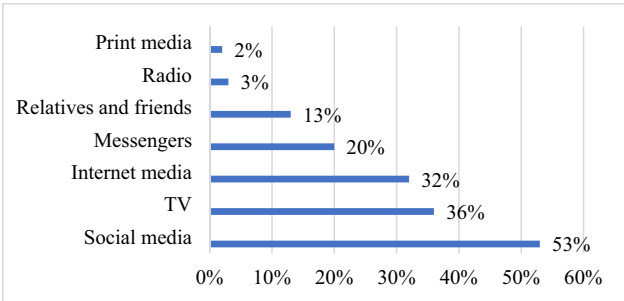


Figure 1: Sources of information in Kyrgyzstan, 2023. Source: Compiled by the authors based on the United States Agency for International Development (2023).

The popularity of television, radio, and print media is gradually declining, while online sources of information continue to grow steadily, although the level of trust in online sources is still lower than in other types of media (Figure 2).

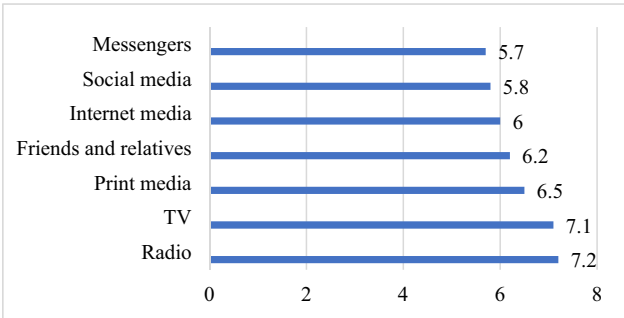


Figure 2: Trust in information sources in Kyrgyzstan, 2023. Source: Compiled by the authors based on the United States Agency for International Development (2023).

At the same time, the level of trust and frequency of using information sources depends on the age of the audience (Figure 3).

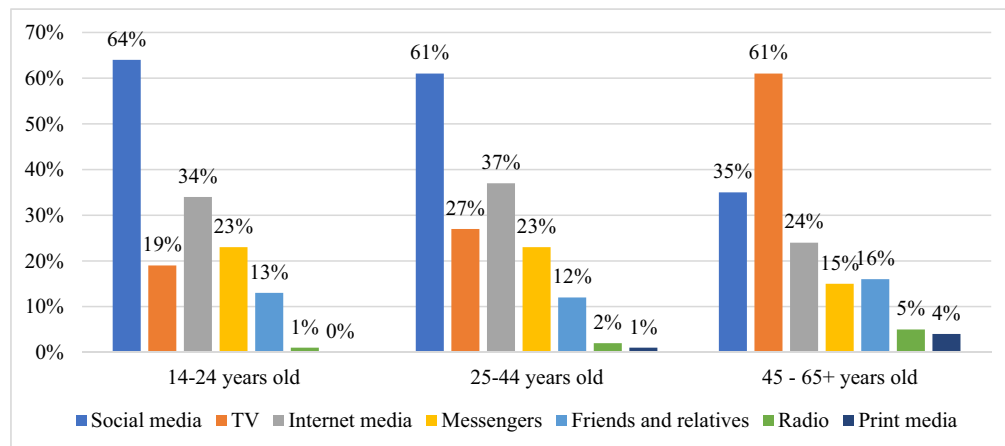


Figure 3: Sources of information according to the age of the audience in Kyrgyzstan, 2023. Source: Compiled by the authors based on the United States Agency for International Development (2023).

Thus, the analysis of Internet media and television as the media that have the greatest distribution and influence on the audience of Kyrgyzstan, and which can influence the formation of tolerance in society in the context of ethno-cultural diversity, is relevant. Kyrgyzstani television is broadcast in three main languages (Kyrgyz, Russian, and Uzbek), but it is also possible to find content in other languages. At the same time, it is important to clarify whether the reference is to Russian-language media produced in Kyrgyzstan or to Russian media consumed in Kyrgyzstan, as their influence and narratives may differ. At the same time, Kyrgyz and Russian are the preferred languages for viewing (Figure 4).

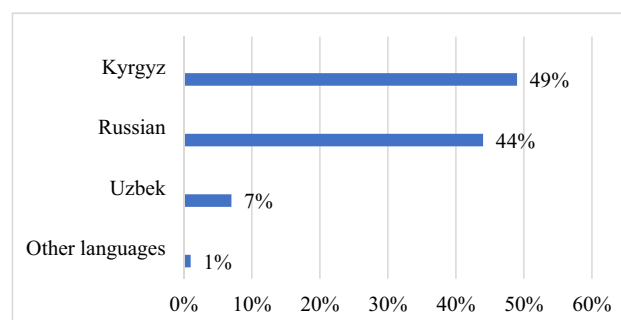


Figure 4: Preferred languages of TV content among Kyrgyz viewers as of the end of 2023. Source: Compiled by the authors based on the United States Agency for International Development (2023).

At the same time, there is a significant difference between preferences depending on the age of the audience and the region of residence (Figures 5 and 6).

At the same time, Bishkek is the most Russified city, and the Batken region is distinguished by the highest consumption of content in the Kyrgyz language (32% of Kyrgyz versus 67% of Russian-language content in Bishkek, 70% of Kyrgyz versus 23% of Russian, and 7% of Uzbek in Batken region). The most popular and consumed type of television product is news (Figure 7).

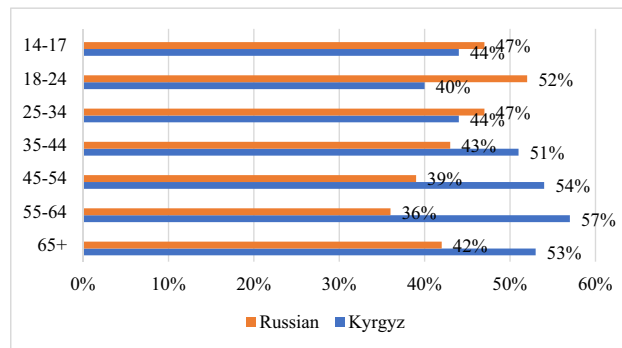


Figure 5: Preferred languages of TV content among viewers of different age categories at the end of 2023. Source: Compiled by the authors based on the United States Agency for International Development (2023).

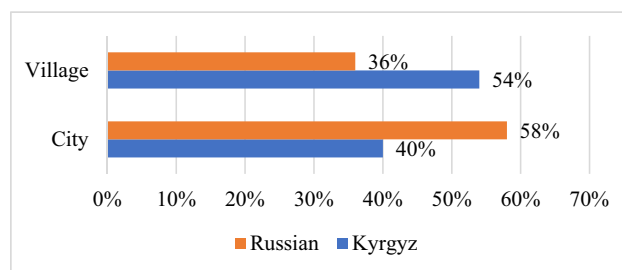


Figure 6: Preferred languages of TV content among viewers in different regions of Kyrgyzstan as of the end of 2023. Source: Compiled by the authors based on the United States Agency for International Development (2023).

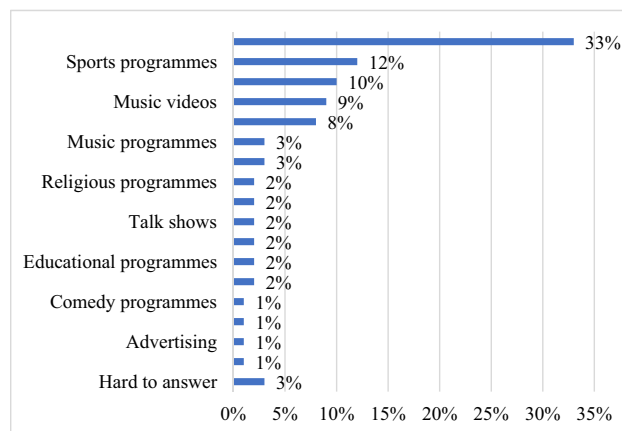


Figure 7: Preferred TV content. Source: Compiled by the authors based on the United States Agency for International Development (2023).

The United States Agency for International Development (2023) report presents the 30 most watched TV channels in terms of regular daily viewing, with KTRK taking the top spot (Figure 8).

Thus, the main focus of the study of TV channel content should be on news programmes, with a focus on KTRK, Rossiya RTR, KTRK Balastan, KTRK Ala-Too 24, ORT (Channel 1), Mir, Zor TV, and Osh TV. The fact that more than 85% of Internet users use it on a daily, regular basis and that the news section is one of the most popular among other content (Figure 9).

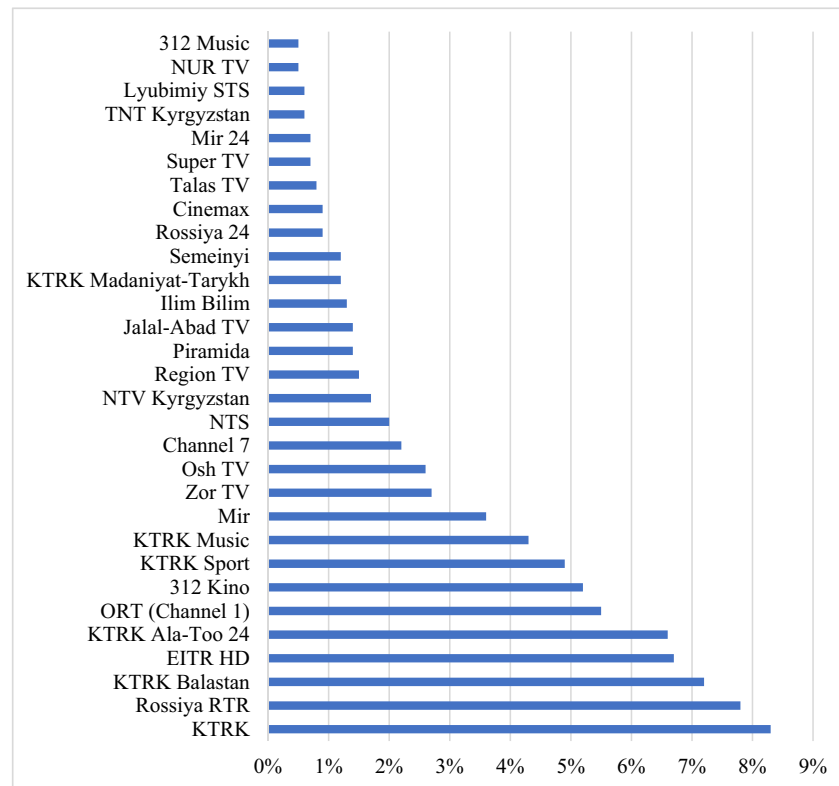


Figure 8: Top 30 TV channels by daily viewership. Source: Compiled by the authors based on the United States Agency for International Development (2023).

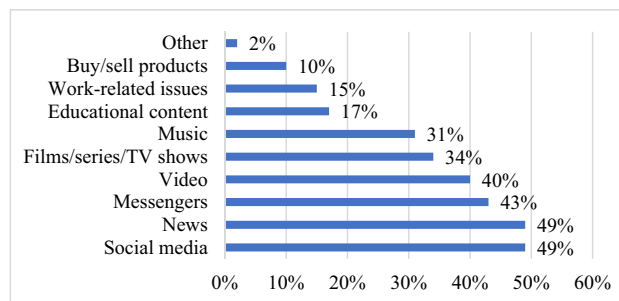


Figure 9: Reasons for Internet access for Kyrgyz consumers. Source: Compiled by the authors based on the United States Agency for International Development (2023).

Moreover, the United States Agency for International Development (2023) also presents a rating of the most popular media sites and news resources (Figure 10) and indicates that 18% of the total population of the country learns news from Kyrgyz news sites, 12% of them prefer to read news in Kyrgyz, and 5% in Russian.

Thus, Azattyk, Kaktus Media, Super KG, Aki Press, Kabar, Sputnik, Turmush, and Kloop will be used for content analysis in the framework of the study. Since it was already established that information consumption is in Kyrgyz and Russian, the analysis will include materials in both languages, within the media outlets identified earlier. The optimal number for analysis is 50 materials created between 1 January and 1 August 2024, representing a sufficiently representative base for the study. Table 1 presents the criteria by which media content will be analysed to identify their role in shaping tolerance in society in the context of ethno-cultural diversity.

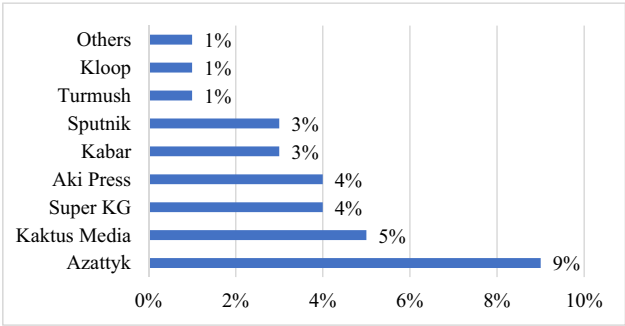


Figure 10: The most popular sites in the Kyrgyz Republic. Source: Compiled by the authors based on the United States Agency for International Development (2023).

Table 1: Signs of media content analysis to identify their role in shaping tolerance in society and ethno-cultural diversity

Features	Form of implementation
Topics of materials	Articles and reports on ethnic and cultural diversity. Coverage of cultural events and holidays of various ethnic groups. Materials on tolerance and inclusion
Tonality	Positive materials highlighting the benefits of ethnic and cultural diversity. Neutral materials that provide information without explicit evaluation. Negative materials containing elements of discrimination or bias
Sources of information and experts	Involve experts and representatives of ethnic groups for comment. Citing research and data on ethnic and cultural diversity and tolerance
Samples of language and rhetoric	Use of inclusive language and terminology. Avoiding stereotypes and prejudicial language
Representation of different ethnic groups	Frequency of references to different ethnic groups. Equal representation of different ethnic groups in a positive and neutral context
Case studies and examples	Description of successful examples of interaction and cooperation between ethnic groups. Coverage of stories about inter-ethnic friendship and solidarity
Material formats	A variety of formats: interviews, reports, analytical articles, and videos. Use of multimedia elements to illustrate ethno-cultural diversity
Audience and feedback	Analysis of comments and feedback from the audience on the materials. Study of media interaction with the audience on issues of ethnic and cultural diversity (surveys, feedback)

Source: Compiled by the authors.

The analysis included 50 stories, 25 of which were published on the websites of online news media and news agencies, and the remaining 25 on the YouTube channels of the selected TV channels (Table 2).

Analysis of the media field in Kyrgyzstan on the topic of inter-ethnic interaction and tolerance has shown that Internet media in Kyrgyzstan cover issues of inter-ethnic interaction in a neutral tone, providing objective information. However, there are also negative materials focusing on repressive measures against migrants. Positive materials emphasise the importance of cultural exchange and harmonious coexistence of different ethnic groups, promoting tolerance in society. There are publications covering events and holidays that promote intercultural interaction and mutual understanding, discussing laws and regulations directed against migrants in the context of their negative impact on ethnic and cultural diversity and tolerance, and condemning impolite statements by MPs and other officials (directed against ethnic groups). Articles focusing on repressive measures and infringement of migrants’ rights are mostly presented in a negative tone. Informative articles that provide objective information without explicit assessments use a neutral tone, while materials emphasising the importance of cultural exchange and harmonious coexistence of different ethnic groups have a strongly positive tone. The overwhelming majority of stories use neutral and often formal language to describe situations and events (60% or 15 out of 25 articles), but journalists allow themselves to use emotionally charged language to emphasise the importance of tolerance and discrimination (12% of publications) and focus

Table 2: Materials from news websites and news agencies

No.	Resource	Name	Topic	Formats
1	Azattyk Radio	“Тил билбегендер кесин”. Мамдумаров: мигранттарга каршы мыйзамды кабыл алды (“Let those who do not know the language go.” Mamdumarov: adopted the law against migrants)	The article discusses anti-migrant legislation that has a negative impact on ethno-cultural diversity and tolerance	Analytical material using expert opinions and real-life examples
2	Azattyk Radio	Foreigners were allowed to buy property in Issyk-Kul. What do residents fear?	The main topic of the article is the discussion of the adoption of a law allowing foreigners to purchase real estate in Issyk-Kul. Both economic and social aspects are considered, including potential impacts on local communities and the ecosystem	Analytical article with elements of interviews and expert opinions. Photos used to illustrate the topic
3	Azattyk Radio	The head of the press service of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic calls a Russian TV presenter's accusation of Russophobia absurd	Kyrgyz President's spokesperson responds to Russian TV presenter Tina Kandelaka's accusations of Russophobia	News article with elements of interviews and analytical comments. Citations and photos used to illustrate the topic
4	Azattyk Radio	Орусияда мигрант эне абакка, наристеси бандар үйүнө түштү (In Russia, a migrant mother went to prison, and her baby went to an orphanage)	The subject of the article is related to migration and migrants' rights, which directly affects ethno-cultural diversity	The article contains interviews, reportage, and analytical elements
5	Azattyk Radio	56 illegal migrants found in Bishkek	The article is dedicated to raids to detect illegal migrants in Bishkek and Chui Oblast	News article describing the raids and their results
6	Azattyk Radio	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic responded to the woman's words about the abuse of migrants in the Sakharov Centre	The article discusses the issue of violations of migrants' rights, which emphasises the relevance of the topic of ethno-cultural diversity and tolerance	News report with comments from various parties
7	Azattyk Radio	Prosecutor's Office appeals against acquittal in Kempir-Abad case	The article discusses the legal proceedings and political conflicts related to the transfer of land from the Kempir-Abad reservoir in Uzbekistan. This issue is directly related to inter-ethnic relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan	Analytical article with quotes from officials and participants in the process
8	Azattyk Radio	Tashiyev and Yatimov discuss Kyrgyz-Tajik state border issues	Discussion of the delimitation and demarcation of the state border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This applies to inter-ethnic and inter-state relations, which is important for building tolerance	Analytical and news articles with official statements and descriptions of events at the international level
9	Kaktus Media	What do Kyrgyzstanis think about the events of 17–18 May in Bishkek? Survey results	The article discusses the opinions of Kyrgyzstanis about the events of 17–18 May in Bishkek, which are directly related to public sentiment and issues of ethnic and cultural diversity	Analytical report with graphs and tables
10	Kaktus Media	The Ministry of Education discussed safety and study conditions for foreign students	The article discusses the issues of safety and study conditions for foreign students, which are directly related to the issues of tolerance and ethno-cultural diversity in the educational environment	Report on the meeting with specific proposals and decisions

(Continued)

Table 2: Continued

No.	Resource	Name	Topic	Formats
11	Kaktus Media	MP Akylbek Tumonbayev made an incorrect statement about foreigners. What's wrong here?	The article highlights an incorrect statement made by a deputy against foreigners, which raises issues of discrimination and intolerance	News article with the analysis of the statements and their consequences
12	Kaktus Media	Will Kyrgyzstan now be regarded as a country of intolerance and discrimination? Opinions	The article examines the problem of intolerance and discrimination in Kyrgyzstan, raising issues of ethnic and cultural diversity	Analytical article with inclusion of expert opinions and comments
13	Kaktus Media	Kyrgyz Security Council Secretary names threats to Central Asian countries	The article discusses threats to Central Asian countries, including extremism, terrorism, and regional conflicts, which may affect ethnic and cultural diversity and tolerance	News report with comments from officials
14	Kabar News Agency	The ethnographic expedition "Big Altai: from Altai to Alai-kuu" was held in Kara-Kulzhinsky district	The article is devoted to an ethnographic expedition aimed at studying and preserving the cultural heritage of various ethnic groups	Report on the event with photos and comments from participants
15	Kabar News Agency	Sabantuy celebrated in Osh	The article is devoted to the celebration of Sabantuya, a national holiday of the Tatar and Bashkir peoples, which is celebrated in Osh	Report with photos and comments from participants
16	Kabar News Agency	A night rally against migrants in Bishkek: the Minister of Labour answered questions about foreigners	The article is dedicated to a rally against migrants in Bishkek and the Minister of Labour's answers to questions related to foreigners and migration policy	News report with comments and reactions from participants of the events
17	Sputnik News	"The conflict arose because of one ditch" – a conversation with an expert on the water crisis in Central Asia	The article discusses the problems of water supply, cooperation between Central Asia and Afghanistan, as well as the impact of these issues on inter-ethnic relations and stability in the region	An interview with an expert, accompanied by analytical comments and examples from the region's history
18	Sputnik News	Kyrgyz people have always lived in harmony with other nations – Supreme Council speaker	Discussion of inter-ethnic harmony in Kyrgyzstan, the role of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan in strengthening unity and tolerance	Reporting on an event with elements of official statements, which gives the material officiality and significance
19	Sputnik News	Kyrgyzstan will prosper with friendship and unity of the people – S. Zhaparov	The article is devoted to strengthening national harmony and inter-ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan, which is important for the formation of tolerance and ethno-cultural diversity	Official statement of the President and Secretary of State, report on the meeting of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan
20	Turmush	Tourists from Israel rented a Toyota Sequoia and drove off-road in the Keminsky Valley – the owner of the car did not like it, and a conflict ensued	The article discusses the conflict between residents and foreign tourists, focusing on cultural differences and rules of behaviour	Description of events and quotes from participants in the conflict, without analysis or conclusions
21	Turmush	Ош милициясы уюл аралык кастыкты козуккан шектүүнү кармады (Osh police arrested a suspect who incited ethnic enmity)	Article on the detention of a man suspected of incitement and incitement to ethnic hatred	News note
22	Kloop			News article with analytical elements

(Continued)

Table 2: *Continued*

No.	Resource	Name	Topic	Formats
23	Kloop	Inter-regional hostility after the riots at the Osh Hippodrome. Supreme Court jails Kyrgyz man for 5 years for video Деколониализация нима ва бу нима учун муҳим? (What is decolonisation and why is it important?)	Inter-regional hostility after riots at the Osh Hippodrome, conviction of a citizen for distributing a video with insults The article examines the concept of decolonisation, its meaning, and its impact on society, with an emphasis on the historical context	Analytical article with historical examples and expert comments
24	Kloop	Чегара хизмати: Боткеннинг Дахма ҳудудига яқин ерда ўқ отилди, ҳозирда вазият барқарор (Border service: a shot was fired near Botken's Dakhma territory, the situation is now stable)	The article discusses an incident on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan	News articles with information and official statements
25	Kloop	Россиялик телебошловчи Артур Цветков Ассоль Молдокматовадан 1 млн \$ компенсация талаб қилди (Russian TV presenter Artur Tsvetkov demanded \$1 million in compensation from Assol Moldokmatova)	The article concerns a legal conflict between Russian TV presenter Artur Tsvetkov and Kyrgyz TV presenter Assol Moldokmatova over compensation for moral damages	News report with legal and personal context

Source: Compiled by the authors.

on the use of inclusive language that promotes a positive perception of ethnic and cultural diversity (8% of publications).

It is worth noting that publications often show a noticeable division between representatives of other ethnicities and nationalities (positive or neutral tone and context) and migrants, who are often presented in a negative context. However, it is worth noting that the materials often receive intolerant reactions from the audience. For instance, on the website and YouTube channel of Turmush (Tourists from Israel rented..., 2024), many incorrect comments on the article “Tourists from Israel rented a Toyota Sequoia and went off-roading in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan” can be found. Thus, at the time of the study, the video on the YouTube channel received 29,000 views, 177 likes, and 273 comments, of which 60% were directly or indirectly negative nationalist. For instance: “Бул Еврей эли озу ушундай эл конок болуп келип уй ээсин кууп чыгат булар менен колдон келсе вообще мамиле кылбаш керек” (These Jewish people are the kind of people who come as guests and drive out the host) (193 likes), “Их вообще нельзя пускать в Кыргызстан!!! Судьба Палестины вам знакома? Они как гость приезжают потом говорят, что они хозяева! Гнать надо их из земель Кыргызстана” (They should not be allowed into Kyrgyzstan at all!!! Do you know the fate of Palestine? They come as guests and then say they are the masters! They should be expelled from the lands of Kyrgyzstan) (215 likes), “Бул арам Еврейлерди эмне киргизесинер Кыргызстанга. жайлоодо жанчып машинага тебелетиш керек болчу” (Why should these illegal Jews be brought into Kyrgyzstan. They should have been crushed and trampled in a car) (139 likes and 3 replies).

This example illustrates how Kyrgyz media often attempt to maintain a neutral editorial stance by reporting on factual events without overt editorialisation. However, the neutrality of the reporting does not always prevent the amplification of pre-existing ethnic prejudices among the audience. The lack of contextual framing in the article – such as an explanation of local regulations regarding off-road driving in protected areas or the tourists’ intentions – may have contributed to the way the audience interpreted the event. Moreover, the comment section became a space where readers projected their broader political frustrations onto an otherwise localized issue. Taking this video as an example, according to the formula (1), the level of viewer engagement was 1.55% and the level of popularity was 8.68%, which proves that such videos receive a high response from the audience and provoke an active reaction from viewers and readers.

Due to the lack of possibility to calculate all the indicators listed in Table 3 in the publications, it cannot be said that the example given is typical and indicative, but it indicates the tendency of the Kyrgyz media to maintain a neutral position.

3.1 Comparative Analysis of Television and Online Media

The analysis of TV materials showed different results than the analysis of online materials. Excluding Russian TV channels from the overall picture, it is possible to note a clear predominance of positive and neutral stories and only a small share of negative ones. The materials cover a wide range of topics, including cultural festivals, ethnographic expeditions, discussions of economic cooperation, issues of tolerance and hospitality, cases of discrimination, and inter-ethnic conflicts. The tone of the materials ranges from neutral to positive (on Russian TV channels, more often negative), with a focus on cultural diversity, tolerance, and friendship between peoples. Negative materials (of Russian TV channels) focus on the superiority of one nation over another and the shortcomings of representatives of other ethnic groups, often using disrespectful and rude language that may contribute to discrimination. Most of the materials use inclusive and respectful language, emphasising the importance of ethno-cultural interaction. In some cases, there is a formal language with neutral expressions. Ethnic groups are presented in a positive context, emphasising the contribution of ethnic groups to the cultural heritage of the region, successful interaction between peoples, and citing cases of successful interaction. The materials are presented in various formats: news reports, TV talk shows, reports with interview elements, and video stories. This variety of formats helps to reach a wide audience and deliver information in different contexts.

Table 3: Materials from TV channels

No.	Resource	Name	Topic	Formats
1	KTRK	Шырдак фестивалы//Үлүү мурас (Shirdak festival//Great heritage)	Cultural festival	Event reportage
2	KTRK	“Кош канат”. Кыргыз-казак маданий достук көпүрөсү//З-көрсөтүү (“Double wing.” Bridge of Kyrgyz-Kazakh cultural friendship//Exhibit 3)	An entertainment show based on the interaction of Kyrgyz and Kazakhs	Entertainment show
3	KTRK	Данангу – өзбек улуттук айылы (Danangu is an Uzbek national village)	Ethnographic outing to Danang, an Uzbek national village in China	Ethnographic report
4	Rossiya RTR	An Evening with Vladimir Solovuyov	Discussion of political and social issues	Television talk show
5	Rossiya RTR	Vesty	News	News Episode
6	Balastan	Кузгун – алдамчы. Эскимос БӨБӨК СЕНИН ЖОМОГУН (A raven is a deceiver. Eskimo BABY IS YOUR STORY)	A children's cautionary tale	Video story
7	Osh TV	Чет өлкөлүк студенттер массалык түрдө өлкөдөн чыгып кетүүдө (Foreign students are leaving the country en masse)	The story dwells on the mass exodus of foreign students, mostly Pakistanis, from Kyrgyzstan on 20 May 2024. This was the result of the night time riots that took place in Bishkek on 18 May. About 30 students were injured during the riots. Because of this event, Pakistani students requested help from their government, and charter flights were organised to take them out. In total, according to the rector of the International University of Kyrgyzstan, Asylbek Aidaraliyev, about 1,200 foreign students have left the country, most of them first- and second-year Pakistanis	Report with comments from the president, politicians, participants of the events
8	Osh TV	Ош шаарына туркиянын ван аймагында жашаган этникалык кыргыздар келишти (Ethnic Kyrgyz people living in Van region of Turkey came to Osh city)	A report on the arrival in Osh of ethnic Kyrgyz living in the Van district of Turkey	Reportage
9	Osh TV	Кооптонууга негиз жок, Ошто Чет өлкөлүк студенттердин коопсуздугуна кепилдик бар (There is no reason to worry, the safety of foreign students is guaranteed in Osh)	A report on an attempt to ensure the safety of foreign students who are subjected to harassment on the grounds of nationality and alienation from Kyrgyz society	Reportage with interview elements
10	Ala-Too 24	Days of Kyrgyz Culture opened in Uzbekistan	A report on the Days of Kyrgyz Culture in Uzbekistan and the cultural, historical, and spiritual ties between the Uzbek and Kyrgyz peoples	Reportage with interview elements
11	Ala-Too 24	More foreign tourists visit Kyrgyzstan	A report on the growing popularity of the tourism industry in Kyrgyzstan, including issues of intercultural interaction and tolerance	Reportage with interview elements
12	Ala-Too 24	Kazakh Foundation sends 40 tonnes of humanitarian aid to Osh		Event reportage

(Continued)

Table 3: Continued

No.	Resource	Name	Topic	Formats
13	Ala-Too 24	The II International Film Festival starts in Bishkek	A report on the provision of humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan by a Kazakh foundation (it is emphasised that a large contribution was made by ordinary Kazakhs)	Event reportage
14	Ala-Too 24	16 foreign nationals detained for illegal migration	Event report on the start of the second International Film Festival	Event reportage
15	Mir TV	Humanitarian aid collected in Kazakhstan for mudflow victims in Kyrgyzstan	Event report on a raid to prevent illegal migration	Event reportage
16	Mir TV	Days of Kyrgyz Cinema to be held in Kazakhstan	Report on humanitarian aid to Kyrgyz people from a Kazakh fund (it is emphasised that Kazakhs made a large contribution)	Event reportage
17	Channel 1	Vremya. Airing of 21.05.24	Event Report on the Days of Kyrgyz Cinema in Kazakhstan	Event reports, news publications
18	Channel 1	The elections of 2024. Debate. 5.3.24	News episode (several stories)	Television talk show
19	Channel 1	Nothing is sacred: a parody of "The Last Supper" at the Olympic opening ceremony caused a wave of outrage	Discussion of political and social issues of life in Russia A report on the performance in honour of the opening of the 2024 Olympics	Event reportage with interview elements

Source: Compiled by the authors.

It is worth noting that negative comments based on intolerance, prejudice against other nations, and even calls for violence are often found among the audience, for instance, Kaktus Media (2024) “Operation “Illegal.” Sixteen foreigners were detained in Bishkek. Comment “Жоок кылгыла кийин кеч болуп калат, жардыруу терактар башталат Кыргызстанга жоон Адам келбейт” (Kill them, then it will be too late, bombings and terrorist attacks will begin. Fat Man will not come to Kyrgyzstan) represented the attitude of a certain part of the audience to the situation. At the same time, positive examples were also present. As such, an article “Кооптонууга негиз жок, Ошто Чет өлкөлүк студенттердин коопсуздугуна кепилдик” (There is no reason to worry, the safety of foreign students is guaranteed in Osh) on Osh TV, out of 118 comments, 95% were comments of this kind: “МашаАллах куриб мазза килдим Оллох рози булсин. Купрок шундайин дослик видео кутиб коламиз” (MashaAllah, I enjoyed watching it, may God be pleased with it. We are waiting for such a friendly video) (20 likes), “Мен Москвада ишлайман магазинда Киргизии дусларим куп яхши хурмат килишади мени менам уз акамдай укамдай яхши кураман Олга Узбекистан UZ Киргизия KG алга” (I do not work in Moscow in the Kirghizia store, my friends love me like my brother, I love Uzbekistan UZ Kirghizia KG alga) (20 likes), “Дос тууган озбек туугандарпа рахмат” (Thanks to our Uzbek relatives) (31 likes and several comments), which demonstrates the desire of the people to show tolerance, tolerance, and respect for the representatives of other ethnic groups in the territory of Kyrgyzstan (however, only on condition that they comply with the laws and regulations of the country).

It is also worth noting that the largest number of responses and comments are received from stories about positive interactions between Kyrgyz and other people. The average approval rate for such materials is 6.5% (according to formula (1)), the engagement rate is 4.7% (according to formula (2)), and the popularity rate is 3.9% (according to formula (3)). At the same time, it is necessary to consider the fact that state TV channels, such as KTRK, regularly broadcast programmes aimed at highlighting ethnic cultures, traditions, and languages of different peoples of Kyrgyzstan, such as the already mentioned earlier programme “Биз кыргыз-тандыкпыз” (We are Kyrgyz), which is often dedicated to discussing issues of ethno-cultural diversity, demonstrating the cultural specificities of different ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan. It is also worth mentioning programmes that dwell on national holidays and traditions, such as “Мураскерлер: Улуу жомокчулар” (Heirs: The Great Storytellers), which highlights epics and oral folk traditions typical of different nations. These programmes promote cultural diversity and highlight the importance of equality and tolerance. Programmes in Kyrgyz and Russian often focus on the traditions of different ethnic groups living in the country and show examples of successful inter-ethnic coexistence. Independent and private media are also actively involved in promoting ideas of tolerance. These media outlets often cover human rights issues, fight against discrimination, and support initiatives aimed at creating an inclusive society. Independent journalists conduct interviews, publish articles, and organise discussions on ethnic and cultural diversity, thereby promoting awareness of the importance of respecting differences and maintaining ethnic harmony (Pidberezhenyuk, 2023). Social media and Internet platforms are also used to promote ideas of tolerance and cultural understanding in Kyrgyzstan.

Television continues to be the predominant medium for reaching a wide audience in Kyrgyzstan, with a focus on cultural heritage, national unity, and inter-ethnic cooperation. Programming frequently highlights cultural festivals, humanitarian efforts, and inter-ethnic collaboration, generally avoiding politically sensitive topics. News reporting aligns with the government’s official narrative, presenting ethnic issues in a balanced and neutral manner, while rarely addressing issues of migration or ethnic tensions (Ismayilov *et al.*, 2025).

Conversely, online media has been observed to engage with controversial subjects, such as migration policies, inter-ethnic conflicts, and minority rights. News websites and social media platforms offer a diversity of viewpoints, frequently holding governmental policies to scrutiny (Mazi, 2023). In contrast to the controlled messaging of television, online discussions are characterised by heightened polarisation, with xenophobic reactions occasionally manifesting in audience interactions (Romaniuk & Yavorska, 2022; Romaniuk, 2021). While television has been shown to reinforce social cohesion, online media has been found to enable public debate, with the potential to either amplify divisions or foster dialogue, depending on the framing of issues.

A clear distinction exists between the roles of television and online media in shaping public perceptions of ethnic diversity (Table 4). Television’s role is predominantly stabilising, serving to reinforce national unity and

Table 4: Signs of media content analysis to identify their role in shaping tolerance in society and ethno-cultural diversity

Aspect	Television	Online media
Main themes	Cultural unity, heritage, inter-ethnic cooperation	Migration, ethnic tensions, political critique
Tone	Neutral to positive	Neutral to critical
Government influence	High	Lower, more independent
Audience engagement	Passive, controlled reception	Interactive, often polarized debates

Source: compiled by the authors.

positive inter-ethnic relations. Conversely, online media has been shown to provide a platform for debate and criticism, with the potential to amplify societal divisions through its coverage of controversial issues.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that Kyrgyz media influences the representation of ethno-cultural diversity in the country, but the task of fostering tolerance is more likely to be undertaken by television, while online sources are more focused on presenting the real picture, albeit with an emphasis on neutral tone and terminology. In general, it can be stated that the approach to the coverage of inter-ethnic relations between Kyrgyz and other peoples both within the country and abroad has changed significantly compared to the period before 2010, becoming more cautious, gentle, and focused on tolerance and respect for other nations. Judging by the response of the audience, the media do manage to influence the situation in the country, but not as much as one might expect (including due to the real problems with migrants, the still existing ethnic hatred, several unresolved political and social problems in the country, and the inclusion of intolerant media products by Russian TV channels in the popular broadcasting network).

4 Discussion

The analysis of the materials carried out as part of this study demonstrated a significant correlation between the narratives broadcast by the Kyrgyz media and the state of society, the peculiarities of Kyrgyz perception of representatives of other nationalities, including in the context of their status of stay in the country (as students, legal and illegal migrants, business partners, tourists, participants in cultural, and other events).

The conclusions that the language, tone, and context of media coverage can indeed both cultivate tolerance and acceptance of other nations and exacerbate conflict are also confirmed in several other studies. For instance, Caster (2019), who investigated the causes of the violent conflict in the Fergana Valley in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010, highlighted the role of the media as a mouthpiece of political manipulation and a tool for exacerbating the situation and promoting harmful and offensive narratives against the Uzbek diaspora in the Kyrgyz Republic. In this context, the comparison made by Yuyan (2020), in which the author showed the fundamental difference in the approaches of Kyrgyz and foreign media in covering ethnic conflicts in Kyrgyzstan, is revealing. The study by Ash (2022) highlighted a direct correlation between the state policy, the weakness of the government (including manifesting itself as a weakening of control over rational media censorship), people's insecurity provoked by the weakness of the government, and the level of influence on such people of chauvinistic messages broadcast through media and Internet sources, social networks, is noteworthy. The author notes that chauvinistic nationalist rhetoric has the strongest influence on respondents who trust informal non-state actors from their ethnic group more than the state to ensure their security. That is, the weaker the state, the more its citizens are predisposed to see representatives of their ethnic group as a defence, and other ethnic groups as a potential or real threat (Kongyratbay et al., 2015; Kongyratbay, 2020). The same conclusions were reached by Commercio (2017) (who also studied ethnic conflicts in Kyrgyzstan), Chapman and Chaudoin (2020), and Scacco (2021).

A significant difference is between the way the media presents information and the way it is perceived by the audience. Even in cases where information is presented in a neutral (or even positive) way, the audience itself can perceive it negatively or even aggressively (Zaki et al., 2023a, b). These observations are also noted in

article by Agadjanian (2019), who concluded that the audience is influenced not only by the information presented in the media but also by the historical context in which this audience exists, whether it has previously experienced negative influences of the events described (e.g., the presence of migrants of another nationality, whether migrants were allowed not to use the Kyrgyz language and not to follow Kyrgyz customs and traditions, whether they had disagreements, conflicts, or prejudices against representatives of other nations in the past), which seems natural and provides a scientific basis for the phenomenon noted in this study.

The difference between the tone of the material and its perception by the audience noted in this study can also be explained based on other aspects. For instance, Mambetaliev (2019) studied the difference in the effectiveness of implementing language policy “from above” (from the government) and “from below” (based on the real needs of society) in the examples of Kyrgyzstan and Hungary, and find a rational explanation for this difference, which is that the imposition of any ideologies, beliefs, programmes, and peculiarities of perception of certain issues will directly depend on the real needs of society and its current demands at a given time. In other words, if ethnic conflicts are still taking place in the country and there are many problems related to inter-ethnic relations, the state’s attempt to impose this tolerance and acceptance of other ethnic groups and nations will have much less or even zero effectiveness (Zelenin *et al.*, 2024). And, on the other hand, solving the aforementioned problems and easing the situation in the country will encourage content consumers to perceive even neutrally presented materials on this topic positively.

This study also noted a qualitative difference in the presentation of materials by television and Internet sources, which was explained by the greater control and accountability of television to the state, a more obvious attempt to follow government directives to build a tolerant and tolerant society, and the greater freedom of Internet media. On the one hand, such censorship leads to incomplete disclosure of the real situation in the country and creates a difference between the approach of journalists to reporting the situation and its perception by the audience (Ternov *et al.*, 2024; Tkachenko *et al.*, 2024). On the other hand, this approach should be assessed primarily as an attempt at the state level to change the model of thinking of most of the population (Shcherban & Samoilov, 2024). Despite the obvious disadvantages of such an approach, one cannot fail to note the precedents of successful or successful policies of such imposition from above. For instance, Megoran (2023) discussed how the authoritarian approach of the Uzbek government allowed the resuscitation of the “friendship of peoples” discourse and prevented the demonisation of an ethnic minority and the further aggravation of the conflict. Khan (2018) and Lewis *et al.* (2018) explore other pros and cons of the authoritarian way of imposing “tolerance” and a certain perception of a particular nation, which can be used to further apply the most successful of these techniques in practice. For instance, Burhanuddin *et al.* (2020) argue that often only authoritarian methods can overcome such iconic negative trends as the radicalisation of young people through mass media and social Internet media, which can have very significant negative consequences for the whole society, up to mass uprisings, global conflicts and even incitement of wars, but it is difficult to agree with this statement unequivocally. The same methods can also lead to the creation of a certain image of favouritism and superiority of the titular nation, when instead of a respectful and tolerant attitude, the government, through the media, shapes in people a condescending and tolerant attitude towards representatives of other nations, which, in turn, leads to tension rather than easing of inter-ethnic relations (Rexhepi & Murtezaj, 2024).

Media practices in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan share similarities due to historical and cultural influences but differ in press freedom and state control (Ibrayeva *et al.*, 2014). Both countries have a highly Russified media space, with Russian-language content and channels like Rossiya 24 remaining popular. However, Kazakhstan enforces stricter media regulations, including legislative restrictions, opposition media bans, and widespread self-censorship (Amangeldiyeva *et al.*, 2020). In contrast, Kyrgyzstan maintains a relatively freer press, allowing independent outlets like Azattyk (RFE/RL), Kaktus Media, and Kloop to critique government policies and cover inter-ethnic issues. Meanwhile, leading Kazakhstani media such as Zakon.kz, Kazinform, Karavan, and Tengrinews largely reflect state narratives, with independent voices facing significant pressure (Sadykova *et al.*, 2022).

Nevertheless, the influence of the media on the audience in the context of creating positive trends and changes in society should not be underestimated. This study also noted the high involvement of the audience

in positive materials (materials about the assistance of other nations to Kyrgyz, cultural events) and the presence of a strong response from viewers and readers, which indicates the ability of journalists to find topics that can affect their audience. The same trends are emphasised in a study by Al-Rawi et al. (2023) and Muschert et al. (2023), who studied the democratisation of Kyrgyzstan's society, Dall'Agnola (2023), who studied the impact of online media on the manifestation of tolerance towards representatives of other nationalities, Engvall (2020) and Hochberg-Marom (2020), who studied, among other things, the impact of the media on the fight against religious extremism, and Baş (2020), who studied the use of media to reduce xenophobia in society, and other authors. It should be clarified that the focus was primarily on the Kyrgyz media, while the study (as evidenced by the data in the rating of media popularity in Kyrgyzstan presented in Figure 8) revealed a high level of popularity of Russian media, which determines the influence of Russian media on the formation of public opinion in Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, several researchers, such as Terzyan (2021), point out that the influence of such media on the overall situation in the country should not be underestimated.

Thus, the results obtained in this study echo the findings of numerous other studies and receive factual and logical justification on many levels.

5 Conclusions

The study confirms that Kyrgyz media play a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of ethno-cultural diversity, with their narratives exerting a measurable influence on inter-ethnic tolerance and social cohesion. The analysis demonstrated that media discourse is not merely a reflection of societal attitudes but an active agent in their formation. The language, tone, and framing of media coverage have been shown to significantly impact audience perceptions, with the potential to either foster inter-ethnic harmony or deepen social divisions.

Television media in Kyrgyzstan predominantly adopt a neutral or positive approach, emphasising cultural events, ethnographic heritage, and inter-ethnic cooperation. This tendency is consistent with state-supported narratives promoting national unity and tolerance. Conversely, online media has been found to display a more diverse range of coverage, including reports on migration, inter-ethnic conflicts, and nationalist rhetoric. While some online publications support cultural diversity, others amplify tensions by focusing on negative portrayals of minority groups and migrants. The observed variation in media approaches suggests that the editorial policies, funding sources, and audience engagement strategies employed by news outlets directly influence the portrayal of ethnic and cultural diversity.

The study found a significant correlation between media narratives and societal attitudes. Positive media content, specifically television programmes highlighting cultural exchange, traditions, and inter-ethnic cooperation, elicit supportive audience responses and reinforce tolerance. Conversely, negative portrayals of migrants and ethnic minorities in online discussions often provoke xenophobic and nationalist reactions, illustrating how media discourse can shape public sentiment and fuel social divisions. The pervasiveness of negative audience comments on online platforms underscores the challenge of mitigating hostility through media interventions alone.

Despite the state's efforts to promote inclusive narratives, media coverage of inter-ethnic issues remains uneven, with online discourse often presenting a more fragmented and contentious picture of ethno-cultural relations. The findings suggest that the enhancement of positive, inclusive media representation, particularly in digital formats where engagement is high, has the potential to mitigate inter-ethnic tensions and reinforce social cohesion.

While the study underscores the significant role of the media in shaping public attitudes toward ethno-cultural diversity, the absence of specific recommendations limits its practical applicability. In order to enhance inclusivity and tolerance through media content, policymakers should implement guidelines that encourage balanced reporting, promote diverse voices, and counteract xenophobic narratives. Furthermore, media practitioners stand to benefit from training programmes that emphasise ethical journalism and the responsible portrayal of ethnic minorities. Furthermore, civil society organisations could collaborate with

media outlets to develop campaigns that foster intercultural dialogue and awareness. The integration of these recommendations would serve to reinforce the study's practical impact and contribute to the promotion of long-term social cohesion.

Future research should focus on further quantifying the direct impact of specific media formats on different audience segments. Furthermore, the implementation of media literacy programmes, targeting journalists and consumers alike, could assist in cultivating a more informed and critical approach to media portrayals of inter-ethnic relations. In light of the evolving nature of Kyrgyzstan's media landscape, ongoing monitoring of media trends and audience reactions is imperative for comprehending and addressing the challenges of fostering ethno-cultural tolerance through mass communication.

By encouraging responsible journalism and promoting balanced coverage, the media can serve as a constructive force in shaping inter-ethnic relations. This study underscores the necessity for targeted policy interventions to promote media practices that bolster social harmony while countering divisive narratives that have the potential to exacerbate societal tensions. The role of the media in Kyrgyzstan, therefore, extends beyond the mere dissemination of information to the active influence of the framework within which ethno-cultural diversity is perceived and negotiated.

Funding information: No funding was received by authors of this study.

Author contributions: Zhanara Akmatbekova: conceptualisation, formal analysis, data curation, and writing – review and editing. Aina Duishekeeva: formal analysis and writing – original draft. Nurzat Baizakova: conceptualisation, validation, and writing – original draft. Gulzina Amatova: formal analysis and writing – original draft. Hu Fangxin: methodology, writing – review and editing, and visualisation.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

References

- Agadjanian, V. (2019). Exclusion, violence, and optimism: Ethnic divides in Kyrgyzstan. *Ethnicities*, 20(3), 457–480. doi: 10.1177/1468796819835657.
- Al-Rawi, A., Nicolai, J., Inoyatova, T., Turdubaeva, E., Bekturgan, T., & Papoutsaki, E. (2023). Mediated public diplomacy targeting the Kyrgyz Republic: Implications of audience engagement with news information on Facebook. In E. Turdubaeva & E. Papoutsaki (Eds.), *Mapping the Media and Communication Landscape of Central Asia: An anthology of emerging and Contemporary Issues* (pp. 329–346). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Amangeldiyeva, G. S., Toktagazin, M. B., Omarov, B. Z., Tapanova, S. S., & Nurtazina, R. A. (2020). Storytelling in media communication: Media and art models. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 9, 3166–3174. doi: 10.6000/1929-4409.2020.09.383.
- Ash, K. (2022). State weakness and support for ethnic violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan. *Journal of Peace Research*, 59(6), 860–875. doi: 10.1177/00223433211055581.
- Atykanova, D. A. (2022). Historical chronology of inter-ethnic relations in the mass media of the Kyrgyz Republic (1990–2010). *International Journal of Humanities and Natural Sciences*, 5-1(68), 46–51. doi: 10.24412/2500-1000-2022-5-1-46-51.
- Atykanova, D. A., & Arzymatova, A. A. (2022). The activity of Chinese media in Kyrgyzstan (functional content analysis). *Bulletin of the Kyrgyz National University named after Jusup Balasagyn*, 2(110), 332–337.
- Baş, D. (2020). *Rising Sinophobia in Kyrgyzstan: The role of political corruption*. Middle East Technical University.
- Burhanuddin, A., Yani, A. A., Hans, A., Hidayat, A. R., & Pudail, M. (2020). Mapping youth radicalism and socio-religious intolerance in social media. In *Proceedings of the 1st Hasanuddin International Conference on Social and Political Sciences* (pp. 59–71). European Alliance for Innovation. doi: 10.4108/eai.21-10-2019.2291531.
- Caster, M. (2019). *Ethnic divide or human security: An investigation into the cause of violent conflict in the Ferghana Valley region of Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010*. https://www.academia.edu/1452926/Ethnic_Divide_or_Human_Security_An_Investigation_into_the_Cause_of_Violent_Conflict_in_the_Ferghana_Valley_Region_of_Southern_Kyrgyzstan_in_June_2010.
- Chapman, T. L., & Chaudoin, S. (2020). Public reactions to international legal institutions: The International Criminal Court in a developing democracy. *Journal of Politics*, 82(4), 1305–1320. doi: 10.1086/708338.
- Chupak, M. S. (2024). *Riots broke out in the capital of Kyrgyzstan over migration issues: There are victims*. https://24tv.ua/ru/protesty-kyrgyzstane-sostojalis-18-maja-2024-goda-ichto-izvestno_n2557996.

- Commercio, M. E. (2017). Structural violence and horizontal inequalities: Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan. *Politics, Groups and Identities*, 6(4), 764–784. doi: 10.1080/21565503.2017.1301822.
- Dall'Agnola, J. (2023). Smartphones and public support for LGBTQ+ in Central Asia. *Central Asian Survey*, 43(1), 123–142. doi: 10.1080/02634937.2023.2187346.
- Dall'Agnola, J., & C. Wood. (2022). Introduction. The mobilising potential of communication networks in Central Asia. *Central Asian Affairs*, 9(1), 1–15. doi: 10.30965/22142290-12340013.
- Daminov, I. (2024). When do authoritarian regimes use digital technologies for covert repression? A Qualitative comparative analysis of politico-economic conditions. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 1, 1–29. doi: 10.1111/spsr.12607.
- Duishekeeva, A. (2019). Dostuk radio's ethnomosaic programmes of the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Kyrgyzstan. *World of Ideas and Politics*, 18, 442–460.
- Engvall, J. (2020). *Religion and the secular state in Kyrgyzstan*. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program.
- Hochberg-Marom, A. (2020). *Radicalization as a threat to the Belt and Road Initiative*. <https://anathochbergmarom.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Article-to-Heinan-Institute-Dr.-Anat-Hochberg-Marom-17.7.2020-FIANL.pdf>.
- Human Rights Watch. (2024). *Kyrgyzstan: Events of 2023*. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/kyrgyzstan>.
- Ibrayeva, A., Abdikarim, Y., & Alimbekova, M. (2014). The legal policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan: New priorities and succession. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 29(8), 1071–1074. doi: 10.5829/idosi.wasj.2014.29.08.13944.
- Imyarova, Z. (2022). Balancing between majorities: The negotiable identity of Osh Dungans. *Central Asian Survey*, 41(3), 402–418. doi: 10.1080/02634937.2021.2013773.
- International Media Support. (2010). *The media in Kyrgyzstan: A window of opportunity. Report from the IMS Mission to Kyrgyzstan in April 2010*. <https://www.mediasupport.org/publication/the-media-in-kyrgyzstan-a-window-of-opportunity/>.
- Ismayilov, V., Mammadova, F., Fataliyeva, G., & Shykhlyly, K. (2025). Development of an econometric model of the relationship between migration dynamics and demographic factors in Azerbaijan. *Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management*, 10, 50–61. doi: 10.52783/jisem.v10i3s.358.
- Kaktus Media. (2024). *Operation "Illegal". 16 foreigners were detained in Bishkek*. https://kaktus.media/doc/502672_operaciia_nelegal_v_bishkeke_zaderjali_16_inostrancev.html.
- Kawiana, I. G. P., Rexhepi, B. R., Arsha, I. M. R. M., Swara, N. N. A. A. V., & Yudhistira, P. G. A. (2023). Accelerating values in shaping ethical leadership and its effect on organisational performance. *Quality - Access to Success*, 24(196), 295–302. doi: 10.47750/QAS/24.196.36.
- Kemp, S. (2024). *Digital 2024: Kyrgyzstan*. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-kyrgyzstan>.
- Khamidov, A., & Nolle, D. B. (2024). Islam and ethnic tolerance: Assessing Kyrgyz' Muslim religiosity and acceptance of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan. *Central Asian Survey*, 44, 1–19. doi: 10.1080/02634937.2024.2390857.
- Khan, V. (2018). Nation-building in Central Asia: Towards a new ethnic policy. In C. Owen, S. Juraev, D. Lewis, N. Megoran & J. Heathershaw (Eds.), *Interrogating illiberal peace in Eurasia: Critical perspectives on peace and conflict* (pp. 145–172). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Kongyratbay, T. A. (2020). To the methodology of studying the ethnic nature of the heroic epic (historiographic aspects). *Eposovedenie*, 17(1), 5–22. doi: 10.25587/SVFU.2020.17.58362.
- Kongyratbay, T. A., Sultanova, M. S., Bekmoldinov, N. S., Ospanov, B. Z., & Kongyratbay, K. T. (2015). Study of the heritage of Korkyt in the Turkic world. *Asian Social Science*, 11(21), 55–61. doi: 10.5539/ass.v11n21p55.
- Kurmanov, B., & Knox, C. (2022). Open government and citizen empowerment in authoritarian states. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 13(2), 156–171. doi: 10.1177/18793665221104118.
- Kyrgyzstan Media Guide. (2023). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16187183>.
- Lewis, D., Heathershaw, J., & Megoran, N. (2018). Illiberal peace? Authoritarian modes of conflict management. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 53(4), 486–506. doi: 10.1177/0010836718765902.
- Limaj, E. (2022). Overcoming gender differences in education. *Proceedings of International Conference on Research in Education and Science*, 8(1), 109–117.
- Lottholz, P. (2018). Old slogans ringing hollow? The legacy of social engineering, statebuilding and the 'dilemma of difference' in (post-) Soviet Kyrgyzstan. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 12(3), 405–424. doi: 10.1080/17502977.2018.1507869.
- Mambetaliev, A. (2019). A comparative study of the gap between de-jure and de-facto language policies: The case of Kyrgyzstan and Hungary. *Sustainable Multilingualism*, 15(1), 48–69. doi: 10.2478/sm-2019-0013.
- Mambetaliev, A. (2022). *Language policies, attitudes, and beliefs in Kyrgyzstan*. University of Pannonia. doi: 10.18136/PE.2023.840.
- Matyakubova, D. R. (2015). Four years later: The consequences and challenges of the 2010 inter-ethnic conflict in Kyrgyzstan. *Strategy*, 1(3), 54–65.
- Mazyi, N. (2023). The main tools of internet marketing in public administration in the conditions of global digitalization. *Democratic Governance*, 16(2), 91–102. doi: 10.23939/dg2023.02.091.
- Media Support Center. (2024). *Newspaper editorial offices in Kyrgyzstan*. <http://msc.kg/en/partnery/redakcii-gazet-kyrgyzstana/>.
- Megoran, N. (2023). Taking account of authoritarian peacebuilding in post-liberal statebuilding in Central Asia. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(4), 732–734. doi: 10.1080/02634937.2023.2271528.
- Mukambaeva, I., Lailieva, E., Mukambaev, N., Shambetova, E., Kibets, E., & Mikhalin, S. (2023). Factor assessment of the mortality in Kyrgyzstan through data analysis. In *SIST 2023 - 2023 IEEE International Conference on Smart Information Systems and Technologies, Proceedings* (pp. 261–266). Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. doi: 10.1109/SIST58284.2023.10223570.

- Muschert, G. W., Karabchuk, T., & Shomotova, A. (2023). The media landscape in three Central Asian countries and its impact on key social and behavioral dimensions in the region. In E. Turdubaeva & E. Papoutsaki (Eds.), *Mapping the media and communication landscape of Central Asia: An anthology of emerging and contemporary issues* (pp. 151–172). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Panier, B. (2024). *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's island of democracy sinks into authoritarianism*. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2024/04/kyrgyzstan-central-asias-island-of-democracy-sinks-into-authoritarianism/>.
- Papko, A. (2023). *Ethnic conflicts in Central Asia: Who is to blame?* <http://cdn2.belsat.eu/ru/programs/etnicheskie-konflikty-v-tsentralnoj-azii-kto-vinovat>.
- Pidbereznyk, N. (2023). Formation of the Ukrainian national information space in the context of the war. *Democratic Governance*, 16(2), 42–52. doi: 10.23939/dg2023.02.042.
- Podra, O., Litvin, N., Zhyvko, Z., Kopytko, M., & Kukharska, L. (2020). Innovative development and human capital as determinants of knowledge economy. *Business: Theory and Practice*, 21(1), 252–260. doi: 10.3846/btp.2020.11305.
- Rexhepi, B. R., & Murtezaj, I. M. (2024). Visa liberalisation and labour migration: Legal and economic implications for Kosovo. *Social and Legal Studies*, 7(2), 19–27. doi: 10.32518/sals2.2024.19.
- Rezvani, B. (2013). Understanding and explaining the Kyrgyz-Uzbek inter-ethnic conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan. *Anthropology of the Middle East*, 8(2), 1–22. doi: 10.3167/ame.2013.080205.
- Romaniuk, O. (2021). Expression and interpretation of attraction and interpersonal intimacy: A comparative study of female nonverbal behaviour. *Analele Universitatii din Craiova - Seria Stiinte Filologice, Lingvistica*, 43(1–2), 220–237.
- Romaniuk, O., & Yavorska, L. (2022). Complimenting behaviour in young adults' first impression scripts. *Analele Universitatii din Craiova - Seria Stiinte Filologice, Lingvistica*, 44(1–2), 168–187. doi: 10.52846/aucsfilingv.v44i1-2.58.
- Sadykova, T., Stamova, R., Abdina, A., Sapargaliyeva, S., Kulzhanova, Z., & Zhanarstanova, M. (2022). Globalization of culture in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: Ways of its manifestation. *Croatian International Relations Review*, 28(91), 147–161.
- Scacco, A. (2021). *Anatomy of a riot: Participation in ethnic violence in Nigeria*. WZB Berlin Social Science Center.
- Sharshenova, A. (2024). Safety, security, and self-censorship as survival strategies. In J. Dall'Agnola & A. Sharshenova (Eds.), *Researching Central Asia: Navigating positionality in the field* (pp. 67–75). Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-3-031-39024-1_8.
- Shcherban, T., & Samoilov, O. (2024). Socialisation of student youth in social networks. *Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series "Pedagogy and Psychology"*, 10(2), 9–16. doi: 10.52534/msu-pp2.2024.09.
- Sheryazdanova, G., Nurtazina, R., Byulegenova, B., Serikzhanova, A., & Dzhusunova, A. (2024). Socioeconomic and political causes of Youth Radicalization during the January 2022 Events in Kazakhstan. *Global Perspectives*, 5(1), 120495. doi: 10.1525/gp.2024.120495.
- Spytska, L. (2024). Practice-based methods of bringing to legal liability for anonymous defamation on the Internet and in the media. *Social and Legal Studies*, 7(1), 202–209. doi: 10.32518/sals1.2024.202.
- Suprun, S. (2024). New ethics as a response to globalization. *Humanities Studies: Pedagogy, Psychology, Philosophy*, 12(1), 172–179. doi: 10.31548/hspedagog15(1).2024.172-179.
- Tatischeva, M. Z. (2012). Inter-ethnic (inter-ethnic) conflicts in the Kyrgyz Republic. *Socio-Humanitarian Knowledge*, 3, 354–358.
- Ternov, N., Nurtazina, R., & Serikzhanova, A. (2024). The sociopolitical January 2022 protests in Kazakhstan's Telegram channels: Agenda interception. *Global Perspectives*, 5(1), 120497. doi: 10.1525/gp.2024.120497.
- Terzyan, A. (2021). Post-Soviet authoritarian pathways: Insights from Kyrgyzstan and Belarus. *Eurasia Research Digest*, 1, 1–15. doi: 10.47669/ERD-6-2020.
- Tkachenko, O., Chernykh, M., Kuznetsov, I., Karpovich, V., & Jatkiewicz, P. (2024). An impact of web animation on user perception and engagement. *Journal of the Balkan Tribological Association*, 30(5), 875–897.
- Tokmakov, A. (2012). *Inter-ethnic conflicts in Kyrgyzstan*. <http://surl.li/hoxzzw>.
- Tourists from Israel rented a Toyota Sequoia and went off-roading in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan. Video. (2024). <https://www.turmush.kg/ru/news:2138137>.
- Turdubaeva, E. (2021). *Media landscape in Kyrgyzstan: Caught between elite capture and control of political and business interests*. <https://fpc.org.uk/media-landscape-in-kyrgyzstan-caught-between-elite-capture-and-control-of-political-and-business-interests/>.
- Turemuratov, O., Byulegenova, B., Pogodin, S., Onuchko, M., & Nurtazina, R. (2024). Urbanization trends in Central Asian Countries: Aspects of extensive and intensive agglomeration growth. *Public Organization Review*, 24(3), 963–986. doi: 10.1007/s11115-024-00766-0.
- United States Agency for International Development. (2023). *Media consumption in Kyrgyzstan*. <https://mediasabak.org/media/library/2024/01/27/610350c240d841ebaff4722755bc2791.pdf>.
- Yuyan, Z. (2020). Ten years after ethnic conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan: Socio-economic causes and effects. *Journal of European Economy*, 19(2), 356–368. doi: 10.35774/jee2020.02.356.
- Zaki, H. O., Jamaludin, N. A., & Ghazali, A. W. (2023a). The influence of social media on gen alpha's purchasing decisions. *Digital Natives as a Disruptive Force in Asian Businesses and Societies* (pp. 110–119). IGI Global. doi: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6782-4.ch006.
- Zaki, H. O., Rashid, S. F. A., & Adznan, S. (2023b). Media Sosial dan Iklan Tajaan: Analisis Bibliometrik dan Rangkaian (Social Media and Sponsored Ads: Bibliometric and Networking Analysis). *Jurnal Pengurusan*, 68(2023), 1–17. doi: 10.17576/pengurusan-2023-68-05.
- Zelenin, V., Chopyk, L., & Doskach, S. (2024). Media influence on mass perception and psychological state of citiz. *Humanities Studies: Pedagogy, Psychology, Philosophy*, 12(2), 213–219. doi: 10.31548/hspedagog15(2).2024.213-219.