

Gender Stereotypes and Family Decision-Making: Comparative Study of Central Europe and Central Asia

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Abstract

Purpose: The article aims to examine the impact of women’s decision-making power in families on their gender stereotypes about business executives in the promising but insufficiently explored regions of Central Europe (CE) and Central Asia (CA).

Methodology: The study utilized multiple linear regression and Spearman’s correlation coefficients to analyze survey data (No=6,869) from Central European (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) and Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan).

Findings: Central Asian women demonstrated stronger gender stereotypes about business executives compared to the Central European sample. Equally shared power in decision-making with a partner has a positive impact on weakening women’s gender stereotypes about top managers. Men’s unilateral decision-making correlates with their spouses’ higher gender bias, whereas independent women’s decisions do not reveal a relationship with their gender stereotypes.

Research limitations: The study does not control respondents’ marital and mother’s status and excludes one of the Central Asian states, namely Turkmenistan.

Research implications: Policymakers can use the present findings to forecast how familialist policies reproduce gender stereotypes and inhibit gender equality. The research complements the specificity of the vicious cycle linking gender roles and stereotypes in the context of CE and CA and expands the “family cage” phenomenon.

Originality/value: First massive research on gender stereotypes about business executives embracing the Visegrad Group and four Central Asian states. The study discovers the internal aspect of family impact on women’s views of top managers that has been neglected before.

Keywords: business executives, family, egalitarianism, traditionalism, Visegrád Group.

JEL: D19, M12, J16

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Introduction

Most studies present women business executives as not only equally effective to men in post-socialist Central Europe (CE) and Central Asia (CA; Lipovka et al., 2021) but also make a favorable contribution to firm performance (Havran, Primecz, & Lakatos, 2020), quality of financial reporting (Dobija et al., 2021), and earnings management (Orazalin, 2020). Nevertheless, women still represent less than 20% of business executives in the CE and CA regions (ILO, 2018).

The recent research in the USA identified a decrease in gender stereotypes about managers (Eagly et al., 2019) and a shift from the masculine prototype of a good manager to the androgynous prototype in the past five decades (Powell, Butterfield, & Jiang, 2021). Meanwhile, the situation in the Visegrad Group demonstrated progress in smoothening gender bias toward women managers until the first half of the 2010s (Scharle, 2015), which has started to worsen with the reconsideration of gender policies for the family privilege agenda (Grzebalska & Petó, 2018). The current gender policies accentuate traditional gender roles and place women in a position in which family becomes an even greater challenge for women business executives than it has been before.

The Visegrad Group (V4), initiated in 1991, unites the efforts of four Central European states of the post-socialist bloc – Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia – to expedite the processes of social transformation and European integration. The V4 states have common historical and cultural roots, close religious traditions, geographic proximity, and political coherence, and are oriented toward inculcating cultural, research, and knowledge exchange values (Visegrad Group, 2022).

Socialist history, continuing transformation toward a liberal market economy, and the course for familialism (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018) along with the promising but partially utilized gender capital, high rates of women education and employment, and insufficient women's presence on decision-making posts are the idiosyncratic features of both CE and CA (Wodon & de la Brière, 2018). However, there is a distinction between CA and CE states: Central Asia has had a long-lasting orientation toward familialism since gaining independence in 1991 (Cleuziou & Direnberger, 2016), while CE demonstrates a more recent change in gender policy toward patriarchic family values (Grzebalska & Petó, 2018).

The above economic, political, and social tendencies make this cross-cultural field an intriguing area for investigation. This study scrutinized four CE countries (Czech

Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) and four CA countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan). The choice of the listed CE countries was substantiated by their common cultural values, religion, and economic aspirations resulting from the V4 alliance (Visegrad Group, 2022). The inclusion of only four CA states out of the five sharing common cultural traditions, religion, geographic location, and historical heritage was dictated by the isolated character of Turkmenistan, which provides little available data (Pomfret, 2019).

Although studies of gender stereotypes (GS) about managers in post-socialist CE and CA define family as one of the main discourses (Mihalčová et al., 2018; Tokbaeva, 2020; Turaeva, 2017b), they mainly consider the influence of gender stereotypes on women as an external factor. Moreover, there are few studies on how power distribution between spouses may shape women's gender stereotypes about business executives (GS as an internal factor). Most of the studies that revealed GS link with families are based on qualitative research that provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Kuzhabekova et al., 2018; Nagy & Primecz, 2014) but lack the statistical proof of family's impact on women's gender bias on a representative sample. The closing reason for undertaking this study is the deficit of massive cross-cultural investigation aimed at studying how families in newly emerging states affect women's views.

This article fills the existing gap in research by examining the influence of women's decision-making power in families (as a spouse) on their GS about business executives. A quantitative method was used in the study to provide a representative sample for identifying a causal relationship between family and gender stereotypes across the prospective but slightly studied geographic region.

The article will begin with a literature review on the family role in cultivating gender stereotypes about business executives in CE and CA. The review of the literature will also present theoretical frameworks showcasing how gender stereotypes shape women's lives and careers. The method section will reflect the applied research tools and measures. In the findings, we will share the results of testing the hypotheses and provide correlation and regression coefficients, along with descriptive statistics. The final sections will discuss the findings in the context of the existing research and conclude with theoretical and practical implications.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Gender Stereotypes About Business Executives in CE and CA

Gender stereotypes are “beliefs about the psychological traits that are characteristic of members of each sex” (Powell & Butterfield, 2017, p. 130), they “stem from people’s direct and indirect observations of women and men in their social roles” (Eagly et al., 2019, p. 2). Gender stereotypes about business executives are rooted in the functions women and men perform in society and the attributes associated with these functions. The concept of the vicious cycle by Eagly and Koenig (2021) postulates that women experience difficulties with managerial careers due to their fixed societal association with a caring role. Social roles in families present the key reference points for persons in attributing certain features to women and men, thus a traditional caregiver role of the former in the household is automatically transmitted to work and business settings (Eagly & Koenig, 2021), building a woman’s image as less inclined to leadership positions connected with domination, power, and persistence. Family as a phenomenon and a social construct occupies an important place in the generation and reproduction of GS, because people gain initial experience of distributing roles in their families while observing their members’ behaviors and learning from them (Powell, 2018). Traditional and patriarchic families further the existing vicious cycle through reproducing GS, while egalitarian families contribute to its destruction via the equal distribution of social roles between spouses.

Role distribution in families is linked with gender labor segregation in industries. Thus, women in CE and CA are massively employed in education and healthcare, while men represent the majority in engineering, extraction, construction, and heavy industry (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017; Khitarishvili, 2017). Despite the non-physical nature of a managerial job, which at first glance could be gender-neutral, the manager’s image is continuously related to men and associated with dominance, assertiveness, goal-orientation, persistence, and risk-taking which individuals mostly attribute to men (Powell & Butterfield, 2017). Women managers suffer GS in two facets: (1) they are rarely associated with a leader’s prototype, and (2) they have a higher level of family care burden due to traditional role distribution in households (Bego, 2015). The macro-level situation (women’s economic empowerment) is closely interrelated with the micro-level conditions (family; Kiester, 2021). Therefore, considering that family power distribution may bring fruitful insights to the current challenges of women’s managerial prospects in the studied countries, the vicious cycle concept explains how gender stereotypes in families contribute to the construction of gender in societies and elucidates the ways of GS weakening (Eagly & Koenig, 2021). The

present theoretical framework assists not only in explaining conceptual issues but equally in the practical approach to GS reduction.

Several studies were conducted to scrutinize GS about managers in Central Europe (Bego, 2015; Dobrovič et al., 2019; Gallo et al., 2021; Górska, 2017; Mihalčová, 2018; Mihalčová et al., 2015; Nagy & Primecz, 2014; Nagy & Vicsek, 2014) and Central Asia (Greig & Kudaibergenova, 2019; Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2019; Kuzhabekova et al., 2018; Uskembayeva, et al., 2017; Tokbaeva, 2020; Turaeva, 2017b). Previous studies in CE and CA repeatedly prove women managers are seriously exposed to the intervention of family in their career trajectories (Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2017; Nagy & Primecz, 2014; Tokbaeva, 2020). The existing research on gender stereotypes in CE and CA could be divided into two groups:

1. Studies of gender stereotypes intensity mostly via quantitative research methods. In these studies, researchers measure how strong GS are in certain groups (Čeněk, 2013; Dobrovič et al., 2019; Gallo et al., 2021; Lipovka & Buzady, 2020; Mihalčová et al., 2015; Siemieńska, 2015; Uskembayeva et al., 2017).

Siemieńska (2015) explains women managers' insufficient progress in CE by the GS rooted in cultural and societal expectations of women. In their research, Mihalčová et al. (2015) define considerable gender bias toward women managers and the higher burden of combining managerial and family obligations. In the study of industrial enterprises, Gallo et al. (2021) found the absence of GS about gender and management along with the discriminating gender pay gap between men and women in managerial positions. Čeněk (2013) revealed more significant male students' GS compared to their female counterparts and an almost equal inclination of both gender respondents to consider women's caregiver role and household chores as a barrier to effective management. The cross-cultural study in Central and Eastern Europe showed gender bias toward women managers with some fluctuations among countries (Bego, 2015). The recent CE research findings prove GS backlash on women's confidence in their business acumen (Adamus et al., 2021) and lower salary expectations compared to male counterparts (Kurek & Górowski, 2020). In Dobrovič et al.'s (2019) study in Slovakia, family was defined as a hindrance to making a managerial career for women by 76.47% of respondents and for men – only by 7.84% of respondents. The massive survey in CA revealed a significant GS about business executives: above 11% of respondents characterized managerial profession as a men's area versus 1% of respondents characterizing it as a women's area (Uskembayeva et al., 2017).

2. Studies of GS as part of other research focused on women's economic and professional advancement. These were mostly conducted with qualitative methods, providing women's views on how GS hinder their professional progress (Górska et al., 2021; Greig & Kudaibergenova, 2019; Kuzhabekova et al., 2018; Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2019; Mihalčová et al., 2018; Nagy & Primecz, 2014; Nagy & Vicsek, 2014; Tokbayeva, 2020; Turaeva, 2017a).

In her experiment on the selection of men and women applicants, Górska (2017) showed that men candidates were rated higher compared to women with the same professional characteristics and background; the experiment results were explained as the influence of GS caused by the cultural context. Mihalčová et al. (2018) argue that women face gender discrimination in public organizations because of their status as a mother. Górska, et al. (2021) ascertain that women business executives link their professional advancement with their supportive family and relatives' egalitarian views. Nagy and Primecz (2014) postulate that women's international managerial careers are positively influenced by their egalitarian spouse and harmed by societal expectations of traditional gender roles. Nagy and Vicsek (2014) uncovered considerable GS about women's managerial competence and gender bias towards mothers-managers with little children, along with the positive evaluation of women's professional qualities.

Tokbayeva (2020) posits CA women's managerial careers in a family business are moderated by their societal image as wives and mothers, as their motherhood brings them more power and recognition in business. The more women meet family expectations regarding their wife's and mother's status, the more support they receive from their families in business settings. This finding reflects Kuzhabekova et al.'s study (2018), in which CA women must follow an ideal portrait of a successful working mother and a docile wife, thus developing an overburdened managerial career. Greig and Kudaibergenova (2019) found that even highly educated people in CA were limited by GS: the participants referred women's lower representation in management to their supposedly natural predisposition to take care of the family.

Even when the research in CE and CA is not primarily focused on GS, this topic appears almost in every study on women's economic progression. The first group of previous studies identifies a considerable level of GS in the explored region. The second group contributes to a deeper understanding of women's concerns about the destructive consequences of GS engendered by traditional family values and the positive effect of egalitarian views on their advancement. However, there is no research about

the influence of families on women's own GS toward business executives and how power distribution in families may impact women's views in households.

Family in CA plays a crucial role in people's lives, especially in women's lives. After marriage, young women are often vulnerable and submissive to their husband's mother, and only after reaching a mature age do they gain more power and respect from the family (Turaeva, 2020). In CA patriarchal families, elder generations are highly respected and younger family members are as a rule obedient and follow the advice and will of their more mature relatives (Childress, 2017). What is specific for CA is the *uyat* custom (meaning "shame" in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek), which represents moral norms of the society and mostly regulates women's behavior: rules of conduct, appearance, and social roles (Cleuziou & Direnberger, 2016). *Uyat* serves as an effective tool for reinforcing, reproducing, and transmitting GS from one generation to another. This people's law inscribes women with purely feminine attributes – softness, meekness, modesty, courtesy – that are not associated with a manager's conventional image (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Central Asian women often face GS rooted in Muslim patriarchic traditions positioning family interests as primary and creating considerable hindrances for their managerial ambitions (Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2019). A recent study based on comparative research of GS about managers in Central Eastern Europe and Kazakhstan (Lipovka & Buzady, 2020) demonstrated stronger gender bias toward women among CA than among CE respondents. The shift to religious values after gaining independence is mostly negatively evaluated by CA women, considered a backsliding in emancipation and a narrowing of their occupational opportunities (Turaeva, 2017a).

Although GS represent a universal phenomenon, there are some variations between ethnicity and culture (Fiske, 2017) since behavior is interconnected with people's beliefs and attitudes and varies across the context (Vaisey, 2014). Consequently, despite commonalities between CE and CA, the cultural values rooted in different religions and longer state familialist policy in the examined Asian states can obviously result in some GS discrepancies. Thus, we posit the following:

H1. Women in CA have stronger gender stereotypes about business executives compared to women in CE.

Decision-Making Power in Families: Traditionalism Versus Egalitarianism

In opposition to Western studies, where family discourse does not emerge as a central problem, research on gender stereotypes in CE and CA shows a family trace (Lipovka & Buzady, 2020). “Motherhood” is the central research field of international and local theorists studying women’s issues in CA (Cleuziou & Direnberger, 2016). The state policy of familialism perpetuates the ideal and often contradictory image of a woman harmonically combining a caring mother, a compliant wife, and a career-oriented professional (Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2019).

“Familialism – a form of biopolitics which views the traditional family as a foundation of the nation and subjugates individual reproductive and self-determination rights to the normative demand of the reproduction of the nation” (Grzebalska & Petó, 2018, p. 4). Central European and CA states that root their gender policy in familialism enhance traditional family values and further attach women to their households. Relations in traditional families are based on historical labor division between genders, in which the man provides, and the woman keeps the hearth. On the other hand, an egalitarian family appeared as a response to the collapse of “patriarchal gender relations” and is “based on the equality of adult family members” (Tereškinas, 2010, p. 64). In egalitarian families, partners focus on creating an equal relationship and seek a concordant balance between work and family obligations (Tereškinas, 2010).

We claim the topic of GS about business executives in CE and CA has its regional specificity for which two main theories are crucial: the vicious cycle linking social roles and GS (Eagly & Koenig, 2021) and the familialism concept (Grzebalska & Petó, 2018). The specificity is reflected in “the family cage” phenomenon (Lipovka & Buzady, 2020, p. 30), which describes women’s limited economic progress by the deliberate continuous reproduction of their caregiver roles in public and private lives. To that end, we should properly differentiate research in CE and CA regions from studies of Western Europe and the USA (Nagy & Primecz, 2014).

Family plays an important part in its members’ egalitarian or traditional views: women and men position equal distribution of power and duties when they observe their parents’ egalitarian role models (Kaufman et al., 2016). Siemieńska (2008) argues CE citizens’ opinions about work, family, and gender represent a “mosaic” made of traditional and egalitarian viewpoints. The study of attitudes toward gender roles in V4 unveiled variations among the states and mixed views on women and men’s social image, showing both traditional and egalitarian opinions with an inclination toward

less conventional attitudes (Scharle, 2015). The study in Lithuania (Tereškinas, 2010) – whose gender values and policies are close to those of V4 states – documented that people widely shared egalitarian values in their families, although cultural and social environment pushed them to follow more traditional gender roles and violate their internal ideals (Tereškinas, 2010).

Women's opinions and behaviors in CA are considerably shaped by traditional patriarchal values, despite a diversity of families ranging from highly patriarchal and traditional to egalitarian (Turaeva, 2017a). Women in CA do not constitute a homogenous community (Cleuziou & Dierenberger, 2016), they represent a diverse population sharing egalitarian, traditional, and mixed views on gender roles (Urbayeva, 2019). The women's viewpoints are determined by a whole range of factors, including their economic opportunities, education, religion, and social mobility (Urbayeva, 2019). In business endeavors, CA women must follow both rules of tradition and contemporary trends (Turaeva, 2017a). Preceding studies in Asian cultures show women's decision-making power depends on the level of the dominant ideology and patriarchy in the society that is transmitted to business settings (Yamak et al., 2015).

Following the vicious cycle concept (Eagly & Koenig, 2021), we propose that women's roles and functions in families considerably influence their views of business executives. The decision-making authority has a close link to women's images in society cultivated via cultural values, environment, and politics (Hora, 2014; Lizarraga et al., 2007). The more equal decision-making is present in the household, the more assertiveness women have about themselves (Gayatri, 2020). The distribution of decision-making power in families regarding financial spending and investment between women and men depends on their attitudes, beliefs, employment, and it reflects gender equality relations between spouses (Pepin, 2019). Deficits in egalitarian ideology further reproduce traditional gender roles, activating gender social constructs and enabling gender stereotypes (Evertsson, 2014). Women's attachment to traditional family values prevents them from participating in making decisions in their households and decreases their life satisfaction (Li, 2021). Previous studies revealed that women's higher decision-making power reduces female financial dependency and increases household welfare (Baig et al., 2018; Shuai et al., 2018), women's health (Wado, 2013), and the quality of family social activity and leisure (Gayatri, 2020). In this regard, we posit the following:

H2. The women who making equal decisions with their partners demonstrate weaker gender stereotypes compared to the women who lack decision-making power.

Method

The study utilized the quantitative research method of multiple linear regression and Spearman's correlation coefficients to analyze selective data of Life in Transition Survey III (LiTS III, 2016) of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), World Bank, and Transparency International. LiTS III (2016) contains household reports with opinion-based data of political, social, and economic nature, as it was designed on a multistep random sampling with probability stratified clusters. We examined the raw data of four countries of Central Europe (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) and four countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan). Answers of 6869 women about their views of business executives were scrutinized along with responses about their decision-making power in families. Only the answers of primary respondents were considered and analyzed further. The detailed sample characteristics are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample by country

#	Country	Respondents, persons	Respondents, %	Mean age (years)	Ever or currently working, %	Working during the past 12 months, %	Religion, %
1	Czech Rep.	845	12.3	50.46	92.07	58.58	Christian 29.23; agnostic 66.39
2	Hungary	837	12.19	55.36	87.81	40.98	Christian 80.76
3	Kazakhstan	975	14.19	44.82	75.49	56.62	Muslim 55.79; Christian 35.28
4	Kyrgyz Rep.	805	11.72	41.60	51.30	34.41	Muslim 88.20
5	Poland	887	12.91	49.13	87.37	50.51	Christian 93
6	Slovakia	895	13.03	54.04	85.47	44.58	Christian 86.82
7	Tajikistan	813	11.84	39.51	46.74	30.26	Muslim 99.14
8	Uzbekistan	812	11.82	44.26	63.18	26.48	Muslim 94.95
	Total	6869	100				

Source: own elaboration.

Following Table 1, the number of participants from each country was rather close and ranged from 812 in Uzbekistan to 975 in Kazakhstan. The mean age of respondents

constituted 47.4, with younger CA respondents in their late thirties and early forties and elder CE women in their late forties and middle fifties. The CE respondent pool was characterized by significantly higher rates of employment experience (88.18%), which was almost 30 p.p. higher than that of CA (59.11%). The indicator of work in the past year in CE (48.72%) also outperformed the same characteristic in CA (36.92%). Kazakhstan was the CA country in which respondents' employment characteristics were closer to those of CE rather than CA countries pool. The religious factor demonstrated Christianity to be the dominant faith for CE and Islam for CA, with two deviant countries: Kazakhstan, in which above 1/3 of the survey participants professed Christianity, and the Czech Republic, in which about 2/3 were agnostic.

Measures

Women's opinions about business executives were used to measure their level of gender stereotypes. Answers to the statement "Women are as competent as men to be business executives" were used to create a dependent variable, in which "Agree" and "Strongly agree" = 1, while "Strongly disagree," "Disagree," "Refused," and "Don't know" = 0. The region (CE and CA) and decision-making power were taken as independent variables. First, models were calculated for all eight states, then the region variable was added to the regressors, in which 1 meant CA and 2 – CE states.

Decision-making power was measured by answers to the question "Who decides about the following issues in your household? (1) managing day-to-day spending and paying bills; (2) making large household purchases (e.g. cars, major appliances); (3) how children are raised; (4) social life and leisure activities; (5) savings, investment, and borrowing; (6) looking after the children." The alternative response options were "mostly me," "shared equally between me and my partner," "mostly my partner," "shared equally between me and someone else in the household," "mostly someone else in the household," "mostly someone else not currently living in the household" (Table 2).

The sub-questions were converted to dummy variables for each answer category. A strict linear dependence or the effect of multicollinearity was avoided since among the answers there were responses -97, -98, and -99, which were replaced with zeros. Further regression models were calculated for each statement of the question. The regression model was completed in four logical steps; a new statistically significant variable was added with each step. The IBM statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was applied as the primary software for statistical analysis, and the automatic stepwise method for selecting statistically significant variables was set in SPSS.

Table 2. The fragment of the LiTS III questionnaire

Who decides about the following issues in your household?		Mostly me	Shared equally between me and my partner	Mostly my partner	Shared equally between me and someone else in the household	Mostly someone else in the household	Mostly someone else not currently living in the household
a	Managing day-to-day spending and paying bills	1	2	3	4	5	6
b	Making large household purchases (e.g. cars, major appliances)	1	2	3	4	5	6
c	The way the children are raised	1	2	3	4	5	6
d	Social life and leisure activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
e	Savings, investment and borrowing	1	2	3	4	5	6
f	Looking after the children	1	2	3	4	5	6

Source: own elaboration based on LiTS III, 2016.

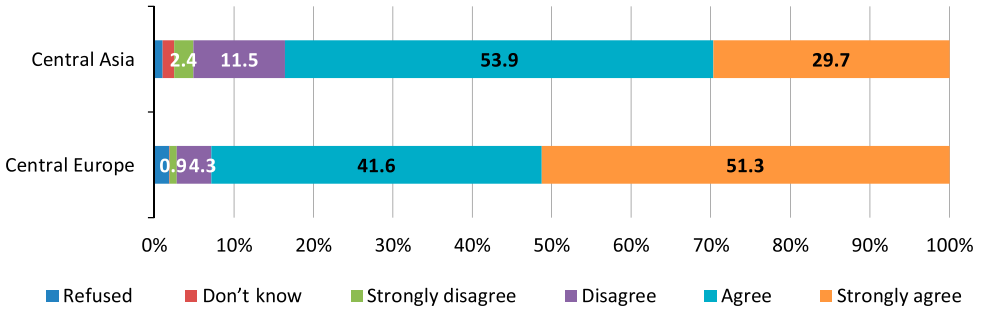
Findings

For testing *H1*, we first analyzed the descriptive statistics of CE and CA women's agreement with the statement "Women are as competent as men to be business executives." (Figure 1).

Following Figure 1, CE women respondents have weaker gender stereotypes compared to CA participants. The discrepancy in average agreement with the statement constituted 9.3 p.p. in favor of CE women, while average disagreement is considerably higher (by 8.7 p.p.) among CA women. The most important difference resided in the intensity of answers: strong disagreement and disagreement of CA women were two times and a half higher than those of the European participants, whereas strong agreement of CA respondents were above one and a half lower compared to CE respondents. For

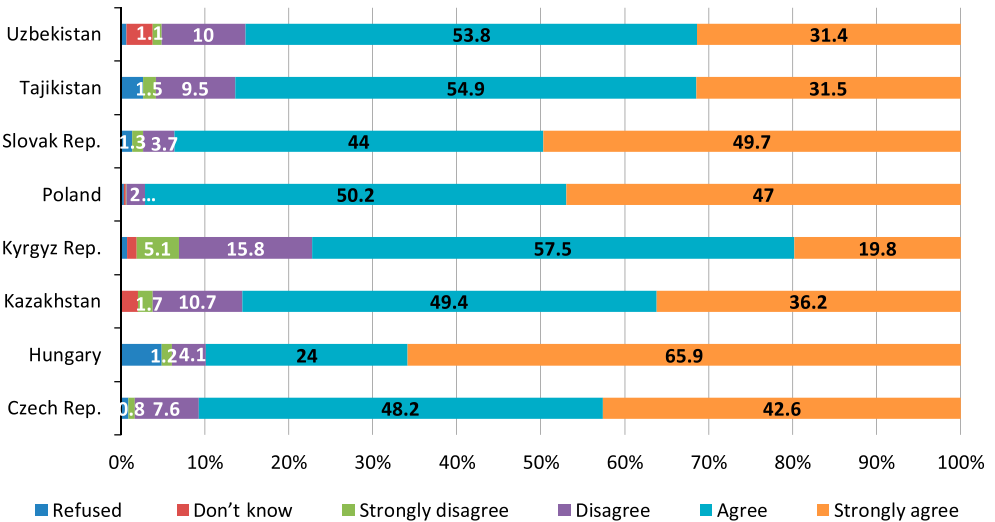
a clearer understanding of stereotypes fluctuations between the countries, Figure 2 was compiled.

Figure 1. Descriptive statistics of women’s agreement with the statement by region



Source: own elaboration based on LiTS III (2016).

Figure 2. Descriptive statistics of women’s agreement with the statement by the country



Source: own elaboration based on LiTS III, 2016, p. 26.

Following Figure 2, CE and CA women’s agreement significantly varies within the CA and CE countries. Polish respondents demonstrated the highest level of overall agreement with the statement (97.2%), followed by Slovaks (93.7%), while Czechs gave the most negative assessment of women managerial competencies by their lowest strong agreement (42.6%) and the highest disagreement out of all CE countries (7.6%).

Although Hungarian participants reported an average level of disagreement (4.1%), they showed the highest intensity of their strong agreement out of the whole sample (65.9 %).

In the CA sample, Kyrgyzstan women expressed the strongest gender bias toward women in business (20.9% of overall disagreement) out of the whole CA sample. Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan signified an almost equal level of the overall agreement: 85.2%, 86.4%, and 85.6%, respectively. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan showed the highest level of the strongest agreement (36.2%) and the closest views with the CE pool out of the whole CA sample. The linear regression model was composed to further test *H1*.

Table 3. Linear regression model illustrating the significance of the region for women's stereotypes

Independent variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.680	0.036		103.337	0.000
Region	0.323	0.023	0.175	14.108	0.000

Source: own elaboration.

Following Table 3, the regression coefficient for the region variable is positive which means that European women are very likely to agree with the statement “Women are as competent to be business executives as men.” The model with the region variable showed a statistically significant result, thus indicating the significance of differences in opinions between CE and CA respondents. Consequently, *H1* was fully confirmed. The multifactor linear regression model was calculated to test *H2*.

Following Table 4, the region variable showed the most statistically significant result, which indicates its critical meaning and higher effect of decision-making power in CA families on women respondents' GS. The other most influential variables also concerned children: “looking after the children” and “how the children are raised” negatively impacted GS when these decisions were made by “mostly my partner.” Savings, investments, and borrowing decisions made by “mostly someone else not currently living in the household” had a considerably negative influence on women's views of women business executives. The equally shared power of making decisions about social life and leisure between partners had a significant positive impact on women's GS.

Table 4. Regression model illustrating the significance of the region and decision-making power for GS

Independent variables		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.758	0.037		102.876	0.000
	Region	0.287	0.023	0.156	12.423	0.000
	Looking after the children (mostly my partner)	-0.418	0.048	-0.109	-8.681	0.000
2	(Constant)	3.770	0.037		102.827	0.000
	Region	0.282	0.023	0.153	12.160	0.000
	Looking after the children (mostly my partner)	-0.300	0.059	-0.078	-5.090	0.000
	How the children are raised (mostly my partner)	-0.228	0.066	-0.053	-3.434	0.001
3	(Constant)	3.775	0.037		102.916	0.000
	Region	0.280	0.023	0.152	12.116	0.000
	Looking after the children (mostly my partner)	-0.304	0.059	-0.079	-5.161	0.000
	How the children are raised (mostly my partner)	-0.228	0.066	-0.053	-3.441	0.001
	Savings, investment and borrowing (mostly someone else not currently living in the household)	-0.334	0.111	-0.037	-3.016	0.003
4	(Constant)	3.755	0.037		100.450	0.000
	Region	0.286	0.023	0.155	12.324	0.000
	Looking after the children (mostly my partner)	-0.301	0.059	-0.078	-5.103	0.000
	How the children are raised (mostly my partner)	-0.228	0.066	-0.053	-3.438	0.001
	Savings, investment and borrowing (mostly someone else not currently living in the household)	-0.331	0.111	-0.037	-2.988	0.003
	Social life and leisure activities (shared equally between me and my partner)	0.100	0.035	0.035	2.816	0.005

Source: own elaboration.

Table 5. Correlation matrix for women's decision-making power and their GS

Independent variables	Mostly me		Shared equally btw me and my partner		Mostly my partner		Shared equally btw me and someone else in the household		Mostly someone else in the household		Mostly someone else not currently living in the household	
	rho	Sig.	rho	Sig.	rho	Sig.	rho	Sig.	rho	Sig.	rho	Sig.
Managing day-to-day spending and paying bills	0.052**	0.000	0.054**	0.000	-0.028*	0.027	-0.050**	0.000	-0.010	0.428	0.011	0.390
Making large household purchases	-0.012	0.341	0.043**	0.001	-0.008	0.517	-0.045**	0.000	-0.004	0.726	0.000	0.978
How the children are raised	-0.015	0.247	0.015	0.236	-0.046**	0.000	-0.107**	0.000	-0.001	0.937	0.005	0.721
Social life and leisure activities	-0.011	0.384	0.042**	0.001	-0.025*	0.049	-0.044**	0.000	0.017	0.188	-0.006	0.633
Savings, investment and borrowing	-0.017	0.181	0.038**	0.002	-0.013	0.316	-0.054**	0.000	-0.007	0.558	0.006	0.651
Looking after the children	-0.013	0.285	0.000	0.986	-0.035**	0.006	-0.120**	0.000	0.002	0.857	0.000	0.999

Note: ** Statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.01$ (2-tailed); * statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (2-tailed).

Source: own elaboration.

Spearman's nonparametric rank correlations (Spearman's Rho coefficients) were calculated to examine other statements regarding decision-making power not reflected in the multifactor linear regression model. The correlation matrix of independent variables is given in Table 5 below.

As presented in Table 5, only one area of women's independent decisions out of six – “managing day-to-day spending and paying bills” – had a positive link with women's lower GS. Women's decision-making power regarding other statements about children, social life, finance, and large household purchases indicated neither positive nor negative effect on their GS. Decisions made equally by partners were the most significant in the areas of social/leisure activities and finances, namely daily spending and paying bills, large household purchases, but also savings, investments, and borrowing. In turn, individual partners' decision power about child upbringing and care showed its serious negative impact on women's GS, whereas men's unilateral decision-making about social life and leisure and daily expenses appeared to be a less significant. The implication of sharing decision power with someone else in the household (not the partner) was critical, because it touched on all the studied statements and negatively reflected on women's GS.

Summing up the findings of the regression model and correlation matrix, *H2* was partially supported because women's independent decisions in the household did not demonstrate a significant correlation with their gender stereotypes about business executives. At the same time, *H2* was partly approved since there was a positive correlation between women's equal decisions with partner and women's weaker GS, particularly regarding women's bargaining power, social life, and leisure activities. The considerable negative correlation between partner's decision-making power over “how the children are raised” and “looking after the children” further supports *H2*. Thus, unilateral partner decisions influence stronger women's gender stereotypes.

Discussion

We scrutinized two hypotheses to reveal differences in the intensity of women's gender stereotypes about business executives between the CE and CA women and to examine how decision-making power in families affect women's bias toward their peers engaged in business.

The first result (*H1*) allowed us to identify that CA women have stronger gender stereotypes compared to their European counterparts, particularly in their intensity. This

finding complements the recent study in which CE respondents demonstrated weaker gender bias compared to the Asian sample (Lipovka & Buzady, 2020). The present research extended the previous one with a wider CA geography and incremental knowledge about how the division of power in families contributed to women's GS.

The second finding partially supported *H2* and provided unexpected thought-provoking results. Women's GS emerged stronger when decisions were made mostly by their partners, and lower – when the partners had an equal influence on the decisions. However, our prediction regarding the positive impact of women's unilateral decisions on gender stereotypes only held true for coordinating daily spending and paying bills. As the scope of LiTS III (2016) raw data precluded control of such variables as the respondents' marital status, we could only presume women's independent decisions did not demonstrate the correlation with their GS, because respondents' power could not refer to their family egalitarianism but result from their necessity to decide everything themselves because of their single, widowed, and divorced status.

The study exposed that the power of financial decision-making shared equally between partners improved females' views of women in business, whereas men's sole decisions about childcare and nurture seriously undermined their spouses' attitude towards their peers involved in business. These findings contribute to the international studies on diverse positive effects of women's participation in decision-making in families (Baig et al., 2018; Gayatri, 2019; Shuai et al., 2018).

The intriguing but unpredicted finding refers to the high negative correlation between women's GS and sharing decision-making power with someone else in the household. Out of all respondents' answers, this one showed the highest relationship with women's stronger GS. We assume the higher influence of the CA region on the given correlation stems from the fact that there are many families in Central Asia in which the spouses live with the husband's parents. Thus, patrilocal households represent bearers of traditional gender roles, in which the daughter-in-law is continuously moralized to be a good wife and mother (Grogan, 2007). This finding expands the preceding qualitative studies about the harmful impact of patriarchic CA households on women's power with new knowledge of how the lack of this power detracts women's societal images of other females (Childress, 2017; Turaeva, 2020; Urbayeva, 2019).

The value of this study is multifaceted. First, it is the only study of GS about business executives with the broad coverage of CE and CA states. Second, the article provides statistically significant support of the findings of the preceding qualitative studies about family's crucial impact on GS about business executives within a large sample

(Dobrovič et al., 2019; Greig & Kudaibergenova, 2019; Kuzhabekova et al., 2018; Mihalčová et al., 2018; Nagy & Primecz, 2014; Tokbayeva, 2020; Turaeva, 2017a). Third, this study allowed examining the traditional family and GS from a new internal perspective: How women's attitudes and own GS were hindered by traditional order and power distribution?

This study has its limitations including a deficit of correlations between women's marital status, unilateral decision-making power, and GS. Another limitation was the exclusion of one of the CA's most isolated countries – Turkmenistan – whose study could bring new insights on patriarchy and GS.

Recommendations for future research lie in the necessity to clarify whether women's voluntary, independent decisions have a different effect on their GS. It is essential to define whether married women who make independent decisions and single women who make independent decisions have a similar or different level of GS. The answer to this research question would further shed light on the impact of egalitarian families. The other area of prospective research encompasses more detailed differences in the CE and CA region as gender equality policies and GS fluctuate between the studied states of Central Europe and Central Asia.

The study lays an initial foundation for further theoretical research of family influence on women's economic empowerment in post-socialist CE and CA. The work demonstrates how females' limited power in families may distort their evaluations of peers and favor societal misrepresentation of women managers. Moreover, the new theoretical concept of vicious cycle (Eagly & Koenig, 2021) has been supported by the present study and found research confirmation of its core idea. The vicious cycle linking of social roles with gender stereotypes could be undermined by egalitarian families and, vice versa, is persistent in traditional families that lack gender parity. Therefore, this CE and CA research is one of the first studies confirming the newly emerging idea in the field of gender stereotypes about managers (Eagly and Koenig, 2021) and provides initial framework for future research in other countries.

The study results allow us to connect the American concept of the vicious cycle with the CE and CA phenomenon of the “family cage” (Lipovka & Buzady, 2020). Egalitarian families help women leave their “family cages” via better rebalancing their social roles, decreasing focus on women's caring functions, and raising opportunities for women's career development. Unlocking family cages will contribute to breaking the vicious cycle, because women experience their empowerment opportunities, become role models for their daughters, and GS of the future generations.

As for practical implications, the article highlights the necessity of understanding women's well-being under the changing family politics. Women's GS can hamper both their advancement and other females' success in making managerial careers and therefore undermine gender potential utilization on the macro level.

Conclusion

This study was the first to scrutinize women's decision-making power and their gender stereotypes embracing eight countries of CE and CA. The quantitative nature of the study provides considerable factual support for the previous qualitative research identified critical family's impact on women's managerial careers in the studied region. The findings give scientific ground for predicting how women's limited decision-making power in families may worsen women's economic empowerment and, particularly, their managerial advancement.

The theoretical implication of the present paper lies in the detection of regional insights in the vicious cycle that links gender roles and GS (Eagly & Koenig, 2021): familialist policies represent the core element of the vicious cycle in the context of CE and CA, and a reconsideration of these policies is essential to break the cycle. Furthermore, the study augments the "family cage" phenomenon (Lipovka & Buzady, 2020, p. 30) with a new perspective: family represents not only an external barrier but also an internal impediment, limiting women's social roles and economic advancement along with their minds.

Although GS are stable over time, they can be modified via gender politics and feminist movements (Eagly, 2018). Gender stereotypes should be altered (Eagly & Koenig, 2021), and there are two key factors in the studied regions that demand an incremental change: state gender ideology and traditional family values. Considering the nature of gender as a social construct mostly caused by politics (Saxonberg & Sirovatka, 2006), the further emphasis on women's traditional family roles in post-socialist CE countries may setback previous achievements in women economic empowerment. We assume the present study gives a clearer vision to governors of how traditionalism is reflected in the population's perceptions of women and men's professional images. The findings are relevant as an account of the worsening women's economic positions under the process of CE progressing from "explicit to implicit familialism" (Szelewa, 2017, p. 129). Central European and CA public figures should reconsider their gender policies to better uncover and utilize the gender potential of their economies because the current

state ideology and gender policies negatively shape populations' ideals and build barriers on the way to gender equality.

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