25
GENDER AND SOCIETY IN THE CAUCASUS

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Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet system prompted sweeping and radical transformations in all spheres of life across the Caucasus, as well as the rest of the former Soviet Union. These transformations affected gender roles in society, changing them in some cases entirely, while leaving others almost intact, and in yet other cases leading to their re-traditionalisation. This chapter, which draws on a number of quantitative datasets, surveys and qualitative data, discusses the implications of these major socio-economic and political shifts for gender roles across the region. Briefly considering the issue in historical perspective, it further focuses on three major components of the gender system: gender role distribution in the family; gender equality in education; and women’s careers, in terms of employment, professional development, and political participation. It highlights the regional specifics of the Caucasus, where national traditions and customs are strongly honoured. They include a greater role for religion, as well as such practices as child marriage, marriage by abduction, and virginity testing, each of which violates women’s rights.

It is important to note that it is very difficult, and in some cases impossible, to find comparable statistical data and research findings for all countries of the Caucasus. Gender analysis in the North Caucasus is complicated by the fact that this region consists of several federal subjects of the Russian Federation and most available data relate either to a particular North Caucasus autonomy or to Russia as a whole, rather than to the region.

Gender roles in the Caucasus in historical perspective

Historically, in the Caucasus, household duties and family structure were based on the premise that women had to stay at home, and were unable to travel outside the household. In contrast, men were free to move, being responsible for earning a living. Household duties, ranging from childcare to washing clothes, were defined for women. Women in the countryside were engaged in animal husbandry and agriculture, and in cities, women were engaged in home crafts, but only within their own yard and home. Religious gender restrictions played a more notable role among Muslim Caucasians.
The invasion of the Caucasus by tsarist Russia in the nineteenth century left its mark on the economic, political and gender sphere, leading to some societal secularisation and subsequently involvement of Muslim women in education and public life. An obvious example was the prevalence of women on the editorial board of the magazine *Ishiq* (‘Light’) which was launched in 1911 in Baku. This magazine was aimed at enlightening Muslim women regarding their rights to education and employment by emphasising certain egalitarian passages from the Qur’an and *hadith* (Prophet Muhammad’s saying) and by cautiously and indirectly criticising Islamic authorities (Tohidi 1998: 140). The three democratic republics of the Caucasus that emerged from the ruins of the tsarist empire in 1918 declared for gender equality and even suffrage (see Chapter 8). Although these republics existed for a short time only, they contributed to the process of emancipation of women. In February 1919, the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918–21) held its first democratic and multi-party elections for the Constituent Assembly. Remarkably, women were allowed to take part in these elections, leading to the election of five of them to Parliament. One of them was Peri-Khan Sofiyeva, a Muslim Azerbaijani woman from Georgia’s region of Karajala. It is almost certain that Sofiyeva was the first Muslim woman to be elected to parliament formally anywhere in the world (Dunbar 2018).

The process of women’s emancipation intensified even more during the Soviet period. The Soviet regime brought tremendous transformations in the life of women in the Caucasus, as in the whole Soviet Union. The introduction of free and compulsory general education up to the age of 17 and free higher education was one of the momentous factors of female emancipation. The Soviet authorities proclaimed men and women’s equality before the law. This meant that women acquired political, civil and labour rights, which had

*Figure 25.1 Women in a market place, Georgia. Editor’s photo*
previously been denied to them. Labour law, for example, established the equal rights of men and women to insurance in cases of illness and recognised a right to maternity leave with financial support of full-pay for eight weeks before and after birth. A minimum wage for employees in Soviet institutions was also set and applied to both sexes (Buckley 1989: 34). In the Muslim Caucasus, the Soviet atheist authorities banned Islamic and customary practices, which were detrimental to women, such as polygamy, bride wealth, and unilateral male divorce and women’s seclusion and veiling (Edgar 2006: 257). All these actions enabled women’s participation in public life and subsequently contributed to further societal secularisation. However, in the private sphere, traditional foundations, in both Muslim and Christian communities, persisted. In particular, women and their chastity remained an aspect of family honour. This was the main reason that women were not allowed to make decisions about their own lives, and did not even possess the freedom to move around or travel alone. ‘Public control’ over young girls’ virginity, especially in provinces, retained its validity. In the Muslim Caucasus, Islam was driven underground and privatised; however, it retained a cultural role informing life-cycle ceremonies and rituals. In Azerbaijan, it remained a publicly muted marker of ethnic ‘Azeriness’ (Heyat 2002: 8).

Gender roles and female chastity in Caucasian families

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Caucasus underwent great turmoil, including ethnic clashes, civil wars, and other violence, leading, in many cases, to population displacement (see Chapter 15). These social and political cataclysms introduced major changes in the lives of Caucasians. However, gender relations appeared to be less affected by these changes.

According to sociological research data from Georgia, in 2014, the majority of male respondents believed that sexual freedom of a female family member damaged his and his family’s good reputation. Thus, a woman’s sexuality defines the honour of her family and can even become the defining feature of Georgian identity (Japaridze et al. 2014: 150).

Research data from Armenia similarly reveal that, in 2015–16, over 85 per cent of respondents believed that ‘a woman should remain a virgin until marriage’. In other words, over four-fifths of the surveyed respondents effectively deny women the right of control over their own bodies and sexuality, and force them to conform to the norms and standards imposed by the patriarchal mentality (Osipov and Sargizova 2016: 208).

There are no similar statistics for Azerbaijan, although it can be assumed that the situation there is more complicated due to Islamic restrictions. This relates to incidents of ‘honour killings’, which are not often reported in the Azerbaijani media. Still, according to one such rare report from the Yasamal District Court of Baku, on 24 June 2018, Ilgar Qurbanov, a father aged 57, killed his daughter Aysel Memmedli, 27, because of a rumour about her indecent behaviour (az.baku.ws 2018). Such criminal practices also exist in the North Caucasus. According to research data, collected in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya for the period between 2008 and 2017, there were 33 incidents of ‘honour killings’, in which 36 women and three men lost their lives. An analysis of these ‘honour killings’ shows that young unmarried girls are the most likely victims, followed by women aged 20–30, mostly divorced, but in some cases married. They were usually the daughters, sisters, wives, nieces or step-daughters of the murderer (Antonova and Siradzhudinova 2018a: 3).

In Dagestan and some other parts of the North Caucasus there is also the practice of female circumcision, or female genital mutilation (FGM). Those who perform the rite justify this horrific practice as the ‘protection’ of girls from indecent behaviour in the future. Even
local Muslim spiritual leaders indirectly condone this practice: ‘there would be less depravity’, according to Mufti Ismail Berdiyev of Karachaevo-Cherkessia (Antonova and Siradzhdinova 2018b). Public discussion of this barbaric practice adds to the complexity of the issue. Any public denunciation incites a negative reaction in local society, among whom some claim to be insulted by even the open mention of FGM. When a former State Duma deputy, Mariya Maksakova, introduced a legislative initiative aiming to halt FGM by assigning criminal liability for those practising it, she was attacked on social networks by Dagestani residents (Komsomolskaya Pravda 2016). Defending this public backlash, social media users from Dagestan stated that such practices occur only rarely and any public discussion of these incidents insults and humiliates the entire population of Dagestan.

Across the region there persists a widespread women’s inequality at home. Survey results from 2004–10 show that in the North Caucasus, in most families, the husband is regarded as the head of the family, while in Ingush families this role belongs to the father-in-law. The Caucasus Barometer research data of 2010 reveal a similar picture in the South Caucasus, although there are some variations between the three countries. Thus, in Azerbaijan, over 80 per cent of respondents believe that the man must be the breadwinner and over 70 per cent think that the man has also to be the main decision-maker in a family (Caucasus Barometer 2010). A similar picture is observed in Armenia, where 75 per cent of respondents believe that a man should be the family’s decision-maker and that the household work is not, as a rule, considered to be the man’s responsibility (Osipov and Sargizova 2016: 23). In Georgia, 63 per cent of respondents think that the man should be the decision-maker (Caucasus Barometer 2010). At the same time, it is largely acceptable to think that women should be primarily engaged in household chores and child raising and be submissive and more passive than men in the family. They are also not required to be active in social and political life (Japaridze 2012: 3).

The World Value Survey data of 2015 also confirm that, in the South Caucasus, it is widely believed that being a housewife is nearly equivalent to paid work and that mothers continue to play a significant role in the transfer of traditional family values to their daughters. Across the region the prevalence of traditional attitudes is manifested in women’s sharing their problems primarily with their family members, especially sisters or mothers. In the North Caucasus, a quarter of respondents indicate that they would not discuss their problems with anyone because they are afraid to reveal their issues openly and to be seen unfavourably by their community (Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2015).

In the North Caucasus and Azerbaijan, the collapse of the Soviet Union was accompanied by an ‘Islamic revival’, which has taken both moderate and radical forms. Among the implications of this process have been an increased veiling of women as well as the recruitment of some Caucasian Muslim men into the ranks of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (Kaliszewska and Falkowski 2016: 3). Among the North Caucasus republics, Chechnya has been moving towards a harsh interpretation of Islam (see Chapter 13). Chechen authorities stepped up their ‘women’s virtue campaign’ aimed at ensuring that women wear headscarves in public and adhere to traditional family roles. With apparent approval by local authorities, ‘Carthage’, a Chechen online group, published photos of numerous women without headscarves and called for their punishment. In September 2017, federal authorities blocked the website for ‘extremist’ content (Human Rights Watch 2018).

The resurgence of fundamentalist interpretations of Islam also manifests itself in the emergence of polygamy, although on a limited scale. Thus, according to Irina Kosterina’s survey, 94 per cent of women in Dagestan, 91 per cent in Kabardino-Balkaria, and 95 per cent in Ingushetia live in a monogamous relationship. However, in Chechnya 16 per cent of
women are not the only wives. This percentage is even higher in the middle age group (31–45 years) where 28 per cent of women said their husbands have another wife. There is a negative correlation of monogamy with education: the highest percentage of women who have polygamous husbands (33.3 per cent) have only primary and lower secondary education (Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2015).

Gender inequality manifests itself in baby gender preferences as well. If a family’s first child is female, a wife is expected to have more children until a son is born. My own family is a perfect example of this phenomenon. My mother, who gave birth to three daughters, and one son, always said that if her second child was a boy, she would have two children, not four.

Although fuller exploration of this theme lies beyond the scope of this chapter, the World Report (2018) by Human Rights Watch also indicates that there are widely spread negative social attitudes to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and there are incidents of harassment, discrimination, and violence against them (see Human Rights Watch 2018).

**Gender distribution in education**

The Soviet period demonstrated the positive impact of education in eliminating gender inequality. This is because, as argued by Julia Wrigley (Wrigley 2005: vi), educational systems represent the penetration of family life by the state, and the state’s interest in children’s training for the workforce. Official ideologies of equality reach their greatest intensity in the educational sphere, because schools link public and private worlds and help to form consciousness. In preparing students for labour market entry the educational system creates hope for more favourable future careers for women and for eliminating gender inequality and gender discrimination in general.

Due to the Soviet legacy, gender roles in education exhibit a more positive trend in the Caucasus. In Armenia, statistics contained in the National Human Development Report for 2007 show that there is no gender imbalance in terms of enrolment in elementary, middle, and high school. Some indicators even show a preponderance in favour of women. For example, among people with higher education, 58 per cent are women. Women also make up 83 per cent of education personnel (UNDP 2007: 25). In Azerbaijan, official statistics for 2018 show that, among girls, an attainment in secondary school-level education for those aged 15 and over is 99.7 per cent compared to 99.9 per cent among boys (The Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2018). According to the Azerbaijan Human Development Report (UNDP 2007), the majority of respondents consider higher education as equally important for both girls and boys. This assessment coincides with official statistics. For example, the share of women in total number of students increased from 40.1 per cent in the 1999–2000 academic year to 47.0 per cent in 2004–5 and to 48.4 per cent in 2017–18. For the same period, in non-state higher educational institutions the number of female students increased from 46.1 per cent to 53.1 per cent respectively (Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2018).

There is also a positive trend in the gender distribution of doctoral students and academic staff in Azerbaijan. According to the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the beginning of 2018 women constituted 1,215 (56 per cent) of doctoral students. Female doctoral students prevail in such fields as Pedagogy, Philology, Medicine, Biology, Psychology, Physics, Mathematics, Arts, History, Geography and Architecture. By comparison, women doctoral students are under-represented in Philosophy, Politics, Technology,
Mechanical Engineering, Law, Economics and Earth Sciences. Women form 51 per cent of state and private universities’ faculty members (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2018). At the same time, there are considerable social and cultural obstacles causing some gender inequality in education at all levels. Among those are persistent, stereotypical and popular perceptions that boys should not only be given more opportunity in education, but also should receive a higher and better education. Anecdotally, I can say on the basis of my own participant observation that because of the high tuition fees in private universities, parents prefer to pay for the education of their son rather than their daughter. There are considerable dropout rates for women in higher education, especially in remote locations. Among the reasons for this are early marriage and childbearing. As a consequence, women often find it difficult to obtain a relevant job (CEDAW Azerbaijan 2013: 23).

In Georgia, the gender distribution in secondary and higher education displays a similar trend. Thus, in the 2014–15 academic year the students’ total percentage proportions of women and men at public higher educational institutions were 55 per cent and 45 per cent respectively, and in private higher educational institutions 51 per cent and 49 per cent (National Statistics Office of Georgia 2015: 25). Georgia has an increasing number of women studying abroad as well. Overall, across the South Caucasus women’s educational choices reflect their responsibilities in the family and society. Thus, female students are under-represented in engineering, manufacturing, construction and agriculture. For example, in Azerbaijan they constitute less than 20 per cent in these fields (Khitarkishvili 2016: 29).

In the North Caucasus educational indicators for men and women are worse than the average for all of Russia. In her interview Victoria Petrova, head of the NGO ‘Tvori Dobro’ (‘Do Good Deeds’), states, the tendency to return to ‘adats’ (‘customary norms’) and religious practices works against women’s gender equality (see Chapter 5): ‘As a result, it became harder for girls to get higher and even secondary education’. Most often, girls’ parents only allow them to get an education where they live and, in exceptional cases, in the capital of the republic’ (Butorina 2015). In closed, mono-ethnic villages of Dagestan, it is now considered normal for a girl to finish six to nine classes, meaning teenage girls aged 13–16 years, or even just three classes (about 10 years old). Parents of girls often explain this by stating: ‘Why does she need more? Learning to read the Qur’an, get married, have children is enough’ (Butorina 2015).

Women’s careers and political participation

The social and political activity of women in the Caucasus can be observed through three phases: the Soviet period; the 1990s; and the last two decades. As already mentioned, in the Soviet period, the authorities encouraged the participation of women in public and political life. The break-up of the Soviet system adversely affected gender equality in the region. Nominally the constitutions of all three countries of the South Caucasus and Russia continue to guarantee equal rights for women and men, while legislative bodies of these countries have adopted adequate legislation on gender equality to harmonise national policies with international requirements. It is also worth mentioning that in the 1990s all three South Caucasus countries, as well as the Russian Federation, signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. In practice, the 1990s witnessed the restoration or partial return of such practices among Muslim Caucasians as veiling and child marriage, which were not supported by the law.
The 2010s witnessed some positive shift in the gender sphere. A simple proof of this is the fact that during Abulfaz Elchibey’s short presidency in Azerbaijan in 1993 the age of marriage for women was reduced from 18 to 17 years old; however in 2011 the minimum marriage age was changed to 18 for women again. In addition to CEDAW, the EC Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (‘Istanbul Convention’) was signed and ratified by Georgia in 2011 and by Armenia in 2018.

Despite the fact that the national legislations of all countries in the region ensure equal rights and opportunities for men and women, de jure equality has not yet been put into practice and de facto inequality still persists. In all three countries of the South Caucasus fewer women are elected to parliament, and men are more likely to work in highly paid jobs.

In order to assess the gender dynamic in the South Caucasus, it is necessary to consider the Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR), first published in 2006 by the World Economic Forum. The GGGR figures show that across the South Caucasus women are disadvantaged compared to men and the gender gap between them and men is larger than the average global index. The same applies to the sphere of the Economic Participation and Opportunity.

Across the region the main reasons behind the decline in women’s career development and political participation have been the above-mentioned re-traditionalisation of gender roles, and difficulties of balancing work and economic and social problems. Thus, in the North Caucasus women name high unemployment, low salaries and the poor quality of medical services as the main reasons. According to research conducted by the Heinrich Böll Foundation in 2014, low salaries were named as the main problem by 30 per cent of women in Chechnya, 55 per cent in Dagestan, 72 per cent in Kabardino-Balkaria and 46 per cent in Ingushetia (BBC Monitoring Central Asia 2015; Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2015).

In Azerbaijan, the average monthly wages of women constitute about 50–58 per cent of men’s. The main reason for this is the fact that women account for nearly 80 per cent of employees in education, health care, culture and welfare – spheres mainly funded by the government budget, where wages and salaries are relatively low (CEDAW Azerbaijan 2013: 29). In Georgia, in the past several years, the gender gap in wages has been on the rise because of faster growth of wages among men compared to women. In none of the occupation fields do women’s average monthly wages exceed or even equal that of their male counterparts. Women have lower incomes across various sectors with the exception of real estate, pensions, stipends, social benefits and remittances from abroad (UN WOMEN Georgia 2015: 11). By comparison, in Armenia, the income gap between men and women displays a positive trend. According to CEDAW Armenia (2015), the average monthly gap between men and women decreased, with men’s wages going from twice that of women’s to 1.7 times during the period between 2009 and 2011. Overall, the existing wage gap demonstrates the economic disadvantages that women face compared to men and at the same time reveals women’s economic dependence on men.

Women’s political participation has been affected by this economic dependency on men, as well as by patriarchal stereotypes. For example, according to a 2016 survey in Armenia, nearly 60 per cent of respondents think that men make better political leaders than women, while nearly 70 per cent believe that women are too emotional to be leaders (Osipov and Sargizova 2016: 49). Similar attitudes prevail in Azerbaijan and Georgia. In Azerbaijan, women made up only just over 16 per cent of members of the parliament (Milli Majlis) in 2017 (Statistical...
Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2018). In Georgia, executive and legislative bodies also primarily consist of men; women account for only 16 per cent of deputies in the Georgian Parliament. However, in 2018 Georgia acquired a female president, Salome Zurabishvili. This could mark a breakthrough in Georgian women’s political participation.

A new phenomenon has been female political activism outside of state structures. In Azerbaijan, it is exemplified by Khadija Ismayilova, a prominent investigative journalist, working for Radio Free Europe (RFE/RL). She has exposed corruption in Azerbaijan, including among the President’s family and inner circle. Noteworthy is the fact that the authorities used existing patriarchal stereotypes in their attempts to silence her. Thus, they orchestrated the dissemination online of kompromat (material aimed at compromising someone’s reputation) involving film of Ismayilova in intimate circumstances in her own home, in order to force her to stop her investigation. ‘This is a very traditional society where there are still a lot of honour killings, and they clearly calculated that I would prefer to keep quiet and not have this made public’, Ismayilova told The Independent (The Independent 2012). The authorities’ attempt to smear Ismayilova sought to instrumentalise strong societal norms around appropriate female behaviour to both silence Ismayilova and discredit her in the eyes of society. But the authorities failed to achieve their goals. In Georgia, the same ‘dirty methods’ were used when in March 2016 two sex tapes featuring Georgian married female politicians surfaced on YouTube (Thejournal.ie 2016). The reaction of the Azerbaijani and Georgian publics to these ‘revelations’ was surprisingly similar: in both cases there was a significant backlash against those behind the ‘leaks’ in the social media.

In the North Caucasus, female political activism was triggered by the First Chechen War (1994–96). Women appeared to be more pro-active and effective than men in pursuing justice for their male relatives who were killed or subjected to abuse (Kogan 2013: 501). Traditionally, in the Caucasus women were able to end conflicts by throwing their headscarves to the ground between the parties in conflict. This tradition became ground for women’s activity in the process of establishing the peace organisations in the North Caucasus. Of particular importance were the women’s peace organisations ‘Echo of the War’ (Ekho Voiny), ‘Mothers of Chechnya for Peace’, the ‘Union of the Don’s Women’ (Soiuz Zhenshchin Dona), as well as the network ‘Women for a Life without War and Violence’. As Andrea Hapke states, the equation of ‘women/motherhood/femininity’ with ‘peace’ renders possible the mobilisation of women against war and violence. The particular responsibility for life ascribed to women is derived from their life-giving function. A deeply rooted interest in the maintenance of peace is allocated to them (Hapke 2009: 13).

A special note should be made regarding women from the Caucasus travelling to war-torn Iraq and Syria. Many hundreds of women who joined the so-called Islamic State (IS) came from Chechnya, Dagestan and other parts of the North Caucasus. It is notable that, after Tunisia, the largest contingent of foreign fighters overall came from Russia (see Chapters 17 and 18). Even according to the official statistics their number was around 5,000 (Ferris-Rotman 2019). It is highly possible that most of them were residents of the North Caucasus, who took their wives with them. Interestingly, in contrast to these occasions, some women have been involved in bringing jihadists’ children back home. Among those has been, for example, Sevil Novruzova, the 42-year-old lawyer from Dagestan (Ferris-Rotman 2019).

There have also been reports on a number of Muslim women from Azerbaijan and Georgia who travelled to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq. According to research by Aleksandre Kvakhadze, 17 Georgian women were found in Syria or Iraq: 12 of them were ethnic Kists from the Pankisi Gorge. Other Muslim women from Georgia who travelled to Syria and Iraq were four Azerbaijani women from the Kakheti, Kabali, and Kvemo Kartli regions. The average age
of these women was 26 years. One had higher education while most of the rest had secondary education (Kvakhadze 2018). Although there are no specific data for Azerbaijan’s women travelling to Iraq and Syria, empirical evidence suggests that their number is likely to be much higher. It appears that most of them were not ideologically motivated and went there either to accompany their jihadist husbands or in search of such husbands. For example, in an interview, Aygun Sultanli, aged 24, admitted that she had been married at the age of 17 and followed her husband to Aleppo. After his death in Aleppo she was married two more times to Azerbaijani IS fighters and had three children from these marriages. Her second husband died in a battle in Azez and she did not know if her third husband was still alive. Now she wanted to return to Azerbaijan and asked for forgiveness (Amed 2019).

Conclusion

Historically, Caucasus societies were characterised by strong patriarchal norms related to the role of women who were restricted to home and family duties and whose chastity was regarded as a matter of family honour. The annexation of the Caucasus by tsarist Russia in the nineteenth century and subsequent Sovietisation, particularly Soviet compulsory education, led to women’s considerable egress from the private sphere and their involvement in public life. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union gender relations in the Caucasus underwent significant changes towards their partial re-traditionalisation. In the Muslim Caucasus, such re-traditionalisation was accompanied by some return of child marriages, honour killings and veiling. In the sphere of education and political participation the re-traditionalisation was evidenced by women’s under-representation in top political and economic jobs and the gender pay gap.

Since 2010 there have appeared some positive shifts in societal attitudes towards gender roles. They have been linked to the increasing appreciation that education forms the foundation for female participation in political and economic life. On the other hand, an improvement in economic opportunities and political participation motivates young women and their families to change their attitudes and views on gender roles and subsequently gradually contribute to a transformation of the traditional patriarchal family structure. However, despite these positive shifts the Caucasus nations at large have retained traditional patriarchal attitudes and views on a range of issues related to gender roles in family and society as well as women’s political participation and leadership potential.

Notes

1 The chapter draws on a quantitative and inferential analysis of gender attitudes, obtained from Caucasus Barometer, World Value Survey and quantitative data sets. Of particular significance to this study is the World Bank’s World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development (World Bank 2012); the Asian Development Bank’s Gender Statistics in the Southern Caucasus and Central and West Asia: A Situational Analysis (2012); and the qualitative research findings of Vladimir Osipov and Jina Sargizova within the framework of the United Nations Population Fund programme, Men And Gender Equality in Armenia, 2015–16; Elene Japaridze within the research project Assessment of the Gender Equality Policy in Georgia by Women’s Organizations (2012); Tamar Khitarishvili within the research project Gender Dimensions of Inequality in the Countries of Central Asia, South Caucasus, and Western CIS (2016); Farideh Heyat within the research project Azeri Women in Transition (2002); Irina Starodubrovskaya within the research project Transformation of the North Caucasus (2014); and Yulia Antonova and Saida Siradzhudinova within their research conducted in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya in 2017. The chapter’s theoretical approach is informed by works of Joan W. Scott and Amy Wharton and Michael Kimmel (Kimmel 2011; Scott 1986; Wharton 2005).
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3 Of those who were surveyed with the question, ‘Who is the head of your family?’ in 2004 in the Republic of Ingushetia, 65.2 per cent of men and 72.9 per cent of women indicated the husband and 23.5 per cent of men and 15.3 per cent of women named the father-in-law as the head of the family. In 2010 the numbers changed to 52.5 per cent and 58.2 per cent respectively, indicating the husband, and the number of those who indicated the father-in-law as a head changed to 37.5 per cent and 31.6 per cent respectively (Klimenko 2013: 23).

4 Of those who were surveyed by the World Values Survey, the number who agreed with the statement ‘Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay’ was 41.3 per cent in Azerbaijan, 36.5 per cent in Armenia and 19.3 per cent in Georgia (World Values Survey Wave 6, 2010–14).

5 Women in the North Caucasus tend to share their experiences with their sister: 55 per cent of those surveyed in Chechnya, 41 per cent in Dagestan and 46 per cent in Ingushetia. Despite this, women mentioned their mothers as a person to share problems with in Chechnya at 35 per cent, and 60 per cent among young girls, whereas in Dagestan and Ingushetia they named female friends at 40 per cent and 30 per cent respectively. By comparison, in Kabardino-Balkaria the female respondents most commonly referred to their female friends (37 per cent) and sisters (35 per cent), while 26 per cent indicated that they would not discuss their problems with anyone (Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2015).

6 During the 2005–6 academic year, for example, 477,857 schoolchildren attended state general education institutions, of which 49.1 per cent were girls. Non-state schools of Armenia were attended by 6,541 schoolchildren, of which 45.4 per cent were girls. Overall, girls made up 47.8 per cent of children in elementary schools, 48 per cent of those in grades 4 to 7, and 51.6 per cent of high school students; these numbers correspond to the share of girls in the respective age groups. During the 2005–6 academic year, a total of 1,133 children remained in the same form for two years: 435 (38 per cent) of them were girls and 698 (62 per cent) were boys. Women formed 84 per cent of a total of 42,719 teachers working in state and non-state schools and 49 per cent of lecturers at universities (UNDP 2007: 25).

7 In the 2015–16 academic year there were 136 female and 71 male students in foreign public universities and 113 and 84 respectively in private universities. In the 2017–18 academic year there were 285 female and 105 male students in foreign public universities and 109 and 83 respectively in private universities (National Statistics Office of Georgia 2018).

8 Thus, in 2015 41.3 per cent of women have an average higher and incomplete higher education, 33.1 per cent special secondary education, 18.4 per cent secondary education, and 7.1 per cent primary education in all republics of the North Caucasus.

9 According to the Report, in the 2018 Global Gender Gap index for Armenia was 98, Azerbaijan 97, and Georgia 99 out of 149 countries (GGGR 2018: 11).

10 In 2012, the average monthly salary for women was 517.9 Georgian Lari (GEL), which is less than the average salary earned by men (GEL 859.6) (UN WOMEN Georgia 2015: 11).

References


