



MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA
FAKULTETEN FÖR
HÄLSA OCH SAMHÄLLE

THE IMPACT OF GENDER- RELATED STEREOTYPES ON INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA AND ARMENIA

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The main aim of the given thesis is to investigate the impact of gender-based stereotypes and public opinion on intimate partner violence in the South Caucasus and offer the reader recommendations to change the existing alarming situation. As a theoretical background of the study, Patriarchy theory and General Systems theory will be used based on which the influences of stereotypes on the intimate partner violence in the region will be explained. While following study covers 3 countries, the cross-cultural comparison and content analysis will be used as methodological tools. The findings show that in three of the countries - Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia traditional gender-based attitudes shape the main behavioural patterns of perpetrators and victims. The intervention of western European states and increasing public awareness seems to be the most appropriate solution out of the existing situation.

Keywords: Domestic, Violence, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, South, Caucasus

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Introduction

The discussion regarding gender inequality and gender based violence derives from ancient times. Antique approach towards women is clearly expressed in the following quotes of the Greek philosopher Socrates: 'Happiness exists in three things - 1. You are not a wild animal, 2. You are Greek and 3. You are a man and not a woman'. Almost three thousand years have passed since then but the subject of women's inequality is still being discussed (Society Without Violence 'NGO', 2011, p. 5)

Several studies are conducted to show the severity and importance of the problem of domestic violence¹. In result of such studies it was revealed that intimate partner violence is the most common type of violence suffered by women all over the world. The mentioned type of violence is considered to be the worst due to its invisibility. The participants of domestic violence are close people for victim that prevents her to report the accident, thus they are mainly hidden from outside world. In such situations victims become most vulnerable and least protected and may experience different severe consequences. 'According to the UN SG² Report: "The pervasiveness of different forms of violence against women within intimate relationships, commonly referred to as domestic violence or spousal abuse, is now well established' (National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, UNFPA "Combating Gender-Based Violence in the South Caucasus" Project, 2011, p. 26) The amount of literature and number of studies conducted in regard the given topic may lead the reader of the given thesis to the idea: Oh, another paper regarding that notorious topic of gender-based violence! No way! If the reader will have patience to read the couple of following pages of the given work s/he will soon understand that this is not one more trivial piece of paper. The main strength and value of the given work is that it is one of the first tries to analyze contextually gender-based violence in 3 South Caucasian states - Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. The given paper aims to offer to western academic world a reasonable comparative study of the historical background and current situation of South Caucasus - tiny region that still remains unexplored by European scholars.

Purpose

The purpose of the given study is to fill the main gap that is caused by the lack of the comprehensive study covering the South Caucasian region. There is no literature combining the information about the main similarities and respectively main challenges that Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia face nowadays in the sphere of combating domestic violence. The fact that given countries are Post-Soviet states that gained independence no more than 2 decades ago and thus still experiencing the Anomy³, may be the main reason of absence of serious scientific research. In the South Caucasian region the academic research starts flourishing now mainly with important support of international organizations. In the light of

¹ The terms *Intimate-partner violence* and *domestic violence* are used as equal throughout the text. More comprehensive explanation about the given matter is offered in the chapter "Literature review"

² United Nations Secretary General

³ Anomy-Social instability caused by erosion of standards and values (The Free Dictionary by Farlex)

such situation, the limited number of studies done until now is focused only on local level of the states and does not offer insight of general trends of the region. Herewith, it is noteworthy to mention that my research explores the impact of public opinion, the influences of stereotypes on domestic violence in the South Caucasian regional countries that is not investigated yet. The given research will analyze the studies conducted separately in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia to find the general pattern of societal trends that influence on the domestic violence level of the region.

All of the above-mentioned countries have the ancient history full of battles for survival due to region's very strategic location. The struggle to save the national identity and genetics raised the necessity to live in extended families (several generations together). In fact, the tradition of living in extended families along with some advantages had various negative effects too. Very often couples were controlled by parents-in-law that were provoking sons against their wives. Due to the traditional view that speaking family matters outside was shameful, the women were silent and trying to obey every single desire of other family members. The 70 years of Soviet Era had its own impact on the abovementioned societies' mentality. During the 'red period' the deeply rooted way of thinking filled with patriarchal stereotypes was still preserved, even strengthened. The Soviet Union offered South Caucasian women a 'dreamy world' where the gender equality existed only on papers. All of the mentioned reasons provided the same heritage and problems for all three regions. The given comprehensive study gives opportunity to the reader to explore what way the given societies passed until now and what prevents them from combating domestic violence effectively.

Research questions

To what extent the public opinion and gender-related stereotypes have impact on intimate partner violence level in the South Caucasian states - Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia?

What should be done for future improvements in the process of combating intimate partner violence in the region?

Disposition

The presented work is divided into several sections. The first section of the master thesis is introduction which offers reader the general description of the problem, the main gap that is expected to be filled by the following work, research questions that should be answered finally and brief summary of the contents. The following chapter describes methodology and materials used for the purposes of the study. The next chapter covers literature review, quite extensive part of the thesis that includes the discussions about the definitional problem of "domestic violence" and focuses on women victims as specific target group. It ends with section describing the previous scientific work done regarding the domestic violence problem in South Caucasus. Literature Review precedes the chapter dedicated to the description of two theories – Patriarchy theory and General Systems theory that are used as theoretical framework of the study. The next chapter is analysis of the secondary data which begins with investigation of legislative framework of the regional countries. The mentioned part is followed by the analysis of the influencing factors of gender-related stereotypes on the domestic violence problem of all three states. The analysis chapter is concluded with the section that will correlate the previously mentioned theories to the

conducted analysis. The following chapter includes number of recommendations for further possible improvements of the situation. The concluding chapter of the thesis will sum up the whole work.

Methodology

The methodology is one of the most important parts of the research. It mainly determines the quality and academic value of the scientific work. The following master thesis contains several methods of research, more specifically, it is the cross-cultural comparison study based on qualitative content analysis. Speaking about the cross-cultural research, primarily one has to define the concept of *culture* itself. According to the definition by anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn,

‘ “ Culture” consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action.’ (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 47)

The method of cross-cultural research is comprehensive and offers multi-faceted view of specific phenomena including different dimensions. The given scientific method of comparative research offers reader opportunity to compare culture to culture, reply questions about causation of problem in multinational context (Oluwatoyin Olatundun, 2009, p. 82). Cross-cultural researchers in the field of Criminology use data from different environments to explore general principle of the problem, the main cause of particular deviation. The ultimate goal of cross-cultural researchers is to draw the general patters of belief and behavior that are common and explainable similarly despite wide diversity of cultures. Consequently, the type of questions that such methodology applies may be the following:’ Do the same things work in the same ways across different contexts?’ (Halperin & Heath, 2012, p. 204)

There are different types of comparative research. Cross-cultural comparisons are diverse in four dimensions:

- 1) Geographical comparison - the research is focused on specific geographic area (e.g., a region such as South Caucasus);
- 2) Size of the sample - two-case, small-scale and larger comparisons;
- 3) Data used for analysis: primary - collected directly for the given study, mainly by researcher or secondary, collected by others for their own purposes;
- 4) The time frames regarding data collection - one time period or two or more time periods (Ember & Ember, 2009, pp. 16-17)

Referring to the first dimension, it is noteworthy to mention the following: the main characteristic of the regional comparative cross-cultural research is that it is not diffused in a very large territory but focuses only one particular region and tries to find out the similarities and differences on the regional level. 'Regional comparativists are likely to know a lot about each society in a within-region comparison but may not know all the cases in the region that depends mostly on the size of the region' (Oluwatoyin Olatundun, 2009, p. 85). Throughout the presented master thesis, the author will be focused on one specific region - South Caucasus, and will offer the analysis of historical background, current legislative framework and prevalence of domestic violence of three independent regional states – Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. As it was mentioned in the previous sentence, the author of the study herself was born in Georgia, thus is familiar to the region and its traditions.

The cross-cultural comparison will be based on qualitative content analysis of the data retrieved by the author. Content analysis is a method mainly used to analyze different verbal, written and visual information. The latter as a method has long history in different fields, such as psychology, sociology, law and its popularity increases steadily. From the very beginning the mentioned method was used to analyze the newspapers, advertisements, public speeches and other types of popular content (Kynga & Elo, 2008, pp. 107-108). Content analysis is considered as one of the most flexible methods of research. It may be used with the equal success with qualitative, quantitative and even joint models. One of the biggest strengths of the given method is that it offers researcher a wide range of analytical techniques to develop the results (Marsh & White, 2006, p. 22).

Throughout the given study the above mentioned two methods of research seem to be the most adequate. As the study covers 3 regional countries, which have similar historical background and still express considerable similarities regarding the traditions, the cross-cultural comparison will allow the author to investigate the main trends of domestic violence in modern Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, compare the reasons and evaluate the challenges. While the main source of information that will be the basement of the given thesis is secondary data, the qualitative content analysis seems effective for further interpretation.

Material

The material used for the purposes of the given thesis is diverse, mainly secondary in nature. Secondary data is the source that was produced by others than the author and was already the subject of interpretation (Courton, 2014, p. 8). As basis of the given master thesis author use the official reports and statistics of different international organizations and NGOs (for ex: Special Rapporteur of Council of Europe, Amnesty international, Women against violence Europe, United Nations Population Fund, World Health Organization etc.), Regional Organizations, Local NGOs, local independent researchers, official statistics and materials published by public authorities, legislation of the countries and other secondary data. Due to the fact that as it was mentioned above the academic research in Criminology does not have as rich history in the South Caucasian countries as, for example, in Sweden, the main sources of the given research will be not the books and scientific articles published in international journals of Criminology but mainly the reports of diverse NGOs. For the purposes of the master thesis, valuable information was obtained by studying the documentation

available on official web-sites of state organizations (i.e. Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia). During the analysis process, laws (e.g. Georgian Law on Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Support to its Victims) and international acts (e.g. UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) were used as primary sources of information. The validity of the reports that are core foundation of the presented work, is not under consideration due to the reasons that 1) they describe studies conducted by trained researchers that were familiar to the local environment, thus took into account specificities of respondents and 2) they are already published publicly and accepted by academic world; some of them were actively used by state organizations to work on future measures of combating domestic violence (e.g. National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women in Georgia conducted in 2010 was actively supported by Georgian Parliament).

Usage of secondary data as the main source of research was triggered by different reasons. The first one was to find the answers on the research questions “To what extent the public opinion and gender-related stereotypes have impact on intimate partner violence level in South Caucasian states - Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia?” and “What should be done for future improvements in the process of combating domestic violence in the region?” Drawing the general conclusion about such broad concept and then offer the possible ways to improve the situation is impossible without studying the historical background and already conducted researches. If the author of the given study decided to create the sample including the population of all three countries to explore the answer on abovementioned questions it could be connected to unreasonable time, money and human resources. The process of conducting actual research will arise the necessity to involve professional interpreters and translators (to collect the data in Azerbaijani, Georgian and Armenian Language), trained interviewers and number of other difficulties. Significant advantage of the secondary data is that ‘it is simple to utilize when compared to primary research regarding time and resources as large amounts of credible research can be quickly accessed’ (Courton, 2014, p. 8). The second reason of choosing the secondary data as the main source is that working on it is not related to any ethical problems. Conducting the actual research (e.g. interviews, surveys) mostly arise some ethical dilemmas due to topic’s sensitivity. While using already conducted studies that have already passed the ethical test, the researcher is free of any approvals and has more flexibility to analyze the content.

Limitations

Not surprisingly the following master thesis does not aim to cover all the literature and theories related to gender-based domestic violence. Covering the vast amount of literature published in all the three regional states is impossible within time frame and space that author has for the given thesis. Due to the mentioned reason, the author will focus on fundamental concepts relevant for the analysis. One of the limitations of the study may be the very limited number of the theories discussed regarding the domestic violence which focus only on societal level. Patriarchy Theory and General Systems Theory, both used as theoretical framework of the given thesis, are macro-level theories. The extensive argumentation of the choice of macro-level approach will be offered in the *Analysis* chapter but here it is worth to mention that the author aims to show the reader the importance of societal influences on domestic violence and not individual differences that may have impact on it.

The second limitation of the study may be mostly related to the materials. As mentioned above, obtaining scholarly valid data for analysis was challenging due to the absence of officially published articles regarding the domestic violence. In the light of such situation, the main basis of the following work is reports. Due to the fact that studies described in reports were mainly conducted by organizations financed by foreign organizations, the risk of bias exists. As the author read in one Armenian report (Ishkhanian, 2007), some representatives of local NGOs complain that the western donors (using different means, including their reports) try to aggravate the situation and pose the problem artificially. Thus, number of reports may be biased and not actual reflection of the reality. The next limitation related to the validity of the reports may be the time of their publication. While there does not exist any organization except Caucasus Research Resource Center (that is not focused specifically on Criminological issues), that conduct studies and publish papers annually, the author was forced to use various reports mainly published in between 2002 and 2014. Therefore, the critics may emphasize the fact that reality could be different nowadays. In response of such critique, I think that radical changes in society's thinking is impossible to happen only in couple of years. Mostly several decades are needed to change the mentality of nations. Herewith, it is noteworthy to mention that while the author was collecting Azerbaijani, Georgian and Armenian sources separately, the proportion of information regarding each state may not be equally presented.

Literature Review

The given chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of the reasonable amount of literature defining the concept of intimate partner violence and its main forms. Special emphasize will be made to the women as specific target group of domestic violence. The review of already conducted researches regarding the intimate partner violence on regional level will conclude the chapter.

What is intimate partner violence?

The discussions about gender equality are still popular and active in modern world. While centuries ago the concept of gender equality was not even in agenda, today the reality is absolutely different. In the modern world, societies in general agree that females have the same rights that men, but... The number of issues regarding the gender is still under discussion in 21st century among which there is intimate partner violence or in another terms "domestic violence" against women. Herewith it is important to mention that throughout the given thesis the term intimate partner violence and domestic violence will have the equal meanings and both will apply the cases where the victims are women and perpetrators respectively men. Despite the fact that domestic violence is relatively wide concept covering the relationships between partners or other cohabitants (for example: parents, children and etc.), the author took into account that the majority of the literature that was studied and used for the purposes of the given work uses both terms and do not offer any distinction between them. The authors of the report of United Nations Fund also used the abovementioned terms for describing the same phenomena despite 'Domestic violence is a traditional, widely-used term for violence against (primarily) women that occurs in the family setting. [In fact] Domestic violence is violence in the family and is not limited to women' (National

Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, UNFPA “Combating Gender-Based Violence in the South Caucasus” Project, 2011, p. 27). It is general problem for researchers to reach agreement over one suitable term for such cases. It is noteworthy that some scholars use the term ‘Spousal assault’. ‘Spousal assault is any actual, attempted, or threatened physical harm perpetrated by a man or woman against someone with whom he or she has, or has had, an intimate, sexual relationship’ (Baldry & Winkel, 2008, p. 20)

‘In a global context domestic violence has now been defined as a human rights issue’ (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000, p. 954). According to the World Health Organization Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women and includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviors by an intimate partner (World Health Organization, 2012, p. 1). Despite the vast amount of literature that is dedicated to the given problem, there is still ongoing debate around the definition of intimate partner violence. In spite of this, all of the definitions agree over the same general characteristics inherent of domestic abuse. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of United States of America classifies the Intimate partner violence by type— physical violence (i.e., intimidation or the use of force on one’s partner to cause damage or death), sexual violence (i.e., the threat or the use of force to involve a partner in sexual activity without her will, attempt to have sexual intercourse without consent, or abusive sexual contact), and psychological violence (i.e., using threats, actions, or coercive tactics which cause trauma or emotional harm to a partner (Sylaska & Edwards, 2014, p. 3). Part of the literature identifies the economic violence as a separate sub-type of intimate-partner violence. Economic abuse may take the form of active prevention of women from working outside the home, interfering with their ability to find employment, controlling how resources are distributed or monitoring how they are used (Usta, Makarem, & Habib, 2013, p. 357). Before describing the forms of violence in a detailed way, definition of the concept *intimate partner* is necessary to be defined. Karmen’s definition of intimate partners describes them as “people with whom the victim has had a romantic relationship, and therefore includes a spouse, ex spouse, boyfriends, ex-boyfriends, girlfriend, or former girlfriend” (Karmen, 2013, p. 228). The given definition is rather broad and covers not only the current partners but also the exes that may still have some contacts to victim. Nevertheless of such definition, some scholars (for instance, Murdock) are limiting the intimate partner violence concept only within the frames of marriage (Loue, 2002, p. 2). Very often intimate partner violence is associated to the marriage in the societies where premarital sex is banned, while societies for whom sexual relationships before marriage is a norm, intimate partner violence may occur also outside the marriage (Jewkes, 2002, p. 1423). Generally, perception of domestic violence differs significantly according to the personal experience and role of individual in it. Mostly domestic violence acts are perceived differently, on the one side, by legal system and on another side by practitioners, researchers and victim defenders (Buzawa, Buzawa, & Stark, 2012, p. 29)

As it was already mentioned, the most prevalent forms of intimate parent violence are physical, psychological, sexual, economic violence and controlling behavior. Physical violence may refer slapping the victim, kicking, beating, hitting with or without tools. Such beatings may cause very severe results ending up with serious problems to victim’s health. The consequences of psychological abuse are also extremely dramatic. The constant humiliation, threatening, abasing, permanent

threats to take away children, to leave her without livelihood may lead victim to post-traumatic stress, depression or suicidal thoughts (Karmen, 2013, p. 228). One more form of domestic violence - sexual abuse is one of the most difficult forms to identify as an actual violence by the victims. The difficulty of identification as a crime may be caused due to the fact that in intimate partner relationships the forced sexual intercourse is committed by victims' current sexual partners. For considering such sexual act as domestic violence, coercion must be committed with the use of force or threat against victim's will. One more specific form of domestic violence is *economic abuse*. Economic violence is especially well-spread in the developing countries where the women mainly are occupied with household duties and economically depend on their partners. The most important characteristic of economic violence is prohibition of employment, limit the use of resources that s/he already have, overall, taking control over the decisions related to person's own or mutual resources (Adams, Sullivan, Bybee, & Greeson, 2008, pp. 565-566). Herewith, it should be noted that economic abuse sometimes is not excluded as a separated form of domestic violence and is covered by 'controlling behavior' category. Controlling behavior is a wide concept and includes 'isolating a person from family and friends; monitoring their movements; and restricting access to ... education or medical care' (World Health Organization, 2012, p. 1)

Women as victims of Intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence is multifaceted concept and covers broad range of relationships. However, throughout the given work the author will examine the causation of intimate partner violence within the largest category of violent domestic relationships: men as offenders and women as victims (Rawls, p. 3). Despite the cultural diversity in forms of intimate partner violence, there should be drawn clear pattern of its occurrence. The gender-focused nature of domestic violence, the fact that on offending side there are overwhelmingly men and in most of the cases victims are women or children, has led to its recognition as a form of 'gender violence' by the United Nations and international society. (Harne, 2008, p. 17). 'There is substantial evidence showing that the vast majority of victims of spouse abuse are female, and the vast majority of abusers are male' (Pagelow, 1997, p. 109). From the antique period, legal tradition acknowledged the man, as 'head of household' whose home was considered as 'his castle'. He had the 'right' to 'discipline' his wife and children while they were believed as his 'property' or 'chattel' (Karmen, 2013, p. 229). Despite serious changes in thinking inspired by feminists, who struggled to demolish the stereotypes, the patriarchal way of thinking is still integral part of our everyday life. The fact that society puts more expectations on man than woman may be considered as one of the important factors in the process of creating stereotypes. In most of the societies, disobeying the societal norms is easily justified for men rather than women. While in modern world women are working, socializing, defending their rights and live as their male counterparts, in some of the countries the equal treatment is still the main challenge for society. Unsurprisingly, battered women very often cannot leave the perpetrator due to the fear of homelessness. Many victims for whom the main occupation is household routine activities are unemployed and economically dependent on their partners. One preventive factor for victims to escape from family nightmare is children's interests and their well-being. The reasons may be thousands. In fact, women have more to risk while taking the decision of divorce than men.

Previous research about intimate partner violence in the South Caucasus

The author of the work has asked several students (with European origin) living in Malmo, Sweden the question: “Do you know where the South Caucasus is located and which countries are covered by the region?” It appeared that very few respondents had a clear idea about the location of the South Caucasus and even if number of them provided some information, none of the participants was able to name the exact countries. Unsurprisingly, the main associations were linked to the Russian Federation. In fact, South Caucasus is small region located on the historic crossroads of Europe and Asia and unites 3 Post-Soviet states: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Due to the transitional location of the mentioned countries, the dilemma whether they are part of Europe or Asia, existed for centuries. Despite such ambiguity, today it is not doubtful that they are considered as members of ‘Big European Family’. Nevertheless, due to its relatively separate location from continental Europe as well as pending process of integration in European Union, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia still are in the position of ‘stepchild’ – treated indifferently and unequally. Therefore, the lack of information about the South Caucasian region in the western academic world gives my work additional significance. As of today, it is sad reality that the researcher who has an interest regarding the gender-related issues of mentioned region will be disappointed with the finding that there are very limited (almost non-existent) number of sources in Internet as well as in the libraries. The author of the presented study was trying to find out the articles, books, brochures, in a word, every kind of written sources that should be helpful and relevant to draw the picture of previous work done regarding such challenging problem for the South Caucasian region. The reality was frustrating. There are only few studies about the main trends of intimate partner abuse throughout the region. It is important to mention that with the funding of international donors, number of local NGOs has conducted the population studies in three of the mentioned countries separately, but nothing is done to present the regional situation. Speaking about the regional level, it should be noted that in all of three countries exist Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) functioning from 2003 in the capital cities with the goal of strengthening social science research and public policy analysis in the region. The aforementioned organizations were created by the Eurasia Partnership Foundation with financial support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (Caucasus Research Resource Center). The researches done by the mentioned organizations cover diverse social areas, publishing the valuable reports, mainly conducted on national level (for example: Women in Labour Market in Armenia, Attitudes towards the Judicial System in Georgia and etc.). Despite the very limited number of such studies, there is one regional study conducted by the mentioned organization that has direct contact to the topic of given work and respectively is worth to discuss in conjunction of intimate partner violence problem. The study about the ‘Missing girls in the South Caucasus’ took place from May to June, in 2013, in three of the Regional countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The study was aimed to determine the main factors that encourage sex selection in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, possible changes, public awareness and attitudes regarding skewed sex ratios (Dudwick, 2015, p. 3). The researchers have used qualitative methods, more specifically individual interviews as well as group discussions. The mentioned report draws picture of the structural thinking of societies in region, the historical heritage and other social factors that are important for analyzing the attitudes toward woman in the

South Caucasus. According to the given study, in three of the countries 'Women were valued as wives and mothers, but less so as daughters, who were essentially raised to marry and serve other families' (Dudwick, 2015, p. 5) General idea of the population in three of the countries is that having son is much more preferable and honorable than daughter. Boys are considered as future leaders of the family who are responsible to take care of their old parents. In Azerbaijan, as well as Armenia and Georgia people still believe that family is 'childless' if it does not have son. According to the given study in three of the country's population perceive daughters as 'migratory birds' (Dudwick, 2015, p. 14) who will fly after marriage into different family and serve them during their remained life. Despite the fact that mentioned report focuses on son preference phenomena, trying to explain high difference between sex rations, it also refers the attitudes towards intimate partner abuse on regional level. In result, the latter work gives valuable information for the purposes of the presented study. The individual interviews as well as group discussions have revealed that despite the severity of the problem of intimate partner abuse the states mostly fail to protect women's rights. According to some interviewees the 'laws are perfect' but mainly declarative in nature, hence, they are ineffective and useless while combating domestic violence. In most of the intimate partner conflicts police is biased in favor of men and advises the abused women to return home without any scandal. In three of the mentioned countries most of the married women are dependent on their husbands, correspondingly, afraid to complain in police or court against them. Despite permanent conflict situation they do not have hope that they will be accepted by their parents in case of returning home (Dudwick, 2015, p. 26). In three of the countries, the researchers have concluded that religious views play important role on the public opinion. According to the report, the traditional view of the male dominance made for women marriage and motherhood as a primary importance (Dudwick, 2015, p. 33). As a conclusion, the author of the mentioned report recommends the regional states to make more investments on education of population: women must realize that all kind of violence is unacceptable; also increasing the qualification of police and local NGOs is needed.

One more source that provides information in regard of the South Caucasian women is the special report of Mrs. Vera Oskina – Rapporteur of Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of European Council, introduced in 2007. According to the given report the situation in the three regional countries – Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia is deeply concerning. She concludes that despite the cultural, linguistic and other diversities, the situation regarding violence against women has significant similarities in three of the countries. The special rapporteur states that 'In the countries of the South Caucasus, violence against women, especially domestic violence, remains a taboo subject' (Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men; Mrs. Vera Oskina, Russia, European Democrat Group, 6 February 2007, p. 9) The author of the report shares the statements of the local NGO representatives who think that violent behavior of the men in family is connected to the loss of the power and status in family together with employment; frustrated men taking revenge on their women. In the given report as well as the 'Missing Girls' study, the fact that most of women are reluctant to complain about violence of their husbands is emphasized. Besides, perception of domestic violence as a problem seems to be the serious problem for victims that results extremely low rates of reporting. Other sources retrieved by author describing the situation in the South Caucasian region, mostly oriented on general issues, like religiosity or the social perceptions of

gender but not intimate partner violence. Such informational vacuum makes the presented paper more interesting and challenging.

It should be noted that while the literature regarding the intimate partner violence situation in the South Caucasus covering the regional level is limited and comprehensive analysis of the local environment is hard to find, the studies conducted on national level in each of the countries are numerous and diverse. Throughout the given study, different types of documents will be analyzed, including reports and statistical information provided by various international organizations and NGOs, independent researchers, materials published by public authorities, legislation of the countries and other sources.

Theories regarding the intimate partner violence

However thousands of pages are written about the definition of intimate partner violence, the causes of intimate partner violence still remain obscure. Numerous theories have been offered to explain its origin. There should be distinguished 2 major points of view: the number of theories is focused on the societal level, while others apply at the level of the individual or the couple. (Loue, 2002, p. 21) For the purposes of given work, there should be discussed two theories: *Patriarchy Theory* or in the other words *Feminist theory* that seems to be one of the leading theories to explain the domestic abuse oriented on societal level and *General Systems Theory*.

Patriarchy Theory

Patriarchy theory or otherwise Feminist theory identifies patriarchal thinking and traditions as the root cause of domestic violence. In such societies males do anything to gain control over women and show them their superiority. Active discussions about the given theory began in mid 1970s, when feminist activists and intellectuals brought wife beating in front of public eye. The various academic papers published at that time including the narratives and images of survivors stated the problem of patriarchy: Male's constant desire of dominance displayed on their partners bruised and battered bodies (Anderson & Umberson, 2001, p. 358). During the early stages of modern feminism, the idea of patriarchy was developed as an ultimate cause of women abuse. Despite the fact that given theory exists more than 4 decades, it still remains important and actual. The supporters of the given theory still actively publish articles and state that 'domestic violence is a consequence of patriarchy, and part of a systematic attempt to maintain male dominance in the home and in society' (Tracy, 2007, p. 576)

The patriarchal systems mainly can be divided on macro and micro levels. Macro- level focuses on societal level, more precisely, how law, government, religion, people generally perceive men and women. On the other side, micro-level is consisted of families, behaviors between intimates (Hunnicut, 2009, p. 557).

Despite its popularity, the given theory is mainly criticized due to the difficulty of definition "patriarchy" concept. As critics mention the latter is extremely broad and covers wide range of ideologies and behaviors (Tracy, 2007, p. 581).

According to the feminist paradigm domestic violence is 'culturally supported male enterprise'. As Dobash and Dobash in the end of 1970s argued, the behavior of abusive men is the result of cultural prescriptions by society - they should be aggressive to gain females subordination (Dutton & Nicholls, 2005, p. 683)

General systems theory

General systems theory was developed by Murray Straus to explain how family violence results from a positive, complex feedback system of society. According to the given theory domestic violence is viewed as a system product.

“That system, which operates at the individual, family, and societal levels, includes such factors and processes as the level of conflict inherent in the family, high levels of violence in society, family socialization to violence, cultural norms legitimizing violence, the sexist organization of society, and the multitudinous reasons for the battered person’s toleration of the violence”. (Loue, 2002, p. 28)

According to the given theory sexist organization of society which may offer less opportunities of employment for women, low salaries for the same work, child care responsibility, the dogma that men is head of the family, justification of violence with masculinity and other common stereotypes regarding the role of women in family, may create the system that urges the intimate partner violence against women.

The above offered theories apparently focus on societal level and trying to find out the causes of domestic violence taking into account the customs, attitudes and way of thinking of the society where it occurs. Sometimes the society may have very strict rules that are so deeply rooted in its conscious that centuries are needed to change the manner of thinking. The given theories were chosen by author due to the fact that they seem to be the most relevant to explain the causes of domestic violence phenomena in the South Caucasian region. As the mentioned region is geographically located on the crossroads of Asia and Europe (for centuries invaded by Asian rulers, for ex. Gengis Khan, Timur and etc.) the influences of Asian traditions are still powerful and acceptable. The given fact may be the main explanation of the strictly patriarchal views and rules that all three societies- Azerbaijanis, Georgians and Armenians have regarding the family. In most of the domestic abuse cases the accident is hardly perceived by victims as abnormal behavior and even if women realize that they are treated inhumanely by their partners, they prefer to stay silent due to the strict dogma: “This is private matter not public!”

Analysis

The influences of Soviet Union practice on South Caucasian Countries

As far as the three of the countries Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia were the parts of Soviet Union, logically the scholar should start the research by studying the reasons of main trends of causes of intimate partner violence, the way how society treats the women, what are the main priorities of policymakers, by studying the historical background. The author will start with brief summary of the Soviet Union Era, which unifies the historical heritage of the given countries.

The main task of this chapter will be to provide the reader with information regarding the perception of women during Soviet Union and the impact that such policy has on modern Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia.

To look at a glance the materials describing the period of Soviet Union, one can easily understand that in a traditional view, intimate partner violence against women has been broadly accepted and sometimes even exalted by society. It was strictly seen as a private matter. Male violence against his partner was normalized and legitimized by the patriarchal society, appealing violence as a mean of claiming and defending privilege (Fabian, 2010, p. 1)

PhD thesis of Tamar Sabedashvili – ‘The identification and regulation of domestic violence in Georgia’, defended on Central European University in 2011 gives valuable information not only about Georgian reality but draws a picture of women issues during the Soviet period. In her work, various sources about domestic violence during the Soviet Era are collected and described. One of the most interesting facts that I have found in the mentioned thesis and took my attention was that while Clara Zetkin⁴ has visited the Caucasus to monitor the ongoing processes regarding the women rights in 1920 the situation was very concerning. According to Zetkin, one woman described that their fathers were selling women in a very young age. Husbands treated them cruelly, beating them with a stick and whip sometimes. ‘If they wanted to freeze us, we froze. Our daughter, a joy to us and help around the house, they just as we had been sold’ - she said (Sabedashvili, 2011, p. 50)

It is important to note that we have no reliable evidence of the occurrence of violence between intimate partners during the communist regime (Fabian, 2010, p. 19). While in the Soviet Union central government was proclaiming that family was basis of the state and women were responsible to keep the stability of such basis, Soviet policymakers have preferred to ‘turn blind eye’ and hide the facts of domestic abuse (Sabedashvili, 2011, p. 55). ‘The decision-makers could not allow the acknowledgement of the existence of domestic violence in a society where gender equality was ‘achieved’ and women’s liberation had been completed’ (Sabedashvili, 2011, p. 72).

While having a glance to the historic papers, the reader should notice the alarming reality; during the Soviet Era, the rates of divorces were extremely high compared to the Western world. Naturally, numbers of scientists were intrigued with the possible causes of such high number of divorces in the Soviet Era. According to the research conducted by Andrea Stevenson Sanjian, intergenerational cultural problems were the primary causes of splitting the families in Central Asia and South Caucasus. He mentions that ‘the extended family is still common there, and in-laws tend to be more traditional and more demanding in their expectations. ... Childlessness is also far more likely to cause divorce here, especially in extended families’ (Stevenson Sanjian, 1991, p. 636) . It seems that in Soviet Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, women were actively pressured by their elder family members who were putting too much responsibility over them that pushed married women to take a decision of divorce. Unfortunately, the traditions still continue.

⁴ German communist, activist and women’s right defender

For the purposes of the given study author should pay attention to one particular part of Sabedashvili's dissertation mentioning 'the third meeting of the heads of the Women's departments of South Caucasus' held in 1924. Throughout the conference delegates of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were complaining about the indifference that public authorities expressed towards the women victim cases.

'The existing Regional and People's Courts are so overloaded with work that often the cases of worker and peasant women are kept for months among chancellery papers. These cases cannot be put on hold: husbands are often kicking out their wives with under-age children on the street. Poor mothers are left literally on the streets without a piece of bread for their children and then they appeal to Woman's Departments and ask for help. (Sabedashvili, 2011, p. 94)

Clearly from all the above mentioned information, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have received the heavy legacy of Soviet Era. In the Soviet Union, despite the existence of domestic violence as an acute problem, the public authorities were permanently trying to ignore it. Women were the subjects of sale and purchase, severe abuse, beating, slapping and etc. Due to such heritage, identifying and combating the domestic violence in an adequate way is still ongoing process in three of the South Caucasian Countries.

The legislative framework regarding the domestic violence of South Caucasian States

'Two thirds of countries have laws in place against domestic violence...'
(UN Women, 2011, p. 33)

As the title of one chapter of UN Woman report *Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice 2011-2012* says 'It is not enough to have laws in place, they must be implemented' (UN Women, 2011, p. 18) . There are several cases where state's incapacity to have adequate legal basis or its failure to follow the requirements of legislation, ended up fatefully the lives of female victims of intimate partner violence. Thus, not only the laws on papers are important, but also the real mechanisms of enforcement are crucial for success on the way to combat the domestic violence. Throughout the given chapter, the legislative framework of South Caucasian states regarding the intimate partner violence will be discussed.

After long-term struggle to separate from Soviet Union, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia finally gained independence in 1991. Out of three countries first was Georgia who recognized itself as independent on 9th April, then consequently was Armenia on 21st September and a month later, Azerbaijan on 18th October. After such crucial change and newly started independent life, the mentioned states intensively started to get involved in International political life as individual players. One of the first steps on the way to get involved into western civilized life, appeared signing the different International conventions. The implication of such political will was acceding UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by Armenia in 1993, Georgia in 1994 and Azerbaijan in 1995 (United Nations) successively. According to the Article 5 of the given Convention,

‘States Parties should take all appropriate measures ‘to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women’ (United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979, p. Article 5)

Unfortunately, as of today, despite some significant efforts, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are unable to fully implement the requirements of the aforementioned convention. In fact, the standards prescribed by various international acts have rarely been converted into effective laws and policies on the national level. Sadly, implementation of international human rights instruments ‘have more symbolic than actual power in Post-Soviet states’ (Sabedashvili, 2011, pp. 21-22) While talking about legal measures that mentioned states have been carried against intimate partner violence problem, it is noteworthy that the situation is not too helpless. Out of the three regional countries, Azerbaijan and Georgia already adopted the laws against domestic violence, while Armenian society still discusses the mentioned legal changes. Throughout the given chapter the author will try to offer brief summary of the legislative framework that regional countries have against intimate partner violence.

Azerbaijan

As it was mentioned above, Azerbaijan and Georgia seem to be more active in the process of implementation the international requirements on the national level rather than Armenia. After joining the Council of Europe’s Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence in November 29, 2006 Azerbaijan expressed readiness to reduce the domestic violence through various measures, out of which one was developing the legislative base (Gender Association "Symmetry", 2011, p. 13) As a result of critical comments of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women that was followed to the initial report of Azerbaijan in 2009, emphasizing the problem of absence of law against domestic abuse and the prevalence of gender stereotypes, Azerbaijani lawmakers started to work more actively on a new law. Subsequently, on 22 June, 2010 the ‘Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence’ was adopted being ‘significant step forward by the government of Azerbaijan in tackling the global phenomenon of domestic violence’ (OSCE Office in Baku, December, 2013, p. 21). According to the given law ‘domestic violence is any intentional act of one member of the family that infringes the legal rights and freedoms of another family member, ex-partners, relatives living together or close relatives doing physical, sexual, economical, psychological harms and moral damage, or constituting a threat of physical or psychological harm’ (Gender Association "Symmetry", 2011, p. 13) The aim of the law is the prevention of domestic violence and its negative consequences, providing “legal assistance and social protection” for victims‘ (OSCE Office in Baku, December, 2013, p. 11). Such assistance may be protective orders, free rehabilitative courses in the crisis centers, judicial and medical aid, victim’s stay in shelters up to 3 months and so on. The law also provides the opportunity to use different measures against abuser, such as short and long term provisional orders from 30 up to 180 days, written warning, fine and in case of criminal cases punishment according to criminal code (Gender Association "Symmetry", 2011, p. 13). Despite that the

possibility of issuance both short-term and long-term protection orders is provided by law, in fact they work in practice very rarely (OSCE Office in Baku, December, 2013, p. 17).

What about the criminal liability for the domestic violence, the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan lists only the general crimes such as threat, leading to suicide, cruel treatment, etc. that should be used in case of intimate partner violence but there are no special articles focused on such kinds of crimes. '[...], the Domestic Violence Law relies on perpetrators of domestic violence being charged with those crimes which are already enumerated by the Criminal Code' (OSCE Office in Baku, December, 2013, p. 14).

Georgia

In Georgia the situation regarding the domestic violence legislation is essentially the same with little improvements. After joining the CEDAW without reservations in 1994, the Committee reviewed the first report of the Georgia in 1999. The initial government report did not contain any reference to domestic violence, which was the subject of critics similarly to Azerbaijan. The Committee members regularly recommended Georgia 'to put in place measures, including legislation to combat domestic violence' (Sabedashvili, 2011, pp. 205-207). Thus, as a result of international encouragement, the Law on Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Support to its Victims was adopted on 25 May, 2006, 'although most MPs failed to understand it and even cracked jokes about it.' (Chitashvili, Javakhishvili, Arutiunov, Tsuladze, & Chachanidze, 2010, p. 19). The definition of the domestic violence according to the article 3 of the given law is following:

'Domestic violence is the violation of constitutional rights and freedoms of one family member by another family member through neglect and/or physical, psychological, economic, sexual violence or coercion'.
(Georgian Law on Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Support to its Victims, 2006, p. Article 3)

The given Law allows the use of administrative, criminal and civil measures where appropriate, and provides new tools: a protective order and a restrictive order, to be issued for the protection of victim by courts and police respectively. (Chitashvili, Javakhishvili, Arutiunov, Tsuladze, & Chachanidze, 2010, p. 20). The mechanisms of Restrictive and Protective Orders (with minor modifications) were borrowed from the United Nations Model Legislation. The issuing authority of a Restrictive Order is police, which submits it to the court for approval within 24 hours (Sabedashvili, 2011, p. 220). Protective Order is an act issued by administrative court mainly with the request of victim (or other persons prescribed by law⁵) of domestic violence. According to the Article 12 of the Law on Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Support to its Victims: 'Protective orders shall be issued for a period of up to six months. A court shall specify its validity' while 'A restraining order shall be issued for a period of up to one month [...]' (Georgian Law on Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Support to its Victims, 2006, p. Article 12) The given law additionally

⁵Victim's family member or, with the consent of the victim, a person providing him/her with medical, legal or psychological aid, has the right to request a Protective Order.

provides victims with opportunities of shelters, crisis centers and other types of establishments that are in accordance of international requirements.

The most positive thing that distinguishes Georgia from its regional neighbors is the criminalization of domestic violence by Criminal Code, which entered into force in May, 2012. According to the new amendments, two new Articles 11¹ and 126¹ were added to the main criminal act of the state. Article 11¹ defines a circle of family members and refers to the list of crimes throughout the code that if are committed between family members reference must be done to the mentioned Article 11¹, while Article 126¹ determines the criminal nature of domestic violence ("systematic abuse, blackmail, or humiliation of one family member by another if such acts cause physical pain or suffering." (Roudik, 2012)) and establishes responsibility for committed acts (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia).

Despite the criminalization of the domestic violence with the new article 126¹ of Criminal Code of Georgia, the mentioned article is not actively used in practice. According to the presentation made by the Chief prosecutor's Office of Georgia, during the criminal proceedings more than half of domestic violence cases (55.3%) are qualified as *Beating* (Article 125), 20.1% as *Intentional minor damage to health* (Article 118) and only 10.2% of cases as *Domestic Violence* (Article 126¹) (Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, 2014, p. 3)

Armenia

The situation in Armenia is the most concerning in region. Yet in 2011, the NGO "Proactive Society" which conducted the Domestic Violence Survey mentioned the absence of official definition of 'domestic violence' and its boundaries, to be one of the most serious challenges for Armenia. The representatives of NGO were concerned that legislation did not provide any characteristics of 'domestic violence' (NGO "Proactive Society", 2011, p. 4). Unfortunately, the definitional problems still exist. Armenia is one of the few remaining countries in the Eastern Europe that has not passed anti domestic violence legislation yet. Despite it was the first South Caucasian state that became the part of CEDAW in 1993, Armenia still hesitates to take into consideration the main recommendations of the International society. Hence, Intensive involvement of foreign forces and several activities of local NGOs imposed the Armenian government to adopt the Strategic Action Plan on Gender Policy and Combating Gender Based Violence 2011-2015. The mentioned plan foresees the actions for preventing domestic violence, such as workshops for professionals and support services and rising public awareness campaigns about the problem (Zeitlin, 2013, p. 2) In 2013, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues June Zeitlin in her report described the situation regarding the anti domestic violence legislation in Armenia. She emphasized the fact that despite a draft Domestic Violence Law has been developing for several years and at a glance the consensus was reached over it, the government returned the draft law 'for further coordination and revision on the grounds that some provisions were inconsistent with existing provisions of the penal code and that a comprehensive reform of the penal law was expected in 2016' (Zeitlin, 2013, p. 5). On the regional meeting in November, 2014, Ms. Karine Soudjian, Head of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia stated that 'Combating violence against women, including domestic violence is among the human rights priorities of Armenia' (Soudjian, 6 November 2014), but in fact,

nowadays the interests of domestic violence victims are only protected by general provisions of Criminal Code of Armenia that in most cases fail to cover even some forms of domestic abuse (NGO "Proactive Society", 2011, p. 6)

Impact of public opinion on domestic violence in the South Caucasus - do stereotypes really matter?

The following chapter of the thesis appears to be the core part of the analysis where the impact of societal stereotypes, the influence of common traditional views of South Caucasian societies on the domestic violence will be discussed. The analysis will offer the picture of Azerbaijani, Georgian and Armenian communities consequently that share the same kind of traditional thinking regarding the gender roles.

It is noteworthy the cultural ideology of some countries approves the violence against women. Moreover, religious and historic traditions do not prohibit punishing and beating wives. In such countries the physical punishment of women was mostly permitted, appearing to be the expression of ownership⁶ (Gogiberidze, Peradze, Mikanadze, & Saakashvili, 2011, p. 28). Historically, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia were strictly patriarchal states where the dominant role of men was the rule. As a result of such traditional approach towards women which assigned social stigma to them, domestic violence is still serious problem and prevalent in all three countries. Throughout the following chapter, the main focus will be directed to the cultural causes of intimate partner violence in South Caucasian region.

Dilemma of Azerbaijanian women – “Tolerate or Divorce”?

The family is one of the most important institutes in Azerbaijani Society (The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Azerbaijan, 2007, p. 52). The fact how society perceives one's family has serious effect on the individual's identification itself due to the fact that local society is actively judging a person with his/her familial background. While the South Caucasus region is closely located to Asian continent, historically influenced by Eastern world, it is not surprising that Azerbaijan's traditional culture establishes strictly regulated social roles for women and men. As it was mentioned in previous chapters, during the Soviet Union Era, women gained *de jure* independence and equality but *de facto* they remained trapped in traditional cultural roles. In such conditions, females in family and society were perceived as “second sex”. (United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Woman, 8 March, 2005, p. 20) Nowadays, despite country's development, mentality of society is not changing too successfully. The societal roles of females still play serious role in the process of becoming victims of domestic violence. According to the data offered by official State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan the married women are most likely to become the victims of physical violence. 13 % of women report that they experienced some kind of violent act by their current husband or partner. (State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan Republic & Macro International Inc., 2008, p. 219)

Despite intimate partner violence is serious problem in Azerbaijan, not all the forms are recognized by law. Traditionally such specific forms of violence as are so called ‘honor related crimes’, female genital mutilation and so on are

⁶ The translation from Georgian to English is made by author

considered as criminal acts, but mostly common behaviors like physical and sexual abuse against women in family are not considered to be criminal behavior (Woman Against Violence Europe (WAVE), 2011, p. 48). The fact that anti-domestic law of Azerbaijan remains as ‘paper law’ (Aliyeva Gureyeva, 2012, p. 5) is tightly connected to the so-called ‘national values system’. While actively working on the law itself almost all stakeholders were discussing about culture or ‘mentality’ named as the primary factor that would impede its practical implementation (Aliyeva Gureyeva, 2012, p. 10). ‘In many spheres in which inequalities between men and women are identified, Azerbaijan’s “traditional” or “Eastern” culture is used as an explanation and even a justification for continued inequality’ (U.S. Agency for international Development (USAID), 15 January, 2004, p. 5)

The research conducted in Azerbaijan by U.S. Agency for international Development (USAID) in 2004 confirmed the fact that domestic violence was not adequately understood by people. It was considered as ‘traditional norm within the general population’. According to the mentioned research, the fear was expressed that re-emerging patriarchal traditions will cause serious danger to the women role in Azerbaijan and increase the prevalence of gender-based violence. (International Rescue Committee (IRC), June 2004, p. 5)

A brief example of the very rooted stereotypical thinking about women rights could be offered as following: during the ongoing discussions about domestic law of Azerbaijan the Deputy Chief of the Committee on Social Policy - Musa Guliyev expressed protest against such legislative initiative. According to him, in case if they could pass such kind of law, he could be unable to ask his daughter where she spent night due to the possibility that she could file him for court. In the words of Guliyev, the idea of such laws derives from Christian countries and is against to Muslim-Turkish world traditions (Aliyeva Gureyeva, 2012, p. 4).

According to Gender Assessment Survey conducted by USAID, around 38% of Azerbaijani women suffer from physical violence from a family member (U.S. Agency for international Development (USAID), 15 January, 2004, p. 15) . Due to the strict social rules, the facts of domestic violence are not talked openly. The victims prefer to deny its occurrence in public to avoid shame of family. As one Azerbaijani women say “We see and hear these things happening, but we don’t discuss them” (International Rescue Committee (IRC), June 2004, p. 18). According to the Survey conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), according to the majority of Azerbaijanis, family life is thought to be very private and taboo matter, ‘characterized as a “dark forest” and a “bag full of secrets” (The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Azerbaijan, 2007, p. 67) Herewith, It seems a serious problem that in most of the cases women are unable to perceive the violence from their partners as abnormality. According to the report of State committee on Women’s problems of the Republic of Azerbaijan, only ‘7% of women who have been subjected to violence regard it as a factor that complicates their family life. This demonstrates the expressed tendency of turning violence into an everyday and permissible occurrence. Unfortunately, official statistics do not reflect the real picture of crimes against women in the home’ (State Committee on Women's Problems of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2004, p. 10).

In 2004 the assessment was conducted in Azerbaijan supported by international Rescue Committee in Azerbaijan, where participants were offered the scenario of everyday domestic violence act. Unsurprisingly, after reading the scenario many participants asked “Is this really so bad”? “This is normal” was common answer of most of them. For instance about the rape case, the majority said that having sexual intercourse when husband wants, is his right despite spouse’s will. While asking the respondents the question what can women do to change her life, they were mentioning only two radically different options: *Tolerate* or *Divorce*. The latter is mostly hypothetical option and used only in case of apparent damage to health and life, otherwise “A divorced woman has a very slim chance of remarrying, regardless of the reason she divorced” (International Rescue Committee (IRC), June 2004, p. 19). There was no any median between the given options. ‘The wife’s only duties are to “stay and obey” and comply with her husband’s desires. As one woman said “if my husband says yogurt is black, yogurt is black” (International Rescue Committee (IRC), June 2004, p. 18) It is fact that, that customs and beliefs still dictate women’s life in Azerbaijan. The Traditional view is that female is dependent on male and women are subject to traditional culture’s standards and values. It is not surprising that the victims of domestic violence rarely protest due to the fact that such stereotypes have been imposed on them from an early age and are considered as ‘genuine’ roles of the representatives of both sexes. The main duty of women is to take care of household, while man is the taker of essential decisions (United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Woman, 8 March, 2005, p. 21). Making protest about such ordinary thing as it is being slapped by partner, sometimes is not tolerated by society. As one female participant of UNDP Survey said, “If a woman tells the neighbors, or any outsider about it [beating] or goes to court, people will start gossiping about her. People will spread rumors, even if she is innocent.” (The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Azerbaijan, 2007, p. 67).

Stereotypes of Georgia - Obedient wife, ‘good’ wife

The rates of violent acts in Georgian population vary from 5% to 31%. Despite of this, Georgian society likely to Azerbaijan perceives domestic violence as a private matter and avoids expressing any kind of reactions on it⁷ (Javakhishvili, Lortkipanidze, & Petriashvili, 6 December, 2012, p. 4). The problem of domestic violence in Georgia is discussed in many international organizations’ official reports. For example, Amnesty international in the report published in 2006, mentions ‘thousands of Georgian women are subjected to domestic violence on a regular basis. They are hit, beaten, raped, and in some cases even killed. Many more endure psychological violence and economic control’. (Amnesty International, 2006, p. 1) According to the very recent survey conducted by United Nations Development Fund in 2013, the gender related stereotypes are widespread and powerful, that promotes existence of domestic violence in family. Hence, it is important to conduct deep analysis of the problem⁸ (Tchabukiani, Jibladze, & Ubilava, 2014, p. 30).

Clearly, the situation in Georgia essentially has a lot of similarities to Azerbaijani reality. Here as in other regional states, the society is extremely traditional where normative roles are strongly attached to gender. The behaviors expected of

⁷ The translation from Georgian to English is made by Author

⁸ The translation from Georgian to English is made by Author

different sexes are reasonably diverse. Only 1 percent of Georgians believe that female should be the decision maker at home. Two-thirds of Georgians consider that the mentioned role should have the men (Naskidashvili, 2011, p. 2) . Also similarly to Azerbaijan, in Georgia perception of domestic violence by victims as abnormal behavior is a serious problem. The survey of American Bar Association / Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative conducted in 2006 found out that 77 % of respondents in Georgia were hiding domestic violence and 81% considered the fear of public opinion as its primary reason (Sabedashvili, 2011, p. 126). ‘The experts think that the main obstacle in their work is the fact that very often women do not perceive themselves as victims and therefore, do not seek any help. They recall many cases in which they think “a woman is a victim, however she doesn’t perceive herself as a victim and considers it an ordinary thing if her husband gets angry and beats her’ (Chitashvili, Javakhishvili, Arutiunov, Tsuladze, & Chachanidze, 2010, p. 73).

The nationwide survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Georgia conducted in 2010 revealed that 50.7% of women believed that a good wife should comply her husband even when she disagree with his decisions. Additionally, 45% believed that a man must clearly show his wife/partner that he is the head of the family. (Japaridze, Zhghenti, Barkaia, & Amashukeli, 2013, p. 5)

Recently conducted survey about gender attitudes and perceptions among young people in Georgia revealed that despite reasonable development of country in different fields over the last twenty years, stereotypes and traditional views in regard with gender and its roles are still prevalent not only among elder people but also in youth today (Japaridze, Zhghenti, Barkaia, & Amashukeli, 2013, p. 10).

The high tolerance of domestic violence by Georgian society can be explained due to still active prevalence of the opinion - the head of family is man and women should obey him, otherwise husband has right to use violence and show her who is the ‘boss’ in family. Obedient wife is perceived as ‘good’ wife by Georgian society, who has to follow her husband even in case if she does not want to have a sexual intercourse with him. One more difficulty that prevents victim women to escape from family violence is public opinion regarding divorce. Georgian women perceive divorce as “catastrophe” or “end of the world”. Public opinion about so called ‘returned women’ is negative and the reason is mainly “What will people say?!”. The result of such attitude is that despite occurrence of domestic violence in families, parents do not support the idea of returning their married daughters back and therefore discredit family’s reputation in the public eye. (Javakhishvili, Lortkipanidze, & Petriashvili, 6 December, 2012, p. 13)

Due to such stereotypical thinking, many women blame themselves and try to behave in other way to avoid the possible ‘punishment’ from their partners. Sometimes they believe that they deserved such treatment. Nana Agapishvili from the NGO Ndoba speaks about the widespread societal attitude towards domestic violence: "If a man beats a woman that is considered bad behavior in Georgia. However, if people find out that it happens in a family then it means it is somehow a bad family and the woman is probably doing something wrong." According to one of the study, over 90 per cent of women across Georgia considered that the "woman should be more modest and try not to provoke violence" (Amnesty International, 2006, p. 6).

In many cases, the fact that women live in extended families makes the situation even worse. As one interviewee of the National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women in Georgia said she has experienced all types of domestic violence from her husband during 20 years of their marriage. The main cause of such behavior was her husband's family members who constantly provoked him. Especially active was mother-in-law who influenced his son (Chitashvili, Javakhishvili, Arutiunov, Tsuladze, & Chachanidze, 2010, p. 67)

It is fact that main work through the process of changing stereotypical thinking should be conducted with youth, because change in mentality and transformation of way of thinking as people grow older becomes extremely difficult. If middle aged persons think that domestic violence is the normal behavior, it is almost impossible to persuade them to change their beliefs (United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination (Thirty-sixth session), 22 September, 2006, p. 7).

Public opinion regarding domestic violence in Armenia

“Everybody wants to know what sexual orientation, belief and/or religion her/his neighbor has got, but everybody gets all deaf and blind when their neighbor is brutally beaten in the family”
(Society Without Violence 'NGO', 2011, p. 4)

Like in other regional countries, domestic violence seems to be the serious problem also in Armenia. In case of Armenia the valuable sources of information regarding domestic violence are different surveys conducted by nongovernmental organizations. Such surveys reveal that the majority of domestic violence cases are latent and not reported to official authorities. Reporting of domestic violence is strongly stigmatized by local society (Amnesty International, 2008, p. 1). As it was mentioned in the previous chapters Armenia still does not have any specific law against domestic violence that is the result of fierce public opposition. Due to the deeply rooted stereotypes, Armenian society was extremely resistant to the activities of different NGOs who were trying to raise public awareness about domestic violence problem yet in the beginning of 2000s (Johnson J. E., 2007, p. 386).

In thousands of cases, women in Armenia suffer serious injury or even death by the hands of their partners. The researcher from Yerevan State University have conducted a study and found out that over 30% of all murders between 1988 and 1998 were committed within the family (Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights , December 2000, p. 2). The fact that thousands of women are regularly experiencing domestic violence in Armenia was approved by Amnesty International's surveys, conducted in 2007 and 2008. According to the obtained data more than one out of four women in Armenia has experienced physical violence by their family members (including husbands).

According to the results of the survey conducted by United Nations Population Fund in 2008 it was revealed by the answers that intimate partner violence is common for Armenia which is expressed mainly in psychological violence and controlling behavior. In accordance with results, 61% of women had ever had partners had experienced controlling behavior, 25% psychological violence/abuse,

8.9% physical violence (National Statistical Service of RA; UNFPA “Combating Gender-Based Violence In the South Caucasus” Project, 2010, p. 10).

To speak about the influence of societal norms on domestic violence level it is important to pay attention how the family as social phenomena is understood in Armenia. ‘Historically, the Armenian extended family, with as many as 20 to 50 relatives living together, was headed by a patriarch (usually the oldest male relative) and consisted of his wife, their sons, the son’s wives and all unmarried daughters’ (Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights , December 2000, p. 7). It was traditional approach that women had to be silent and passive. She had to obey orders of her husband and do not resist anything. It is fact that strong family ties are integral part of Armenian culture. Due to this perception of family the institutionalized culture of silence is created for the victims of domestic abuse. Pressure on victims to keep the information about family conflicts inside is the rule in Armenian society (Amnesty International, 2008, p. 2). Unfortunately, such mental heritage still influences the married women in Armenia nowadays. In Armenian culture women are extremely close about their intimate life. For them it is crucial to save their social image and reputation in other person’s eyes. Due to this stereotypical thinking and fear of being ashamed, very often the respondents of surveys in Armenia are not honest with interviewers (National Statistical Service of RA; UNFPA “Combating Gender-Based Violence In the South Caucasus” Project, 2010, p. 17) Therefore, high level of latency of domestic violence crimes in Armenia mainly is caused by societal norms. Society generally does not tolerate the victims but on contrary, mainly blame women to be provocative in family conflicts. As United Nations Population Fund’s report (dated of 2011) says the official statistics regarding domestic violence fail to present real picture. It ‘captures only the tip of “iceberg” since most acts of violence (in particular when committed by intimate partner or an acquaintance or when the acts are of psychological or, especially, of sexual nature) are either underreported or go unreported at all (National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, UNFPA “Combating Gender-Based Violence in the South Caucasus” Project, 2011, p. 20)

Existence of stereotypes is inherent to every society but as the representative of NGO ‘Society Without Violence’ in the introduction part of report says,

‘If in other societies those stereotypes change and break down along with the development phases of the society and new ones occur, in Armenia stereotypes are transmitted from generation to generation like a national value. Each and every person, if not consciously then subconsciously, bears within him/herself this or that stereotypical thinking.’ (Society Without Violence 'NGO', 2011, p. 3)

Thus in cases of reporting of domestic violence, victim’s relatives, friends and other from her milieu persuade her to give up the idea. Many people interviewed by Minnesota Advocates to explore general attitudes towards the domestic violence problem in Armenia, mainly were focusing on women than abusers. They blamed victims for provoking the partner (Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights , December 2000, p. 26) Unfortunately, in patriarchal societies like Armenian, public opinion always is focused on men, while “abandoned woman”, “lone mother”, “lone woman” (Society Without Violence 'NGO', 2011, p. 24) almost have no chance of remarrying.

The application of Patriarchy theory and General systems Theory to the current situation regarding domestic violence in the South Caucasus

Before speaking about the theories, it is necessary to classify them by the level of analysis. There are two main groups of theories: 1) Macro-level, which are focused on the phenomena outside of the individual, such as neighborhood, society and 2) Micro-level which examine the characteristics of the individual (e.g. attitudes and behaviors) (Muftić, 2009, p. 35). Both have their advantages and disadvantages. The macro-level theories regarding domestic violence are Ecological Theory, Evolutionary theory, Feminist theory while theories focused on individual level are Social Learning Theory, Marital Power theory, Resource theory and etc. In the analysis of the given study 2 major macro-level theories will be applied: Patriarchy otherwise Feminist Theory and General Systems Theory. Such choice was determined by the aim and nature of the given research itself. The presented master thesis aims to investigate how public opinion impacts the domestic violence level in three South Caucasian States - Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. While as it was mentioned the macro-level theories are interested to find out the causes of crime by studying the broad concepts, e.g. environment, society and general system that affects on perpetrator, it is logical to use macro-level theories for the purposes of the given study. The second reason is that, while conducting the cross-cultural research and qualitative content analysis that are based only on secondary data, using macro-level theories seems more appropriate. Given methodology allows one to study the general structure and attitudes of societies towards particular problem of three states but is unable to explore the causes of violence on individual level that needs more intensive work.

Patriarchy theory

As it was mentioned in the literature review chapter, for the purposes of the presented master thesis, out of various theories explaining the domestic violence, there was chosen two the most appropriate - Patriarchy theory and General Systems theory. The main similarity of the given theories is that they both try to find out the root of problem in society, the milieu that perpetrator has and the rules of community where the domestic violence happens. The most noteworthy sign of the feminist approach is that it recognizes gender as a central component of analysis. According to the feminist approach the victims are explicitly women while perpetrators are men. One of the most serious criticisms of the given theory is that it does not address such forms of conflicts as same-sex violence or female violence against man. The author of the given study generally agrees such criticism but it is fact domestic violence in the South Caucasian region is straightforwardly gender-focused and tendency agrees the principles of feminist theory. The author of the thesis as native Georgian never heard about the domestic violence incidents where the roles were changed - men presented victims and women-perpetrators. It is the similarly very rare in other regional states as well.

The second and the most serious criticism of the Feminist Theory is that 'If patriarchy is the ultimate basis for all violence against women' (Tracy, 2007, p. 578), then why all men do not beat their women? In the system where approving one's masculinity leads him to beat his partner, why only limited number of men decide to become perpetrator? In fact, the given argument is logical. Mentioning patriarchy as one and only reason of all domestic abuse cases seems to be an absurd. It is natural that while exploring the causes of such complex phenomena, as it is

domestic violence, involvement of not only societal factors but also individual ones are needed. The various individual factors (e.g. personality disorders, brain functioning and hormones) may significantly shape the behavioral patterns of men. Having noted such weaknesses there should be admitted the enormous significance of given theory in the process of exploring reasons of domestic violence in South Caucasian region. Patriarchy may not be the sole reason of violence but it may create the tendency, while such tendency may create the reality - reality where abuse is justified, where victims can not perceive it as deviation. Generally, while it is almost impossible to find out one universal theory to explain the cause of domestic violence, the goal of the researcher should be to explore and apply the one that fits better with his/her research. In the given case, the author considers that the fact that domestic violence is such prevalent and regional states still struggle to admit it as problem is mainly caused by the societal thinking and patriarchal attitudes. While the given analysis does not focus on individual level and offers only the macro-level perspective the Patriarchy theory despite some exaggerations and limitations seems still relevant.

One of the cornerstones of the Feminist theory or otherwise Patriarchy theory is the assumption that violent behavior committed by men towards women is encouraged by society. "You are men and you should proof your masculinity even using the violent methods"- such attitude is transmitted to men from the very childhood. Unfortunately, this is sad reality of the South Caucasus. In Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia boys are raised by parents with the thinking that for them almost everything is permitted, but obviously forbidden for girls. The research regarding son preference in South Caucasus in 2014 showed clear pattern that women still hold the "second sex" status. In a words of a interviewee living in rural community of Armenia, the immoral behavior of daughters leaves a big spot on one's public reputation, but son's misbehavior (even if he will commit crime and go to prison) may be changed very easily. The interviewed woman in one of the Georgian districts was speaking about the hardships that girls have nowadays. According to her words "because of the "Georgian mentality," girls commit suicide if they become pregnant and the boy refuses to marry them" (Dudwick, 2015, p. 14). In accordance to the same report, recent years it is tendency for newly-married couples to live separately than in extended families. Such changes are caused due to the permanent conflicts between mothers-in-laws and daughters-in-laws (Dudwick, 2015, p. 18). As it was mentioned, in the previous sub-chapters very often the reason of inner conflicts is parents that provoke the incident between couple. Especially, while it is general opinion for South Caucasian men that mother is the 'sacred' person whose word is the most important even in adulthood.

The second element which plays important role in forming the public opinion and patriarchal views is religion and the impact of religious institutions in South Caucasian nations. Despite the fact that Soviet state actively was involved in massive secularization process, surprisingly society in all three regional states express extremely high levels of trust in religious institutions compared to other post-soviet states (Charles, 2009, p. 1). The current facts and figures clearly indicate that absolute majority of population believe themselves as a part of national religious institutions. According to the conducted studies, In Azerbaijan the 93.4% of the population is Muslims. In Georgia, around 83.9% of the society is the member of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Approximately 94.7% belongs to the local Apostolic Church in Armenia (Charles, 2009, p. 7). It is clear that despite low levels of religious practice (fasting, attending the church and other religious rituals)

the population in the region is still significantly attached to various religious institutions. The figures of *trust* are also noteworthy. The Annual nationwide survey data results from the Caucasus Barometer in 2008 and 2007 conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center show that 63% of population has trust in religious institutions in Azerbaijan, 86% in Georgia and 80% in Armenia (Charles, 2010, p. 4). Obviously in such situations the perceptions and main trends spread by local religious institutions in regard with gender roles in family and generally have extremely serious impact on forming public opinion and stereotypes.

The religious views seriously influence the societal views of particular nations. However, recent decade's trend of secularization throughout the Europe reasonably changed the public opinion about gender roles. The industrialization and development of different social institutions significantly reduced the importance of religion. While historically, people's traditional beliefs and practices were mainly determined by church, the demotion of its image impacted consequently on the changes of public opinion (Voicu, 2009, p. 145).

Despite the secularization tendencies, as it was referred above the South Caucasian states still remain to be tightly attached to religious institutions that may have the important impact on society's way of thinking.

To sum up, the core principles of Patriarchy theory are applicable to the explanation of main causes of domestic violence in the South Caucasus. As the given theory offers the predetermined gender roles and absolution of aggressive behavior committed by men against their partner to be the basis of intimate partner violence, it seems to be the adequate theory in respect of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. The societies in mentioned countries still remain faithful to patriarchal views, that domestic violence is family matter and women should tolerate violent behavior of men, who is still considered as superior creature.

General Systems Theory

'General systems theory' or sometimes mentioned as simply 'Systems theory' see domestic violence to be the phenomena caused by not only by single event but as a result of system, the system that encourages male to use violence against a partner. The given theory as it was mentioned previously was developed by Murray Straus in 1973. According to it, the domestic violence is produced by the system involving individual's pathologies as well as cultural influences and societal norms they live with (Fisher & Lab, 2010, p. 502). Comparing to other theories trying to find explanations of domestic violence in individual level and mainly blame the perpetrator, the presented theory states that 'violence within a family is the norm, not the exception' (Lawson, 2012, p. 575). The mentioned theory includes several different factors to explain such complex concept as it is domestic violence. For the purposes of the given study the author decided to use General Systems theory due to its comprehensiveness and ability to cover different spheres while explaining the domestic violence. As it is clear the problem of domestic violence in the regional countries is importantly linked to the society and the traumas it has experienced. The impact of public's traditional views and patriarchal thinking on the perpetrators and victims will not be discussed more extensively while it was already discussed in conjunction with 'Patriarchy Theory'. Here main discussion will be on the general lifestyle and problems of society that may create the foundation of increasing levels of domestic abuse.

Number of scientists suggests that the aggression level in Georgia is significantly high compared to other European States. As an explanation of such high level of violent mood throughout the population, it is stated several armed conflicts that Georgia has experienced during the last two decades, including Samachablo and Abkhazia regional conflicts, civil war and recently (in 2008) the war with Russia that resulted in loss of South Ossetia region. They assume that maybe the permanent readiness for military operations and experience of having 'bloody past' seriously impacted the psychology of the whole nation (Shalikashvili, 2011, p. 291). Essentially the same problem could be seen in the mentality of other regional states: Azerbaijan and Armenia. Both of the mentioned countries have experience of local conflicts that may have influenced the national mentality in general. To take as the example, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between the stated countries (that escalated in 1988 and turned into war in 1990s) resulted around 30 000 killed (BBC News, 2015) and hundreds of thousands internally displaced persons. Such stressful past provided the societies of the South Caucasus region with the heavy psychological traumas. But it is not the sole reason. One of the most important additional reasons of high level of male violence against their partner in the region is their so called 'lost positions'. While after the collapse of Soviet Union the painful process of building new states begun, the massive unemployment raised as the biggest challenge. Men who traditionally were supposed to be the breadwinners and main supporters of families stayed unemployed and faced the reality that their women started to struggle for livelihood. To proof their necessity for family and regain control, the males with already shaken psychology started to express violence towards their women. In sum, the system where the violence is considered excusable for males and approved by patriarchal society produces the violent environment throughout the whole region. Taking into consideration the mentioned factors, the General Systems Theory that sees domestic violence as system product is applicable to the situation in three of the countries: Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia.

Recommendations for further development of the current situation

While it is clear that local stereotypes and traditional thinking of societies still remain the main problem in the process of combating domestic violence, different measures should be done to solve the problem. 'Changing the social and cultural models underlying stereotypes or reinforcing the notion of women's subordinate role requires a two-pronged approach: legislative and practical, i.e. mechanisms for overcoming stereotypes' (United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Woman, 8 March, 2005, p. 24). Throughout the following chapter, the number of recommendations should be offered by the author that could improve the situation in the South Caucasian region.

Legislative framework

As it was already stated in analysis part, Azerbaijan and Georgia have already conducted several legislative changes. Both of them have adopted the laws against domestic violence that should be considered as significant improvement. Despite such progressive steps against domestic violence there are still number of recommendations regarding legislation that should be taken into account timely. As it was mentioned, Georgia has done the most out of regional countries with

adopting the anti-domestic law in 2006 and then criminalization of domestic violence in 2012. But still it has serious work ahead with regard the implementation of such laws in practice. Especially, Intensive measures should be carried to raise public awareness about the rights provided by law, for instance, informational campaigns explaining the concept of protective and restraining orders, shelters and hotline possibilities and etc.

Speaking about Azerbaijan, it should be noted that despite some positive changes more intensive work on the amendments of Criminal Code is needed. Due to the fact that domestic violence is especially prevalent throughout the country, solely general provisions of the Criminal Code could be ineffective on addressing the domestic violence incidents.

Recommendations regarding the legislative framework for Armenia are more diverse than for Georgia and Azerbaijan. It is not novelty that for years the international society, especially the United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Woman is actively urging Armenian State to adopt the Law against domestic violence. In fact, Armenia still remains throughout the very limited number of states that does not have legislation against such serious issue. The problem why Armenia still resists such legislative novelties should be found again in mentality. As Cooper and Duban conclude Armenian society views violence as 'normal' where women are silent individuals 'who are oppressed by or at the mercy of their husbands and their husbands' families' (Ishkhanian, 2007, p. 492). In the light of such situation, the society just not feels the necessity of prohibition the violence that is not seen as problem. As Ermine Ishkhanian states when some NGOs (supported by western European donors) started anti-domestic campaigns in Armenia there was fierce criticism and resistance from public, academic world and even media. The main reason of such resistance was the opinion that domestic violence is not as acute for Armenia is as it was claimed; and all that 'pseudo-activeness' was imported by 'western world' (Ishkhanian, 2007, p. 503). In such situation raising public awareness is especially essential.

Rising public awareness

As the survey conducted in Georgia showed the conservative thinking and stereotypes are still fairly prevalent even among youngsters (see the report 'Gender attitudes and perceptions among young people in Georgia', conducted by Center for Social Sciences in 2013) (Japaridze, Zhghenti, Barkaia, & Amashukeli, 2013, p. 11) . Based on the above-mentioned results, I think that more work is needed at schools and universities to change the way of thinking right from the beginning. Dealing with elder people who were born in Soviet Era and throughout their conscious life respected patriarchal values seems to be more challenging than starting with the new attitude with future generations. As the report funded by World bank (that studied gender-related attitudes of all three regional states) recommends, combating domestic violence should be addressed with 'educating men and women alike: women must internalize the understanding that violence is unacceptable, and both men and women as parents inculcate this understanding in their own sons and daughters' (Dudwick, 2015, p. 37). In the process of eradication of stereotypical thinking it is especially important to change police attitude towards victims as well. Nowadays, unfortunately majority of police workers and other representatives of law enforcement organizations are under the influence of traditional thinking that blames woman and justifies the violence of men almost in every occasion. As the worker of Armenian NGO says if there is

report of sexual assault, the first question asked by law enforcement authorities to the victim is the following: "What did u do to encourage this?" (Amnesty International, 2008, p. 4). Based on the abovementioned, more trainings, educational seminars, as well as practical work is needed to uproot traditional stereotypical thinking out of the minds of law enforcement workers, that have essential role in the process of combating gender-based violence.

Shelters

According to the official reports of organization Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), as of 2013, in Azerbaijan there was only 1 shelter available for victims of domestic violence and 2 respectively in Georgia and Armenia. Taking into consideration the recommendation of the mentioned organization more than several hundreds of places in shelters are necessary to provide adequate assistance for victims (Azerbaijan - 928, Georgia - 437, Armenia - 283) (Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), 2013). Taking into account such deficit of shelters, the regional states should work intensively on the given matter. The same situation applies to the hotlines that are also very limited in three of the countries. It is essential, that victims of domestic violence had real opportunities to get assistance and support from professionals.

Further research

As the reader was informed by the introduction of the presented master thesis, there is serious deficit of academic research regarding domestic violence on regional level as well as on the local level. Existence of good theoretical framework, useful data for analyzing the problem of domestic violence in a detailed way will create a good foundation for future successful actions. As well-known proverb says "Well begun is half done" and the South Caucasian states finally have to begin recognizing the intimate partner violence as a problem. Involvement of academic world in the process of analyze, identify the main trends of domestic violence, the factors of its prevalence will be one more step on the way of success. Development of relevant literature, research and theoretical background will offer local governments and nongovernmental sector clear directions what should be done for further success.

Conclusion

While the literature regarding the causes of domestic violence in the South Caucasus is very limited, the presented master thesis seems to be important source of information for future researchers and interested people with the given field. The composition of the work provides reader with possibility to apprehend and analyze the information adequately. It offers historical background of the domestic violence problem in the South Caucasus, current situation's analysis and future recommendations. The aim of the given paper was to investigate the impact of public opinion and gender-based stereotypes on the domestic violence in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. The second goal of the paper was to explore estimated actions that could be done to change the existing situation. The analysis conducted by author, based on the data originated by various NGOs, local researchers and official authorities of the mentioned states, revealed that gender role perceptions and traditional thinking that condones men's violence against women, has extremely serious positive impact on domestic violence level. In all

of the regional states women have serious problem of perception of intimate partner violence due to the fact that they are raised with such mentality. The low level of reporting is not caused only by the perception problem. The fact that society is merciless towards women who decide to speak the 'family matter' openly determines the silence of the South Caucasian women.

Generally overcoming the problem starts with addressing to its primary causes and then on its consequences. Therefore, it seems extremely important to realize that in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia high levels of domestic violence has the same 'medicine' - changing the attitudes of society towards gender. Women should not be considered to be the 'second sex' anymore. And in the process of changing public opinion various actions should be done, such as increasing the educational level of society, offering adequate treatment and assistance by professionals and other. In painful process of reviewing the values, involvement of western world is essential, as they already have long-term experiences of combating intimate partner violence. Without active help of Europe the post-soviet states as Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia will spend decades to develop the effective action plans and measures against the problem. And finally I want to finish my thesis and address to the South Caucasian women with the words of American writer Raichel Caine "Don't play his game. Play yours!" (Caine, 2013, p. 57)

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