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EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT: A CATALYST FOR ERADICATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Abstract. The amalgamation of survey and qualitative data yields crucial insights into women's experiences of violence across socio-demographic groups and geographic areas. Furthermore, it fills notable data gaps that have impeded efforts to combat VAW in Georgia. Over the past 12 months, 18.2% of women experienced various forms of violence: sexual harassment (9.7%), stalking (1.6%), non-partner sexual violence since the age of 15 (0.0%), non-partner physical violence since the age of 15 (0.5%), and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) (9.3%). Analyzing lifetime prevalence reveals a much higher figure, with 50.1% of women experiencing one or more of the seven types of VAW measured in the survey.

Among the surveyed participants, the majority possessed at least an upper secondary education. Breaking down the data, 34.7% of women and 46.0% of men held an upper secondary education, 22.8% of women and 15.2% of men had completed vocational education, and 32.9% of women and 29.8% of men had attained a university education. A minor proportion, at 8.5%, of both women and men respondents had a lower secondary education, and less than 1% had a primary education or less.

Notably, women with a primary education or less, as well as those with a lower secondary education, exhibited a higher likelihood of reporting experiences of child sexual abuse at 15.8% and 13.7%, respectively, compared to women with an upper secondary education or higher. Furthermore, women from economically poor and very poor households were more prone to reporting child sexual abuse experiences at rates of 12.6% and 10.3%, respectively, in contrast to those from households with a good economic status (7.5%). Additionally, women residing in capital city were more inclined to report incidents of child sexual abuse (12.2%) compared to women in other urban areas (7.0%) and rural areas (6.6%).

Indicates that women with a university education had the highest likelihood of ever experiencing sexual harassment (36.0%). Notably, women with a university education were considerably more prone to experiencing sexual harassment compared to those with vocational education (14.6%), upper secondary education (21.8%), lower secondary education (18.8%), or primary education or less (15.0%).

According to data, men with a university education demonstrated the lowest tendency to endorse traditional gender roles, with 61.3% believing that a woman's primary role is to take care of her family, 70.1% supporting the idea that a man should control and preside over the household, and 28.8% asserting that a wife should unquestioningly agree with or obey her husband's opinion, even if she disagrees with him.

Further analysis indicated that women with a university education exhibited the least inclination to believe that violence between a husband and wife is a private matter and that others should not intervene (12.8%), that a woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone outside of her family about her husband physically hurting or controlling her (5.6%), and that a woman should tolerate some violence to keep her family together (2.1%).

Keywords: Statistics, Gender, VaW, Education, Survey.

Introduction. This study, the second nationwide survey on Violence against Women (VAW) in Georgia, rigorously adheres to international standards in data collection, specifically targeting intimate partner and non-partner violence, along with sexual harassment and stalking. By employing the WHO and FRA models, coupled with a standardized questionnaire featuring globally accepted indicators, the study not only facilitates cross-country comparisons but also allows for periodic replication to monitor changes over time. Despite encountering challenges stemming from enhancements made to the Women's Health and Life Experiences Survey and the Men's Life Experiences Survey Questionnaire, these modifications contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the factors related to VAW and the driving issues behind the victimization of women in Georgia.

Purpose. The amalgamation of survey and qualitative data yields crucial insights into women's experiences of violence across socio-demographic groups and geographic areas. Furthermore, it fills notable data gaps that have impeded efforts to combat VAW in Georgia.

Information provides compelling evidence of the widespread nature of VAW in Georgia. Over the past 12 months, 18.2% of women experienced various forms of violence: sexual harassment (9.7%), stalking (1.6%), non-partner sexual violence since the age of 15 (0.0%), non-partner physical violence since the age of 15 (0.5%), and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) (9.3%). Analyzing lifetime prevalence reveals a much higher figure, with 50.1% of women experiencing one or more of the seven types of VAW measured in the survey.

Specifically, these experiences include child sexual abuse before the age of 18 (8.5%), child physical and/or emotional abuse before the age of 18 (19.7%), sexual harassment (24.5%), stalking (8.5%), non-partner sexual violence since the age of 15 (1.5%), non-partner physical violence since the age of 15 (6.5%), and IPV (22.9%). This comprehensive data contributes significantly to understanding the multifaceted dimensions of VAW in Georgia.

The data underscores that certain groups of women face a notably higher incidence of victimization, both by intimate partners and non-partners. Specific socio demographic characteristics accentuate women's vulnerabilities, particularly impacting those with lower education levels (e.g., primary education or less), women married before the age of 18, and women residing in rural areas.

While the survey unveils intriguing and statistically significant relationships across socio demographic groups and geographical areas, the absence of these relationships also illuminates the universality of women's experiences of VAW. In certain contexts, factors such as age, education, marital/union status, and area of residence (rural versus urban, or Tbilisi versus other urban areas) demonstrated no discernible difference in women's experiences of VAW. Hence, women across all groups exhibit equal vulnerability to experiencing VAW.

IPV exerts profound effects on women's physical and mental well-being, extending to the welfare of their children. IPV increases the likelihood that children of affected women will encounter challenges in school, affecting concentration and academic performance, and elevates the risk of early school dropout. These findings align with international research on polyvictimization and intergenerational violence, illustrating that women often encounter multiple forms of violence throughout their lives, commencing in childhood and persisting into adulthood. Furthermore, women exposed to violence in childhood exhibit a heightened likelihood of experiencing violence in adulthood, encompassing both intimate partner and non-partner violence, underscoring the reality of intergenerational violence.

Despite a majority of women who experience IPV not seeking formal help, with most confiding in someone about their experiences, severe cases prompt recourse to the police or the health system. Formal social services are rarely utilized, and when women seek help, they predominantly turn to their informal social network comprising family, friends, and neighbors. Conspicuously, formal criminal justice institutions, including the police and the courts, are not perceived as primary sources from which to seek assistance.

The incidence of non-partner violence is low in Georgia, yet nearly one in four women in the study experienced sexual harassment. The data reveals that women are more prone to endure physical violence from intimate partners and face sexual harassment from non-partners, with the majority of non-partner perpetrators known to the victim.

This study's findings underscore a high level of tolerance and acceptance among both women and men regarding VAW within relationships. There exists an inequitable view on gender and gender relations. Notably, a positive shift is observed as very few women and men believe in justifiable reasons for hitting or beating one's wife, marking a change from the 2017 National VAW Survey. This shift may signify a broader sociocultural change in the acceptance of spousal violence against women in the context of marriage.

Comparatively, rates of intimate partner and non-partner violence reported by women in Georgia are lower than the European average. However, gender attitudes in Georgia seem more conservative than in other parts of Europe, potentially indicating underreporting of VAW

prevalence. There may also be underreporting of exposure to child abuse and domestic violence in childhood compared to rates found in other European countries.

To effectively end VAW in Georgia, there is a pressing need to transform behaviors, beliefs, and the social norms perpetuating gender inequalities and normalizing VAW. Gender roles reinforcing women's subordinate positions within households play a pivotal role in normalizing VAW. Addressing this calls for collaborative efforts involving men, boys, women, and girls to promote gender equality. The study emphasizes the necessity for legislation and policies aimed at preventing and responding to VAW in all its forms, ensuring VAW survivors have access to essential services, including health care, social services, protection, and justice.

Among the surveyed participants, the majority possessed at least an upper secondary education. Breaking down the data, 34.7% of women and 46.0% of men held an upper secondary education, 22.8% of women and 15.2% of men had completed vocational education, and 32.9% of women and 29.8% of men had attained a university education. A minor proportion, at 8.5%, of both women and men respondents had a lower secondary education, and less than 1% had a primary education or less.

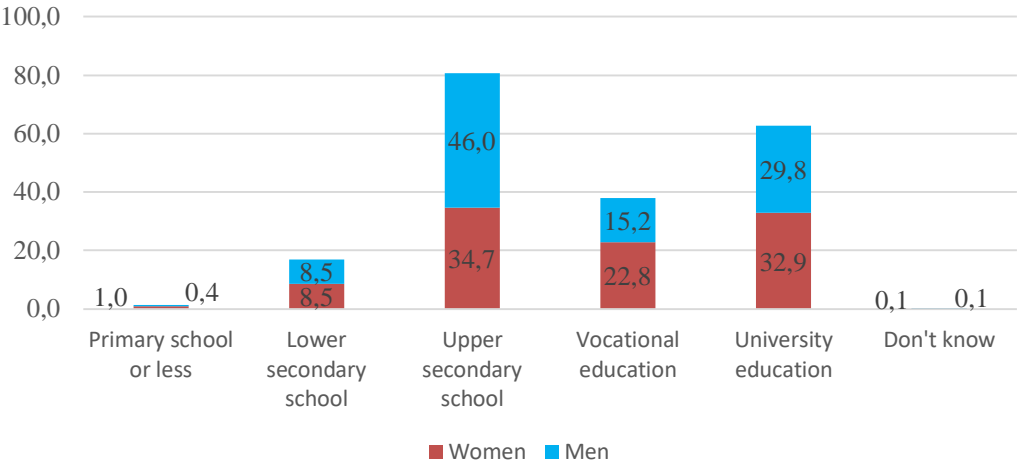


Figure 1 – Distribution of survey respondents, by sex and level of education, (%)
 Source: GeoStat.

Among women with a primary education or less, the lifetime prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) was notably elevated, with nearly 7 out of 10 (69.8%) having experienced IPV, and almost one out of three (33.5%) currently experiencing IPV. Furthermore, 33.2% of women with a lower secondary education reported a lifetime experience of IPV, surpassing the prevalence among those with an upper secondary education (24.3%) or higher education (26.3% for women with vocational education and 27.0% for women with a university education).

Notably, women with a primary education or less, as well as those with a lower secondary education, exhibited a higher likelihood of reporting experiences of child sexual abuse at 15.8% and 13.7%, respectively, compared to women with an upper secondary education or higher. Furthermore, women from economically poor and very poor households were more prone to reporting child sexual abuse experiences at rates of 12.6% and 10.3%, respectively, in contrast to those from households with a good economic status (7.5%). Additionally, women residing in capital city were more inclined to report incidents of child sexual abuse (12.2%) compared to women in other urban areas (7.0%) and rural areas (6.6%).

Indicates that women with a university education had the highest likelihood of ever experiencing sexual harassment (36.0%). Notably, women with a university education were considerably more prone to experiencing sexual harassment compared to those with vocational education (14.6%), upper secondary education (21.8%), lower secondary education (18.8%), or primary education or less (15.0%).

Further analysis also revealed that women with a university education were least likely to believe that a woman's most important role is to take care of her family (47.9 per cent), that the man should control and preside over the house (39.7 per cent) and that a wife should agree with or obey her husband's opinion even if she is not convinced of his opinion or disagrees with him (9.4 per cent). A notable proportion of highly educated women believe that a woman's most important role is to take care of her family (47.9 per cent) and that the man should control and preside over the house (39.7 per cent). Women with less than a university education are most likely to hold more patriarchal attitudes towards women's and men's roles in the family.

Further examination revealed that women with a university education exhibited the lowest inclination to endorse traditional gender roles, with 47.9% believing a woman's most crucial role is to take care of her family, 39.7% supporting the idea that a man should control and preside over the household, and only 9.4% asserting that a wife should unquestioningly agree with or obey her husband's opinion. Conversely, a notable proportion of highly educated women still hold these traditional views, with 47.9% considering a woman's primary role as family care, and 39.7% endorsing the notion of male control in the household. Women with less than a university education are more likely to uphold more patriarchal attitudes concerning women's and men's roles within the family."

According to data, men with a university education demonstrated the lowest tendency to endorse traditional gender roles, with 61.3% believing that a woman's primary role is to take care of her family, 70.1% supporting the idea that a man should control and preside over the household, and 28.8% asserting that a wife should unquestioningly agree with or obey her husband's opinion, even if she disagrees with him.

Analysis indicated that women with a university education exhibited the least inclination to believe that violence between a husband and wife is a private matter and that others should not intervene (12.8%), that a woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone outside of her family about her husband physically hurting or controlling her (5.6%), and that a woman should tolerate some violence to keep her family together (2.1%). In contrast, women with a secondary education or less were more likely to believe that a woman should tolerate some violence to keep her family together and that a woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband.

The data reveals that specific groups of women experience higher rates of victimization by both intimate partners and non-partners. Certain socio demographic characteristics accentuate women's vulnerabilities to both intimate partner and non-partner violence. Women with lower levels of education (such as primary education or less), those married before the age of 18, and women residing in rural areas are particularly at risk.

Conclusion. As indicated by the analysis, education plays a pivotal role in the context of violence against women. Women with higher levels of education tend to be employed, resulting in higher incomes. Consequently, the incidence of violence against them is relatively lower.

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