
GENDER IN POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

Democracy means to understand the opinion of each person. Nowadays, to defend women's rights and strive for equality are one of the biggest challenges of the modern world. The measurement of democracy is the involvement of women in a decision-making process and the quality of human rights' defense. A little amount of women involvement in political life is equally characteristic of both experienced and relatively young democracies. General elective right won't be able to provide a high level of women representation. Gender stereotypes make negative influence on the functioning of society. Its effectiveness is much more noticeable on post-soviet countries than on western liberal states. Women's participation in politics is low and it should be improved to meet the requirements of international norms and standards of gender equality. Gender inequality hinders the development of individuals or the whole country, also society evolution and helps to create unfavorable environment for men and women. Society finds it difficult to accept the idea of gender equality, as it does not recognize the essence of the problem. The establishment of gender quota will make a significant contribution to ensuring gender equality, improving state mechanism, making decisions and integrating gender mainstreaming organically.

Keywords democracy, elective right, gender stereotypes, women involvement, human right defense.

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INTRODUCTION

Democracy means to understand the opinion of each person. Nowadays, to defend women's rights and strive for equality are one of the biggest challenges of the modern world. The measurement of democracy of any country is the involvement of women in a decision-making process and the quality of human rights' defense³.

In spite of the fact that 50% of the population is women, they don't take part in making a decision, because they don't have enough access to the authority and political resources. A little amount of women involvement in political life is equally an characteristic feature of both experienced and relatively young democracies. General elective right won't be able to provide a high level of women representation. But to increase the number of women in parliament, is not the only challenge. It refers to the existing stereotypes that public space is the area of an action only for men.

MAIN PART

Gender stereotypes influence negatively the functioning of society. Its effectiveness is much more noticeable on post-soviet countries than on western liberal states. Georgia had been under the northern tyranny for 70 years and it is clear that during that time even to speak about human rights was considered ineffective and pathetic. Though, the end of every empire is the same – to be separated. The influence of soviet-socialist ideology on modern states is quite big and thanks to it Georgia's progress to the west is hindered. This influence is quite apparent in the society where the results of gender inequality are quite dangerous. A woman is often the victim of domestic violence, underestimation and stereotypical treatment.

But the situation in Georgia was not always the same! Throughout the existence of our country, which counts thousands of years, on the land of free Georgians, women were always treated with respect by men. Their rights compared to the states of that time were on a higher level. The only woman governor in the world who was mentioned as a king not as a queen was Queen Tamar and the period of her ruling was called "Golden Age."⁴

But the country lost its independence through the northern power in the 19th century and had been under the influence of Tsarist ideology until 1918. The above-mentioned period caused the degradation of the nation, Russification. Our virtues and characteristic features would be forgotten if not the merit of such patriots as Ilia Chavchavadze and others. Regardless of that, historical circumstances and events have brought us to today's reality, to stereotypical attitude.

³ www.genderstereotypes.org/ka

⁴ Men and Gender Relations in Georgia.0.pdf

Such attitude brings us to weakening the function of the society, as women's abilities are often in doubt and some people consider that they can't realize their potential. Among widespread opinions are the following viewpoints: a woman can't become a leader, can't be involved in military fare, make important decisions, lead family or community affairs, take part in the reconstruction of the country and etc. Though, all the above-mentioned opinions belong to stereotypes and are not true. The work of many Georgian successful women proves it.

Nowadays many women are enrolled in the armed forces. They take part not only in large-scale affairs, but they also cope with professional challenges. Women also occupy responsible positions.

Women's participation in politics is low and it should be improved to meet the requirements of international norms and standards of gender equality. Gender inequality hinders individual or country development, society evolution and helps to create unfavorable environment for men and women. Society's attitude towards gender equality differs even in the societies which are on the same level of development. It changes according to such factors as religious traditions, type of state arrangement and the level of democratization.

Nowadays, when we argue about the meaning of representation, we should keep in mind four main arguments. According to the argument of justice, women make up half of the population, so they have the right to own half of the positions. An argument supported by the experience says that women have different experiences, constructed biologically or socially, whose representation is important. An argument supported by the interest, women and men have mutually opposite interests and accordingly, these interests should not be represented only by men. According to the symbolic argument, an activity of a female politician is a role model and attracts women to get involved in politics, in spite of the fact which political party it represents⁵.

Despite the tireless work of women's rights defenders, there are a lot of challenges in terms of protection of women's rights. Women's legal status in different periods and also in modern Georgian politics is discussed in the project, particularly, achievements and challenges in this direction.

Women and men not always had equal elective rights and the recognition of these rights was preceded by the active struggle of women, which dates back to XVIII-XIX centuries. Georgian society of that time was actively involved in the fight for women's rights and the idea of equality; involved in the struggle were well-known Georgians: Barbare Jorjadze, Ekaterine Gabashvili, Kato Mikeladze and others. Kato (Ekaterine) Mikeladze got acquainted with women European movement in Paris and in 1916, after returning to Georgia, she began

⁵ Electionreforms.ge

to fight for women's rights with her fellow believers. In 1917-1918 a regional network "Women League" was formed under her leadership. She was a publisher and an editor of a newspaper "Voice of a Georgian woman".

Ekaterine Gabashvili was a prominent representative of Georgian critical realism. Many of her stories are devoted to women's issues – women's independence, their role in the family and society, the necessity of correct upbringing and education. Her women characters are oppressed from life and excluded from the society; some of them are victims of life injustice and community pressure, others gain victory thanks to their self-sacrifice. Barbare Eristavi-Jorjadze was a representative of Georgian culture, literary and public figure in the 19th century. She worked in the field of women's education and rights.

Kato Mikeladze and her fellow-believers made an attempt for women to become elected members of Georgia's Founding Assembly. At that time, women had no right to vote in many countries, but in Georgia 103 years ago, on 14-16 February, 1919 the first global, democratic elections were held in the history of Georgia, Georgian citizens elected Founding Assembly. These elections were significant due to several factors: Electoral Legislation of Georgia gave the right of voting to every citizen regardless of gender or origin. Women took part with both active or passive electoral right. For the election of founding assembly, on the electoral list of various political parties, up to 20 women candidates were registered. Five of them became the representatives: Elisabed Bolkvadze, Anna Sologhashvili, Kristine Sharashenidze, Eleonora Ter-Farsagova Makhviladze and Minadora Toroshelidze-Orjonikidze. This was a progressive event for the world of that time.

35 elections have been held in Georgia since 1990, among them: 10 parliamentary elections; 7-presidential elections; 8 – elections of municipality bodies; 8 – elections of the supreme council of Adjara; 1- elections of the head of Adjara; 1- the elections of the supreme council of Abkhazia. Also 2 referendums and 1 plebiscite had been held in Georgia since 1991. Gender equality in electoral processes is the part of electoral inclusion. Georgian Constitution recognizes and defends the equality of citizens of both sexes – women and men have the right to elect and to be elected on equal terms, without discrimination. Gender equality is recognized by the international agreement, including UN convention about "The Eradication of women's discrimination". We especially want to draw attention to 2018 presidential elections as a result of which the fifth president of Georgia became Salome Zurbishvili. According to 2020 data of Inter-Parliamentary Union, Georgia holds 144 positions according to the indicator of women's representation in the parliament among 193 countries in Georgia. It is almost behind every country in Europe except Malta, Hungary and Lichtenstein. According to the data of the latest 25 years, Georgia is progressing in terms of women's participation in politics, but at a low pace and inconsistently. In February, 2023 Georgian

parliament approved the package of amendments to the election code, including mandatory gender quotes. It specifies that in October 2024 and then up to 2028 parliamentary elections at least one in every four party lists should be female, while in Georgian parliamentary elections in 2028 October 28 and after that until 2032 one in every three-party list should be female. In the recent national elections, the share of women was 51 percent. In 2021 in Georgian parliament the share of women was 19 percent. In the executive branch, the share of women is 15 percent, while among ministers they hold – 25 %. Women make up 55% of the judges in general courts. However, the representation of women in the judiciary is low in managerial positions. Though, a large part of society cannot see the necessity of having women participate more actively, they aren't able to analyze the problems connected with gender inequality.

CONCLUSION

Our cultural values and norms require women to be submissive and passive. The society that has been brought up with this belief, finds it difficult to accept the idea of gender equality, as it does not recognize the essence of the problem.

The establishment of gender quota will make a significant contribution to ensuring gender equality, improving state mechanism, making decisions and integrating gender mainstreaming organically.

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