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Political Science and International Affairs Program

Gender stereotypes and Higher Education in Armenia

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Master`s Essay in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Political Science and International Relations

May 2016

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude towards my Master`s Essay supervisor Dr. Simon Clarke, who is the program chair of the Political Science and International Affairs faculty. Dr. Clarke patiently and enthusiastically supported me during the whole process of my thesis writing. He always showed me the right direction when I needed his advice. This professor dedicated a lot of time and effort for transmitting his knowledge to me. And he managed to teach me fantastic values and moral thinking through his philosophical and analytical courses. He has a huge professional contribution in my thesis project. In particular, I appreciate his fast and to the point feedbacks.

Also, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Arpie Balian, who taught me how to do an empirical study. She has contributed a lot in my knowledge of research methodology, data collection, analysis, etc. All the professors in the PSIA program did their very best for my academic achievements, and I am extremely grateful to each of them for that.

My friends, classmates and my family members also were helping me to overcome difficulties during these two years. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to Gevorg Mamikonyan, who helped me during the data collection process and stayed motivated by supporting me throughout the whole process of my thesis writing.

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INTRODUCTION

The Global Setting

The capstone focuses on the link between gender stereotyping and development in Armenia. In recent years, most international organizations engaged in development programs have added a stipulation in memoranda of agreement or contractual arrangements which requires paying focused attention to inclusion of women in various types of interventions thereby contributing to narrowing the existing gender gap. The reason for this unprecedented interest is due to the assumption that the gap issues seep into various spheres of human life, including education, employment, healthcare, economy, politics, decision-making in families, etc. and trigger underdevelopment.

It has become increasingly important to investigate the impediments of the gender gap. The primary aim of this research is to tackle the situation in Armenia and to find out how the existing gender stereotyping influences one of the spheres that are affected, the development of education.

In the majority of poor and developing countries women are generally portrayed as responsible for domestic chores. Despite their potential, talents and competences, they are mainly viewed as devoid of learning skills and thus are offered limited opportunities to get higher education. Moreover, male power is dominant in all spheres of people's lives. Discrimination between males and females is prevalent from early childhood to adult life. When it comes to sending children to school, preference is given to boys as their utility is believed to be higher upon completion than that of girls (Khachatryan et al. 2014; Heilman 1997).

The actual portrait of a woman, though, is different. Women are as powerful, strong, and productive and can immensely contribute to a country's development. However, conservative and patriarchal views are sometimes embedded in cultures and act as barriers to engaging women in public, political, economic and other spheres or simply creating interest in spheres of interest outside household tasks (Hasratsyan 2003).

Examination of the subject raises several questions. Do such gender inequalities trigger underdevelopment in education? Is the gender divide in poor or developing countries embedded in the cultural and traditional norms of respective countries? Is the situation the same in Armenia?

The current paper argues that gender gap has a negative impact on educational development initiatives. To answer the research questions, the study examines women's role in education in the Republic of Armenia, a developing country where the gender gap continues to persist and is embedded in traditions and ideology.

THE CASE OF ARMENIA

Notes on the History of Armenia

Looking back at the history of Armenia from the days of its membership in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), gender equality was advocated even at the highest levels of government, but there is evidence to the contrary on the level of practical implementation, both in Armenia and throughout the constituent countries. According to the poet Shushanik Kurghinian, gender gap was ubiquitous in the USSR and it is still prevalent in Armenia (not considering other countries of the former Soviet Union). Her beliefs and views

are best expressed in one of her poems: “*Do not love me as if I were a flower! I want to live a worthy life ...*” (UNDP 1999).

Other authors, who conducted a huge empirical study about gender gap during the Soviet period, discovered that Soviet women turned out to be less concerned about the political life of their country, and they felt they hardly could make any change in that sphere. They also posit that the existence of discrimination against women particularly in the field of politics and economy was obvious during the Soviet era, which had a negative impact on the development of the economy in many Soviet countries. Women in that areas perused traditional way of thinking and their role in the society was to some extent limited unlike men who were dominating in many spheres. Yet the study also emphasizes that not all female citizens were thinking traditionally in terms of women`s role in society, however, overall picture of Soviet women showed widespread gender stereotypical views (Carneghan and Bahry 1989).

A 2015 assessment by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) affirms that Armenia still maintains discrimination in different sectors and spheres of human life. The barriers that create gender inequality in Armenia, according to the ADB, are mainly observed in the roles that men and women have in the field of economy in terms of their different opportunities obtain control/access to properties, financial resources, social security, employment and the way they are engaged in the decision making process of the country. In the ADB assessment it is also mentioned that many women who have higher education do not have jobs. The reason behind this is either their poor quality as an employee, or they simply get married and cannot/are not allowed to have a job since after marriage they are responsible for the household chores. To address this problem the government included gender issue in the system of higher education in Armenia, however the implementation of actions concerning

the above mentioned issued is extremely slow and ineffective. A solution that the ADB suggested was to teach children about the importance of gender equality since the early stages of childhood, e.g. to include gender equality studies in the secondary school program (Dunan 2015).

This assessment encourages studying existing stereotypes in Armenia to identify root causes and ways of narrowing the gender gap. For Armenia to push forward in becoming a truly democratic society, it is necessary to ensure the participation of women in education and decision-making in all areas of political, economic, social, and cultural life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.

Kofi Annan

Gender Role Stereotype

Literally fifteen years ago the World stepped into a new millennium bringing new hope and expectations that people would lead a better life and have a better future. However, not much has changed since. Most countries, especially the developing and underdeveloped countries, still confront issues, such as the gender gap issue. To grasp the quintessence of the issue, it is necessary to delve into the concept of gender roles firstly.

Traditionally, gender roles have been used to highlight innate differences between males and females. These roles assume that women should perform “feminine” behavior. Men, on the other hand, are perceived as “masculine, dominant, aggressive and independent”. Gender roles penetrate into different spheres of our life, leaving significant impact on them (Powell 1998; Connell and Barbieri-Masini 2006).

Unfortunately, gender roles mostly posit unequal distribution of power, which underline what we call gender stereotype. As Powell puts it: “A stereotype is a belief about the characteristics of a special social group; it is also defined as a mental picture of a group or category of people”(Powell 1998, 4:79). Stereotyping is often associated with prejudices which are embedded in cultures and which result in biased actions and judgments (Heilman 1995). Okin`s definition of gender is about the differences embedded in institutionalization of both sexes. The major observation is in the family labor division. Women are viewed as responsible for being a good parent and to manage the housework. The author claims that such differences do not come from biological structure of men and women, but are the

consequence of the institutions that stand for support of such differences in the perception of men and women role in society. *“The injustice that results from the division of labor between the sexes affect virtually all women in our society, though not all in the same ways. A pervasive social problem, it is inflicting increasingly serious on children as well as on women, and it is also destroying family’s potential to be the crucial first school where children develop their first sense of fairness ”* (Okin p.1, 1989).

Further examination of gender stereotypes in the framework of the family indicates to the preference of sons over daughters. Parents tend to think that male children perform better utility than female ones. Negative income shock is adhered to girls’ birth as they will unlikely to earn as much as boys can in the future. There is ample evidence to prove that couples with daughters divorce more frequently than those with sons. According to one study, couples’ reproductive choices depend on the gender of the child. To be more explicit, if a couple has a daughter, they will probably have the incentive to bear another second child- a son (Andersson, Hank, and Rønsen 2004).

In 2005 Dahl and Moretti conducted a study in the United States in the framework of which they surveyed people to measure the biased attitude concerning gender issues. Within the scope of their survey they asked people about their preference of son or daughter. According to their findings many families that had a female child considered the probability of having another child, hoping for a boy. Those families with female children had problems concerning family fertility decision making, which had a negative influence on the children especially in families where the number of children (female) was more than one. Another finding from that survey was that fathers of boys were more eager to stay with their families, while fathers of girls left their families more than those who are a father of a boy. The probability that a first born boy will live in a family with two parents (meaning that fathers

will not leave the family) is 3,1% more than of the first born girls. It was estimated that 52 000 girls that are aged lower than 12 would have fathers living with them in case they were not a first born female but male a child. The consequences of such differences between sexes have extremely negative impact on the psychological state of children, particularly female children (Dahl and Moretti 2005).

As for the household decisions within a family, interestingly women are believed to perform more active participation. Though women's say in families' household decisions is less appreciated in poorer countries, it still has value in richer ones (Jayachandran 2014). Wives, mothers and grandmothers generally accentuate welfare-based needs of the family, especially those connected to children. Recent observations and studies exhibit that household decisions are mostly made via bargaining which is likely to lean toward men than women (UNICEF 2015).

Evidently, stereotyping exacerbates fertility decisions, giving preference to sons. In addition, it portrays women as unable to operate on certain tasks, giving birth to the misconception that women are less useful for the society than men. According to some studies, they are restrictively good at upbringing children and running the house (Heilman 1997).

Gender Gap in Education

One devastating stereotypical view that a child learns since early childhood is that women's primary role in a society is to marry and have children. The impact of this views comes to discourage a female child to strive for advanced education or skills required for their career and professional growth. Given men favoring wage gap that exist in not a few countries, parents are more likely to invest in their male children's education (Foster and Rosenzweig 1996). In this framework, other authors state that parents' preference to invest in

sons' education is conditioned with the fact that they stay with parents even after marriage and take the burden of breadwinning on their shoulders, while girls marry, move to their husbands' house and direct their financial gains to their new families (Ebenstein 2014).

The fact that both girls and boys are born with intrinsic right to get equal education does not cast any doubt. However, in some families girls' education encounters a number of barriers. One such example regards school fees: in case a family has limited resources, it will likely favor their son's education. Perhaps, those families do not realize the impact of girls' education in the fulfillment of a country's development goals. Countries that seek for provision of educational opportunities to girls have better chances to decrease poverty. Educated women are less prone to marry at younger ages, especially against their will. As a result, there is less likelihood of deaths in childbirth, doubled chances to have healthier babies and send them to school. When children receive education that advocates maintenance of human rights and gender equality, it promises a great turnover in the generations to come ("UNICEF, Basic Education and Gender Equality" 2015).

Gender Gap in Employment

Mention has been made regarding gender gap's penetration into various spheres of our lives. Workplaces are by no means exceptions. Gender has significant impact on labor market, interpersonal relations at work and compensation systems. Studies show that gender inequality is prevalent in private and public sectors. The result is indeed devastating, as it undermines women's leadership skills and puts under risk their career growth (Acker 1990; Reskin and Hartmann 1986). It is also believed that gender gap prompts employers to disregard women's talents and potential, thus challenging their opportunity for career advancement. As a result, gender discrimination in developing countries causes shortages in skilled labor, and consequently slows down development. The idea is supported by

Jayachandran (2014) who believes that gender inequality is a major reason underlying economic underdevelopment (Jayachandran 2014).

Another author that claims gender inequality to be a major obstacle for economic development is Klasen. He brings in United Nation Population Fund argument that the economic growth and gender equality are strongly correlated and to some extent one depends on the other. The authors also quotes the argument and puts it that “gender inequality holds back growth of individuals, development of countries, and the evolution of societies, to the disadvantage of men and women”. He brings in the example of the poor economic conditions of Africa and South Asia, the consequence of which are the gender inequalities in the field of education embedded in the traditional thinking of the population. (Klasen p.2, 1999).

To proceed, historically men have been more autonomous in decision making both in work and family issues. Dependence is characterized as a more feminine feature. Yet, career advancement which assumes a better job, higher salaries, stronger sense of security and better working conditions, requires to break this unwritten cultural rule and be more proactive and independent than they are misleadingly expected to (Wirth 2004; Heilman 1995).

As women are most perceived as worse at problem-solving and management skills, they are mostly offered low salary jobs which do not intend any opportunities for future growth. These jobs are generally either in informal or in unimportant sectors of economy where women rarely advance in their career. However, it is not their lack of competence that impedes their advancement, but rather the presence of gender gap mentality in the workplace. Some authors argue that organizations are led by gender stereotypes when it comes to designating positions at work. Moreover, it is stated that men purposefully resist accepting women in male domains. An assumption is made that men try to challenge women's entry as it will create equal opportunities in skills and competence manifestations and thus balance the

wage gap (Wirth 2004; Heilman 1995; Reskin and Hartmann 1986; Reskin 1993). Reskin (1986) adds this discrimination also helps them preserve their dominance in other spheres of our lives.

To continue, some authors claim that men may exercise great efforts to disintegrate women from informal communication networks as they provide informal knowledge necessary for upward mobility at work. So, they refrain from telling women about vacancies in the workplace (Bielby and Baron 2013; Guy 1993; Reskin and Hartmann 1986, 198).

To sum up, gender gap adversely impacts employers' decision to hire or promote women. The prejudiced ideology advocates that men are endowed with better problem-solving skills and their confident, objective and active nature is more compatible to their needs. As a result, men surpass women in their number of top management positions and by all means obstacle their penetration there (Heilman 1995; Kelly and Newman 2001; Reskin and Hartmann 1986).

The Case of Armenia

With the advent of the USSR, the integrated countries inherited ideological propaganda of equal rights between men and women. However, on the practical platform men were the ones in charge of top management positions and responsible for decision-making in the workplaces and families (Osipov 2009). A study carried out by Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2015 accepts that the constituent countries, including Armenia, did inherit the official policy of gender equality. However, in contrast to the former study, it states that this policy triggered improvements in women's social and legal status and encouraged their active involvement in labor market. According to this study, patriarchal views and gender discrimination came to the forefront after independence in 1991 (Dunan 2015).

Unfortunately, as the ADB study underlines, during the last five years limited progress has been witnessed in women's rights protection. It is reported that in healthcare and education, women receive almost equal opportunities as men do, but economic conditions and political empowerment considerably differs. Despite the fact that women spend more time on their education, this does not result in considerable gains in their involvement into labor market. It is also reported that women play greater role in civil society, however they are underrepresented in municipal and regional administrative bodies and parliament. As men are the breadwinners, women are generally obliged to run the house and up bring children, thus losing the opportunity of self-realization at work (Dunan 2015).

When discussing possible origins of such discriminations, it will be difficult to safely arrive at any precise conclusion. However, there is a place for the assumption that families in Armenia inherit the gap since the very first day of their formation. In eastern Armenia particularly, when a couple marries, they exchange vows at a church altar. The priest asks the groom: "Տէ՛ր էս" which is close to the meaning "Do you hold on to her?". The bride, on the other hand, is asked: "Հնազա՞նդ էս", which in its turn means "Will you obey your husband?" Obviously, even the marriage vows contain elements of gender gap. This seems far more devastating when we consider a family as a basic unit of the country and a marriage vow as the oath for lifelong discrimination.

To sum up, Armenia is a classic example of a country with gender gap intensely embedded into its culture, religion, employment and other spheres. It experiences almost the same problems as other discrimination-led countries.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Methodology and Data Collection Strategy

The current study is explanatory, as it aims to discuss how the gender gap influences the development in education. Quantitative method of measuring the variables was used in the research. A survey was conducted to measure the independent variable — gender stereotypes and the dependent variable- higher education for women. The aim of conducting a survey is to measure the attitudes of the respondents towards the importance of women education.

Random sampling was used while conducting the survey among the local population of 4 marzes closely located to Yerevan (Ararat, Armavir, Kotayq and Aragatsotn). The entire number of the survey population was 150. Also, additional 24 men with higher educational status were surveyed to understand whether educational status matters in terms of perusing gender stereotypical views. The answers of these respondents were not compared to the answers of women participants since women were chosen to be without higher education. This number of sample population (150 people) is calculated by a sample size calculator with confidence level of 95%, confidence interval of 6, 93 and population of 913,459 (the number of population in 4 marzes in which the survey was conducted) people. According to the Armenian statistical data of population census of 2011 in Armenia the entire number of Armenian population of that year was 3,010,600 from which 913,459 are from the selected marzes (132,925 people from Aragatsotn, 254,397 from Kotayq, 260,367 from Ararat, 265,770 from Armavir) (Armstat, 2011). According to the data the population in Aragatsotn forms 14.5% of the entire population number of all the selected marzes, Kotayq marz forms 28%, Ararat marz-28.5%, and Armavir forms 29%. The same proportion of percentage will be applied to the survey population (150 people) (Armstat 2011).

Consequently, 22 respondents will be from Aragatsotn, 42 from Ararat, 43 from Armavir, and 22 from Kotayq. The survey questionnaires are going to be distributed among randomly selected passengers in each marz (each 3rd passerby in the street).

Theoretical framework

According to the existing literature on this topic it is believed that women are unable to implement certain tasks as good as men do. Thus, their contribution to society is less useful. According to the authors, it is also much believed that women`s occupation is what they are good at raising children, doing household chores, etc. and they are restricted in activities where men dominate (Heilman 1997; Reskin 1993; Jostand 2003; Conell 2006).

Children since their early childhood learn one devastating stereotype about the role of women in society. According to the stereotypical view women are portrait as responsible for domestic chores and rising children. There is no need to be highly education for one to be able to do the housework. Husbands rarely agree that their wives study in universities. Fathers are keen on investing in their sons` future. Despite women`s potential, talents and competences, they are mainly viewed as devoid of learning skills and thus are offered limited opportunities to get higher education, which negatively affects country`s overall educational level (Khachatryan et al. 2014).

The existing gender stereotypes do not allow the women develop their skills further in education. Hence the undereducated female population of the country does not get enough opportunities to develop, which affects the development of the overall country (Mikkola and Miles 2007).

Research Question and Hypothesis

RQ: Do the gender stereotypes create a shortage of highly-educated women in Armenia?

This research question will be operationalized in the following research hypothesis:

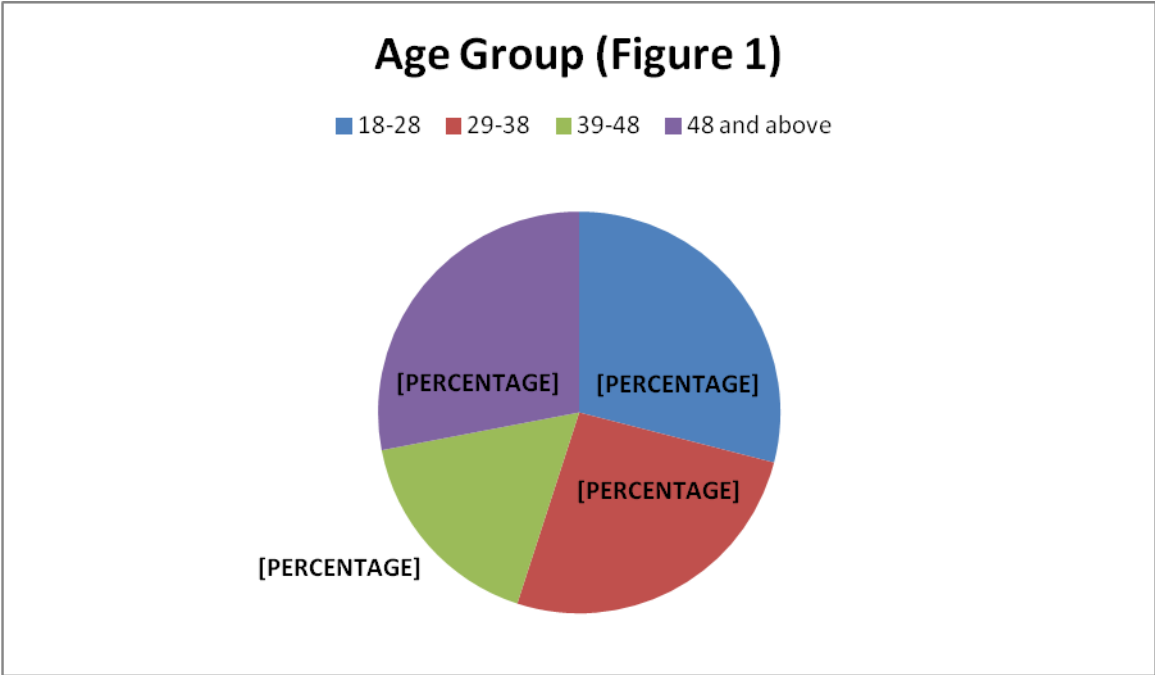
H₁: The existing gender stereotypes create a measurable shortage of highly educated women in Armenia.

H₀: The existing gender stereotypes do not create a measurable shortage of highly educated women in Armenia.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The given section aims at discussing the results of the survey conducted in the mentioned closely located and proportionally chosen areas. The collected data was inputted into SPSS software and several statistics were run based on the answers of the respondents. Note that the tables presented and analyzed below adhere to the sequence of the survey questions.

As mentioned earlier, the number of the respondents was sharp 150. From the very beginning, it was planned to survey an equal number of males and females in order to compare their answers in the context of stereotypical beliefs regarding higher education for women. Thus, we would be granted the chance to grasp which gender had more or less stereotypical views. Hence, the half of the respondents was males (75 people) and the other half was female. Equal number of both gender representatives was ensured.



To continue, **Figure 1** shows the age group of the respondents which were categorized according to the following ages: 18-28; 29-38; 39-48; 48 and above. The categorization of the age groups was supposed to assist the disclosure of the age group with more or less stereotypical views regarding higher education for women, in case such views inhere within. To put it differently, examining the answers of different generations would make it possible to draw conclusions on the possible changes in the people’s way of thinking approximately 30 years ago and now. Therefore, the categorization in **Figure 1** with the percentage of the population according to their age groups is considered important to be presented.

Please mention the reason why you do not have higher education * Have you ever wanted/Do you want to be highly educated? *					
Please, mention your gender. (Crosstabulation- Table 1)					
Please, mention your gender			Have you ever wanted/Do you want to be highly educated?		Total
			Yes	No	
female	Please mention the reason why you do not have higher education	Financial problems	20	3	23
		Prefered to get married	3	7	10
		Men did not allow	28	3	31
		Did not have enough knowledge	0	6	6
		Other reasons	4	1	5
Total			55	20	75

As the scope of the investigation and the research question dictate, we were aimed at finding out whether gender stereotypes result in a shortage of highly educated women in Armenia. With this regard, women without higher education were surveyed to find out the reason of not getting higher education. According to the answers of women without higher education the reasons of not being highly educated are as follows: financial problems; marriage preference; prohibition by husbands/fathers; the absence of enough knowledge to apply for a higher educational institution and other reasons. Note that the answers to the given open-ended question are presented in **Table 1**, which is a cross tabulation of three survey questions. Adhering to the answers, we encounter two main reasons for not getting higher education- financial problems and husband/father prohibition. Of those women who said they wanted higher education, 51% (28/55) said men not allowing was the reason they did not, as compared to 36% (20/55) who said it was due to financial problems. Most of those who preferred to marry 70% (7/10) did not want to get higher education.

These women also made comments orally pointing that in the early stages of their youth they did not realize the importance of the education and believed they should get

married instead of studying at university. Very little percentage of women who preferred getting married (30%, 3/10) also wished to have higher education.

The percentage of those who were prohibited by fathers/husbands was (41%, 31/75). When asked whether they would like to get higher education, the answers of the 90% (28/31) of that 31 respondents were positive and only 9% out of 31 did not actually want to get highly educated. They even shared their stories on how important getting higher education was for them and how crucial is its absence in the present. Only 20 respondents out of 75 (26%) people did not pursue higher education and did not regret it compared to those who did not get higher education but wished to have who form 73% (55/75).

Women who did not manage to get higher education because of fathers'/husbands' prohibition or financial problems had mostly cherished to have it and only a few did not.

According to the literature reviewed about gender inequalities in Armenia and other countries in Caucasus it can be infer that gender stereotypical views are embedded in the cultural thinking of Caucasian people (Dunan 2015). Thus, it would be of a great interest to compare the answers of survey respondents with the way they believe people in their living environment treats women higher education.

Considering it important the prism through which people view their environment as favorable for women to get higher education and the importance attached to it, the following questions were posed to the participants, and the cross tabulation is presented accordingly. The aim of the following questions is to understand whether people live in an environment they consider is good or not. Putting it differently the answers to these questions shown in the **Table 2** will help us understand whether the respondents and those living in their environment pursue gender stereotypical views concerning women higher education or not.

Do women and men in your living environment have equal opportunities for getting higher education? * Do you think it of high importance that the people could get higher education regardless of the gender? * Please, mention your gender.
(Crosstabulation -Table 2)

Please, mention your gender		Do you think it of high importance that the people could get higher education regardless of the gender?		Total	
		Yes	No		
male	Do women and men in your living environment have equal opportunities for getting higher education?	Yes	52	8	60
		No	12	3	15
	Total		64	11	75
female	Do women and men in your living environment have equal opportunities for getting higher education?	Yes	53	8	61
		No	13	1	14
	Total		66	9	75

As presented in the **Table 2**, 60 out of 75 male participants (80%) believed women enjoy equal opportunities for higher education and only a few considered it unrealistic. The female participants' answers to the same question the following way: 61 out 14 females (81%) claimed they did enjoy equal opportunities, and the other 19% stated they did not. Thus, both male and female participants viewed the surrounding environment favorable for women to get higher education. To the question whether it is important to get higher education regardless of the gender, 64 out 75 male participants (85%) answered positively, and a very small number of the participants claimed it did not. Female participants agreed with the male participants that the gender does not matter when it comes to getting higher education.

Those participants who agreed that getting higher education is important regardless the gender are more in percentage, 86% (66+64 out of 150) than those who did not agree with the mentioned statement, 14% (11+9 out of 150).

Overall, the majority of both male and female respondents (87%) believed that both genders should and do have equal opportunities of higher education in their environment. According to approximately the same percentage of the respondents think that in their surrounding environment men and women do have equal opportunities of getting higher education.

Which age group do you belong to? * Would you mind if your partner (wife/husband) had a higher educational status than you? * Please, mention your gender (Crosstabulation, Table 3)					
Please, mention your gender		Would you mind if your partner (wife/husband) had a higher educational status than you?			Total
				Yes	
male	Which age group do you belong to?	18-28	14	11	25
		29-38	15	4	19
		39-48	7	4	11
		48 and more	12	8	20
	Total	48	27	75	
female	Which age group do you belong to?	18-28	1	21	22
		29-38	4	20	24
		39-48	1	11	12
		48 and more	3	14	17
	Total	9	66	75	

Afterwards, the participants were asked to mention their age groups according to their genders (see **Table 3**). Among males, there were varied groups. The 11 respondents out of 75 (15%) male respondents belonged to the age group of 39-48. Meanwhile, in the other groups there were almost an equal number of respondents. As for the female respondents, they mostly aged 18-28 (29%) and 29-38 (32%). Both males and females were surveyed to find

out their views on having a partner (wife/husband) with a higher educational status than themselves. It is showed hesitation when talking about the educational status of their wives. According to the survey findings, 48 out of 75 male participants (64%) would mind if their wives had higher education than they have. The majority even explained their preference. As they put it, there is no equality between men and women. They even mentioned they would not allow their wives to have any status which is higher than theirs. By their words, they were in charge of the actions their wives would undertake. Interestingly enough, the older they got, the more tolerant they appeared to be towards their wives' higher educational status than theirs. What's to be stated here as well is that only 9 out of 75 of females (12%) would mind a husband with a higher educational status than theirs. Thus, the women (88%) across various age groups, proved to be more tolerant of the opposite sex achievements, especially when they surpass theirs. Moreover, many of them even stated that they would take pride in their husband if he did. This indicates that the females, unlike males, are more willing to see their partners standing above themselves in terms of education. Furthermore, no matter how sad it may sound, some wives view having a status lower than of their husbands in any sphere as quite a normal phenomenon common to their living environment. As one may recall from the discussion in the literature review, children since their early childhood learn one devastating stereotype about the role of women in society. According to the stereotypical view women are portrait as responsible for domestic chores and rising children. There is no need to be highly education for one to be able to do the housework (Khachatryan et al. 2014). This is what female children learn since their early childhood. That is why women respondents consider it normal to have lower status than men in their family while men believe women should never be equal to them in any sphere.

As one may recall from **Table 1**, among the reasons why the women did not get higher education, the third most stated one was early marriages (according to 8% percent

surveyed females) , which means that the women preferred to get married rather than to apply to a higher educational institution. In other words, they prioritized the pursuit of a family, at least at that period of their lives. As a result of their choice, they became housewives and were not able or willing to study in a university. But what about being a wife and a student at the same time? Is it possible to combine these two ‘professions’? The next cross tabulation aims at spreading light onto these questions.

Do you think that females aged more than 20 should prioritize family creation rather than studying at university? * Do you think it is possible to be a good student and wife at the same time? * Please, mention your gender.					
(Crosstabulation, Table 4)					
Please, mention your gender		Do you think it is possible to be a good student and wife at the same time?			Total
		Yes	No		
male	Do you think that females aged more than 20 should prioritize family creation rather than studying at university?	Yes	20	31	51
		No	10	14	24
	Total		30	45	75
female	Do you think that females aged more than 20 should prioritize family creation rather than studying at university?	Yes	10	11	21
		No	38	16	54
	Total		48	27	75

As we can see in **Table 4**, the males and females share different attitudes towards the priorities women are expected to have after 20. To be more explicit, 51 out of 75 of the male respondents (68%) believe that girls aged above 20 should prioritize marriage rather than getting higher education. While in the case of the female participants only 21 out of 75 (28%) agreed with the 68% of the males in this regard. By the words of women, education should be a priority in every stage of person's life. Moreover, only upon completion of a degree one should start thinking about creating a family. As they put it, it is never too late for marriage,

but it might be late for studying at a university. Moreover, many women surveyed were against early marriages based on their personal experience, since it was the marriage in some cases to hinder getting higher education. What's important to mention next is the opinions of both genders about the juggling the two 'professions' (being a wife and student) at the same time. Regarding this question 45 out of 75 male respondents (60%) did not agree that it is possible for a women to study at university and be a wife at the same time. They commented on this issue explaining that one of these two 'professions' will fail as a result in case one decides to combine them. On the other hand, 48 out of 75 female respondents (64%) do believe that it is quite possible to be a wife and a student at the same time. By their words, although it would be extremely difficult to be responsible for domestic chores and to dedicate enough time for studying.

An interesting fact concerning women opinion of both survey questions discussed above is that 70% (38/54) of female respondents do not agree with the statement that girls who are aged above 20 should prioritize family creation rather than studying at university.

Overall the percentage of those who prioritized marriage 48%, (51+21 out of 150) is the same as of those who did not believe in the possibility of juggling both roles ('professions') in an efficient way, 48% (45+27 out of 150).

As it is discussed in the literature review the existing gender stereotypes do not allow the women develop their skills further in education. Hence the undereducated female population of the country does not get enough opportunities to develop, which affects the development of the overall country (Mikkola and Miles 2007). Women participants orally commented on the question about prioritizing family creation. They pointed that in many cases men do not allow their wives study at university, thus girls should prioritize getting

higher education in any way so that they could at least be highly educated before getting married.

Another significant issue to be discussed refers to the importance of partners` (wife/husband) with higher education. What does matter is whether the higher education plays a role in the marital relationships. To open the brackets, we need to find out the extent to which it is important for a highly educated person to have a highly educated partner. The question matters, as the educational level may engender a gap between them. These and other similar questions were discussed with the respondents in all of the marzes. The majority of them shared their opinion not only by completing the questionnaire but also by sharing stories about their own experience. They were talking about other higher and moral values that a good husband or wife should have. By their words higher educational status is an advantage perhaps for having a good job or simply for being well educated. When choosing a husband or wife the respondents consider other features other than higher educational status.

It is important for me that my partner (husband/wife) be a highly educated person			
Frequency Table 5			
		Frequency	Percent
	Strongly agree	17	11,3
	Agree	37	24,7
	Partially agree	9	6,0
	Neutral	4	2,7
	Partially disagree	6	4,0
	Disagree	72	48,0
	Strongly disagree	5	3,3
	Total	150	100,0

According to the data collected during the survey approximately 55% (6+72+5 out of 150) of the respondents did not attach much importance to the possible higher education of their partner. Those respondents explained this fact by claiming that the educational level does not play any role in the family relations. People generally highly appreciate the

kindness, devotion, caring attitude and honesty of their partners. The more a woman is educated the better for their children. This is the way how mainly the male respondents explain their attitude towards their partners' education. Those respondents (42%- 17+37+9 out of 150) who attach much attention to the higher education of their partners explained that the reason for having that opinion is that at least one of the parents should have higher education to be able to help children with their studies. They believed that the educational gap might be intolerable. Most women who adhered much importance to a higher education of their husbands explained that higher education is vital to everyone, particularly to those who they are going to marry/are married. However, having a higher education is not a must for their partner.

86% the respondents (see the interpretation of **Table 2** on page 22) considers getting higher education an important step in life. However, this gives birth to a question whether it is an important precondition for getting a job. Generally people go to school to become educated individuals. They also aim at getting a profession, sometimes even going deep into one or more spheres. They exercise all efforts possible to guarantee a better future not only for themselves, but also for their future families.

Correlations (Table 6)			
		I think that men should get highly educated to be able to find job	I think that women should get highly educated to be able to find job
I think that men should get highly educated to be able to find job	Pearson Correlation	1	,661**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	150	150
I think that women should get highly educated to be able to find job	Pearson Correlation	,661**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	150	150
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

However, it is highly questionable if all those with higher education have a success story to share and vice versa. In other words, one may cast doubt on whether a person has to necessarily be highly educated to be able to find a job. Furthermore, it is debatable if these issues are equally important or unimportant for both genders.

Statistically significant, strong, linear and positive correlation of two variables was found as the results of the survey. See the **Table 6**, which illustrates the strong correlation of the two variables. In other words most available, those who deem education as a principal precondition for males to find a job also tend to think that it is an important precondition for females as well. Thus, a conclusion is drawn that the respondents do believe that being highly educated for a future job is equally important for both genders.

At this point, the reader may recall a relevant phenomenon of sons' education preference introduced in the literature review of the given study. There is a documented increase in patrilocal norms and selective abortion, as sons unlike daughters stay at home with their family when they get married and they are the ones to take the burden of breadwinning on their shoulders. In order to do so, they need to have a proper job to be able to take care of the family when their parents get old. Thus, sons need to have proper education to be able to find a good job. Meanwhile, daughters are not expected to work. They leave their paternal house after marriage and are supposed to take care of their in-laws. Hence, providing a woman with higher education is not as important as for a man (Ebenstein 2014). The results of this survey show that the respondents, unlike the previously discussed situation, do think that higher education is equally important or unimportant both for genders in terms of their further pursuits to find a job.

Correlations (Table 7)

		I would prefer that my son was highly educated rather than my daughter	I would prefer to send my son to study abroad rather than my daughter
I would prefer that my son was highly educated rather than my daughter	Pearson Correlation	1	.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	150	150
I would prefer to send my son to study abroad rather than my daughter	Pearson Correlation	.709**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	150	150
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Another strong correlation of two variables found within the survey results refers to son preference in terms of providing them with higher education. In other words, both men and women prefer their son to be educated rather than their daughter. Those who share this outlook also believe that it would be more desirable to send their sons abroad to get higher education rather than their daughter. This widely recognized patrilineal worldview totally corresponded to what was narrated by the Jewish author (Ebenstein, 2014). As for the consideration to send their child abroad, the vast majority of the respondents explained that living abroad alone (without family) for a girl might be more dangerous than for a boy. This is the reason why they would prefer their sons to study abroad. Notably, son preference in terms of education is a widespread phenomenon among the respondents of all the above mentioned marzes.

As mentioned in the “Research design and Methodology” section additional 24 men with higher education were surveyed to understand whether educational status matters in terms of perusing gender stereotypical views. The answers of those respondents were not compared to the answers of women participants since women were chosen to be without higher education.

To the statement regarding the importance of getting higher education regardless of the gender 79% (19/24) of highly educated men expressed positive attitude. They commented that each person should get a profession regardless being men or woman. The other 21% of highly educated men respondents expressed the opposite opinion. **See Table 8.**

Table 8		
Highly educated men	Do you think it of high importance that the people could get higher education regardless of the gender?	
Total	Yes	No
24	19	5

The findings discussed above reveal that men with higher education do think that there is no difference whether a person is male or female higher education is very important.

It is interesting to know what highly educated men think about the possibility of being a good student and a good wife at the same time. **See Table 9**

Table 9		
Highly educated men	Do you think it is possible to be a good wife and a student at the same time?	
Total	Yes	No
24	21	3

Table 9 illustrates that 87% (21/24) find it possible for a women to be a good wife and study at university at the same time. However the other 13% (3/24) do not find it

possible. Those who think so orally commented similar to what men without higher education said in this context. They claimed it would not be possible to have two “responsible professions” at the same time, one of them might fail because of the other. Those who find combining the two “professions” believe that any person can do anything in a high level quality in case he/she has a strong desire for that.

Another finding about highly educated men attitude worth to discuss is about the importance of higher education of their partners (wives). See **Table 10**.

Table 10		
Highly educated men	It is important for me that my partner be a highly educated person	
Total	Yes	No
24	20	4

According to **Table 10** it is obvious that more respondents (83%, 20/24) among highly educated men attach importance to their partners` educational status than those who do not (17%, 4/24). The mentioned 83% of highly educated men mainly attached importance to the fact that their partners should correspond them in terms of having higher education. Since they have higher education they believe it would be of great importance to have someone with similar professional knowledge as their partners.

So far, there have been ten tables analyzed which all lend a helping hand in answering to the research question. In an attempt to summarize the survey results of 150 respondents (75 males and 75 females) from all marzes, predominantly aged 18-28, 28-39, 48 and above, we find the clues to our research question. Firstly, we encounter two main reasons of not

pursuing higher education in the women's answers- husbands'/fathers' prohibition and financial problems. By their words, though, they had a desire to apply for the university and felt a strong regret about it. Next, we find out that the men and women agree upon the existence of equal opportunities for women to get higher education in their living environment. They even unanimously claim women should be granted the opportunity for education. To what extent this correspond to the reality, is of high doubt, though.

To continue, the surveys pointed to men being discriminative in having a partner with a better status/education than themselves. Moreover, within a strong denial of equality between genders, they assigned themselves the role of the one who needs to be in charge of their wives' undertakings and actions. The women, on the contrary, were more tolerant and even mentioned they would take pride in having an educated husband.

Based on their personal experience, many women respondents orally commented that they blamed early marriages in their failure to apply for the university. Many of them agreed that women above 20 should prioritize education, as there will always be time for marriage and in case of a big will and desire, it is possible to hold both marital and student lives.

Most respondents disclosed their patrilocal discrimination in the answers to the question who they'd rather provide with higher education, especially abroad, where it is so costly. Both the majority of men and women chose their sons, considering him the one responsible for getting a better job in the future and taking care of their parents.

Overall very little number of highly educated men have gender stereotypical views in the field of women higher education. This is conditioned with the fact that they themselves are highly educated and find higher education important for everybody regardless gender, especially for their wives.

By and large, the above mentioned findings were extracted as core in answering to our research question.

CONCLUSION

“A woman is human. She is not better, wiser, stronger, more intelligent, more creative, or more responsible than a man. Likewise, she is never less. Equality is a given. A woman is human.”

Vera Nazarian

While most educated women in Armenia advocate gender equality and equal rights for higher education, the reality proves there is still gender discrimination embedded into our mentality and cultural norms. The survey results presented in the previous section serve as a proof. Analyzing the answers of 150 participants without higher education, we came to the conclusion that equal opportunities for higher education are available for both genders, but there are some factors which obstacle women in their pursuit of higher education. As it turned out, those factors to hinder their pursuit were husbands'/fathers' prohibition and then financial problems. Another factor was early marriages, one that almost all women regret about. Thus, in our reality, women are mostly deprived of higher education because men do not allow them to. This comes from a common misperception that sons only are the breadwinners and the ones to take care of their parents, meanwhile daughters leave their home to look after their in-laws. In other words, our society reflects patrilocal norms as endogeneity. What's more, even under the circumstances of equal opportunities for education, most men view themselves as the ones to decide what their wives or daughters are allowed to do. In their deep conviction, a woman should not be allowed to study as she has to prioritize marriage and marital life which is strongly incompatible with a student's life.

Women, on the other hand, confess they would be proud of their husbands if they had higher education. They would like to be highly educated themselves, if granted a chance. So, women prove to be totally indiscriminative when it comes to having a husband with a higher status than themselves.

In an attempt to embrace all these answers under one umbrella, we can witness that our hypothesis is partially accepted, which states that the existing gender stereotypes create a measurable shortage of highly educated women in Armenia.

According to the data found in the framework of this research in the mentioned 4 marzes there is a shortage of highly educated women because of stereotypical views, however, that is not the only reason for the shortage of highly educated women in Armenia. As we found out from the previous sections, women suffer because of financial problems and early marriages as well. Therefore, not all the blame should be adhered to husbands' or fathers' discriminative outlooks.

Even though the gender inequality is widely accepted as embedded into our cultural norms, but we still hope that a growing number of educated youngsters will tend to appreciate equal rights for both genders.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire is to find out to extent to which the gender stereotypes create a shortage in highly educated women in Armenia. Gender stereotypes are the beliefs adopted by people and underline unequal treatment of men and women in society, particularly advocating men dominance over women. For example women should only be housewives and bring up the children, women should not work and if they do they should not earn more than men, women education is not important, women do not have to deal with politics, etc.

Your participation only will requires filling the questionnaire, which will last only 5 minutes. We do not collect any personal information and your name will never be mentioned within the framework of this study. Your answers will be generalized with the one of other for creating a clearer picture of the stereotypical views in 4 marzes of Armenia. We want to extend our gratitude to you for your help in advance.

Please mention your gender

- Male
- Female

Which age group do you belong to?

- 18-28
- 29-38
- 39-48
- 48 and above

Please indicate the marz you live in?

- Aragatsotn
- Armavir
- Ararat
- Kotayq

Please indicate the level of your education

- Secondary education
- Bachelor`s degree
- Master`s degree
- PHD

If you are a female without higher education please answer to the next two questions as well:

Please mention the reason why you do not have higher education

Would you like to be highly educated? Please elaborate on the reason why you would/not like to be a highly educated person

Please answer YES or NO to the following questions.

- Do you think that women and men in your living environment have equal opportunities for getting higher education?
 - YES
 - NO
- Do you believe that your female family member should have a higher education?
 - YES
 - NO
- Would you mind if your partner (wife/husband) had a higher educational status than you?
 - YES
 - NO
- Do you think that females aged more than 20 should prioritize family creation rather than studying at university?
 - YES
 - NO
- Do you think that it of high importance that the people could get higher education regardless of the gender?
 - YES
 - NO
- Do you think it is possible to be a good student and wife at the same time?
 - YES
 - NO

- Do you know any female who does not have higher education because of the existing stereotypes towards women in the environment you live?
 - YES
 - NO

Please read each statement below and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the provided questions.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Female and male students perform equally well in learning							
I would like that we had a government system which would guarantee the opportunity women to study in universities							
It is important for me that my partner (husband/wife) be a highly educated person							
I think that men should get highly educated to be able to find job							
I think women should get highly educated to be able to find a job							
I would prefer that my son was highly educated rather than my daughter							
I would prefer to send my son to study abroad rather my daughter							

