

GENDER INEQUALITY AND POVERTY IN ARMENIA: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH

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Abstract: A gender perspective highlights that poverty affects women and girls disproportionately due to gender biases, unequal division of power in society and social expectations from the roles of men and women. Starting from the 1980s, feminist researchers had begun to raise the issue of the **feminization of poverty**, and stressed the importance of the intersectionality between not only poverty and gender, but also poverty, gender, ethnicity, age, marital status, etc.

Multidimensional analyses of poverty can become the most appropriate methodological approach to understand interconnections between gender and poverty. In order to reveal the whole spectrum of impacts of poverty on different social groups, a multidimensional analysis focuses on 1) opportunities and choices; 2) resources; 3) power and voice; 4) human security. In the article, poverty among men and women in Armenia is presented and recommendations to mitigate poverty among various women's groups are presented.

Key words: poverty, gender, multidimensional poverty, unpaid domestic work, gender pay gap, feminization of poverty.

ԳԵՆԴԵՐԱՅԻՆ ԱՆՀԱՎԱՍՏԱՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ԵՎ Ս ԱՂՔԱՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆՈՒՄ. ԲԱԶՄԱԶԱԲ ՄՈՏԵՑՈՒՄ

Գոհար Շահնազարյան

սոցիոլոգիական գիտությունների թեկնածու, ԵՊՀ գենդերային հետազոտությունների և առաջնորդության կենտրոնի տնօրեն

Անփոփում. Գենդերային հեռանկարն ընդգծում է գենդերային կարծրատիպերի, իշխանության անհավասար բաշխման և տղամարդկանց ու կանանց դերերի վերաբերյալ հասարակության սպասելիքների պատճառով աղքատության անհամաչափ ազդեցությունը կանանց և աղջիկների վրա: 1980-ական թթ. սկսած՝ ֆեմինիստները խոսել են աղքատության կանացիացման (feminization) խնդրի մասին և ընդգծել բազմաչափ մոտեցման կարևորությունը ոչ միայն աղքատության ու գենդերի, այլ նաև էթնիկ պատկանելության, տարիքի, ամուսնական կարգավիճակի և այլն հարցերում:

Աղքատության բազմաչափ վերլուծությունները կարող են լինել ամենահամապատասխան մեթոդաբանական մոտեցումները գենդերի ու աղքատության փոխկապվածությունը հասկանալու համար: Սոցիալական տարբեր խմբերի վրա աղքատության ազդեցության ամբողջական պատկերը բացահայտելու համար բազմաչափ վերլուծությունը կենտրոնանում է՝ 1) հնարավորությունների ու ընտրությունների, 2) ռեսուրսների, 3) իշխանության ու ձայնի, 4) մարդու անվտանգության վրա: Հոդվածում քննարկվում է Հայաստանում աղքատության խնդիրը կանանց և տղամարդկանց շրջանում, ինչպես նաև առաջարկություններ են ներկայացվում կանանց տարբեր խմբերի շրջանում աղքատության նվազեցման ուղղությամբ:

Բանալի բառեր – աղքատություն, գենդեր, բազմադրոսային աղքատություն, սվճարվող տնային աշխատանք, աշխատավարձի գենդերային ներքվածք

ГЕНДЕРНОЕ НЕРАВЕНСТВО И БЕДНОСТЬ В АРМЕНИИ: МНОГОМЕРНЫЙ ПОДХОД

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Аннотация: Статья посвящена рассмотрению бедности среди мужчин и женщин в Армении. Гендерный подход рассматривает непропорциональную бедность среди женщин и девочек по сравнению с мужчинами в силу гендерных предубеждений, неравного распределения власти в обществе, а также социальных ожиданий от ролей мужчин и женщин. Начиная с 80-х годов прошлого столетия, исследователи феминизма заинтересовались в феномене феминизации бедности и подчеркнули важность многомерного подхода по выявлению взаимосвязи не только между бедностью и гендером, но и бедностью, гендером, этнической принадлежностью, возрастом, семейным статусом и т.д.

Многомерный подход к изучению бедности может стать наиболее подходящей методологической базой для изучения взаимосвязи между гендером и бедностью. С позиции данного подхода, спектр влияния бедности на различные группы включает анализ: 1) возможностей и выборов, 2) ресурсов, 3) власти, 4) безопасности. Предлагаются рекомендации по снижению уровня бедности среди различных групп женщин.

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Ключевые слова: бедность, гендер, многомерная бедность, неоплачиваемая домашняя работа, гендерный разрыв в оплате труда, феминизация бедности.

Introduction

Poverty affects a lot of people. Yet some groups in society are more vulnerable and disadvantaged than others due to their social roles, lack of opportunities, and inefficient social policies. Despite changes in gender roles, when it comes to progress being made in women's empowerment and gender policies, women still remain among the poorest all over the world. Women are at greater risk of poverty because they have relatively limited material, as well as social and cultural assets (UN Women, 2020). Generally speaking, a feminist perspective on poverty highlights that women are more likely to experience poverty than men, and that inequality in a social fabric makes women poor. In other words, gender inequality is not a symptom of poverty, but a fundamental cause of it (USAID, 2021). Throughout the world, women are more likely to reduce paid working hours outside of their household in order to perform unpaid domestic work such as the rearing of children. Despite the fact that women are overrepresented among low income and poor classes globally, the situation differs across various respective regions. For example, women are underrepresented among those living in extreme poverty in Europe, Central Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, whereas in the East, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, women are overrepresented (Swedish International Development Agency, 2020).

Starting from the 1980s, feminists had begun to raise the issue of the *feminization of poverty*, and stressed the importance of the intersectionality between not only poverty and gender, but also poverty, gender, ethnicity, age, marital status, etc. It has also been proven, in many international reports, that the countries where women have the fewest freedoms and rights are the same countries that have the poorest conditions and worst conflict-affected areas (USAID, 2021). The consequences of poverty for women varies from housing problems, health issues, debts, and domestic violence (Women's Budget Group, 2018). Women from marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities, elderly women, and women living in the rural areas, are even more vulnerable and susceptible to poverty.

Feminist analysis of poverty is impossible without understanding the concept of patriarchy. Many feminist scholars emphasize the impact of the interconnection between capitalism and patriarchy on with respect to the feminization of poverty. Feminist scholar, Sylvia Walby, distinguished six main patriarchal structures of patriarchy, which put women in a more vulnerable position (Walby, 1989). Those structures are the following: a patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations within waged labor, the patriarchal state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal culture.

COVID-19 became an exacerbating factor in terms of the further feminization of poverty. COVID-19 created a new category of people; namely, the so-called "new poor". The new poor were not living in poverty before the pandemic, but lost their job opportunities in 2020 (Swedish International Development Agency, 2020). According to the World Bank's latest reports, women are affected by this situation more than men mostly due to their large representation in the most affected sectors of the pandemic with respect to economy (Swedish International Development Agency, 2020).

Despite the fact that more policymakers are becoming aware about the idea of feminization of poverty around the world, the interconnection between gender and poverty should still be understood and analyzed deeper. Among the main challenges are gaining a deep understanding of the connection between gender and poverty remain, especially in light of the following threefold contexts: 1) different forms of gender inequalities in various economic, social, and cultural contexts; 2) difficulties in measuring poverty, and especially multidimensional poverty; and 3) lack of gender disaggregated data (Cagatay, 1998).

In order to understand poverty from a gender perspective, it is important to analyze and define poverty from various perspectives. Most researchers identify three main approaches: (UNDP, 2004).

- The monetary approach, which defines poverty as a decline in consumption or income.
- The capacities approach rejects monetary income as the sole measure of wellbeing, and highlights the importance for an individual to fulfill her/his capacities. From this perspective, poverty is interpreted as a lack of resources "to having access to knowledge and enjoying freedom of expression and thought". The capacity approach also focuses on the importance of access to social capital and social networks.
- The social exclusion approaches mainly study the structural characteristics of society that prevent certain social groups from full social participation.

How to Look at Poverty Through the Lenses of Gender

In the past decades, many methodologies were developed by international organizations in order to study poverty. However, not all of them were and are sensitive enough to and take into account gender

perspectives, and therefore allow the taking into account of things like the conceptualization of such complex phenomena as the feminization of poverty. The majority of feminist researchers agree that a traditional measurement of *household income* doesn't reflect the gender aspect of income and expenses, and neither does it measure non-monetary indicators of poverty, such as time use, unpaid domestic work, decision making dynamic, etc.

The measuring poverty by *income at the individual level* could be a better effective tool in the endeavor of understanding more invisible aspects of poverty. For example, a woman can live in non-poor household, and yet not have any personal income, which consequently makes her vulnerable in the face of violence as well as abuse within the household.

Another way to measure poverty from gender perspective is to identify a household's headship. From the start of the 1970s in the 20th century, female household headships have been used as an indicator of the feminization of poverty. In the past decades, certain conceptual and methodological concerns were raised regarding the relationship between household headships and poverty, and its use as a representative measure of women's poverty. Nevertheless, it still remains a credible tool to identify some trends in women's poverty. In Armenia, women comprise 33% of being the heads of households. However, there are more women than men among heads of household with two and three children under 16 years of age (45% women vs 30% men) (The Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2020).

Female household headships are closely interconnected with the issue of land ownership by gender. Being a landowner represents not only access to material resources, but also the empowerment and bargaining power it can give to a person owning land (UNDP, 2004). In the case of women, it also provides some security, and makes them less vulnerable in situations of domestic violence, divorce, and the like.

By law, women in Armenia have equal rights as men to inheritance as well as ownership and disposal of land and property. Yet the land privatization process and local customs have resulted in more men accessing land and other assets. The increasing of women's access to land and other property for collateral is essential to ensure women's use of productive resources to pursue a better livelihood and enterprise development opportunities (Asian Development Bank, 2019).

From a gender perspective, *unpaid domestic work* is one of the most important concepts. Unpaid work within the household is not counted as income. Yet domestic work can make a considerable difference in household income.

It is worth noting here the specifics of the unpaid emotional labor first coined by sociologist Arlie Hochschild in her from 1983 entitled "The Managed Heart" (Hochschild, 2012). The term emotional labor originally defined the work of managing one's own emotions that was required by certain professions, such as the flight attendant's requirement to smile at all times regardless of stressful or challenging situations. Over time, the original meaning of the term has been expanded and various alternate usages of the term have appeared. One of the most popular alternative applications of the term in modern contexts refers to household chores, especially unpaid work, that is usually expected to be done by women. On the other hand, emotional labor mostly impacts women by preserving occupational segregation and gender wage gap. The latter is particularly grounded by the fact that in many female-dominated occupations caring and empathizing are the core requirements for job placement. Therefore, work-related tasks which are assumed to be emotional labor are automatically associated with women.

It has been shown throughout many surveys that there is a strong relationship between unpaid work and the impoverishment of women. The measurement of unpaid work shows an important difference in household income between households with a person devoted to domestic work and care giving, and households that must pay the private costs associated with this work (Hochschild, 2012).

Another way to measure and visualize unpaid work is through time use studies. Unpaid work is divided into subsistence work (food and clothing production, clothing repair), domestic work (purchasing household goods and services, cooking, laundry, ironing, cleaning, activities related to household organization and task distribution, and errands such as bill payment among other tasks), family care (child and elderly care) and community service or voluntary work (services provided to non-family members through religious or lay organizations) (Hochschild, 2012). The calculation of time that each household's member spends on unpaid domestic work allows for the possibility of the visualization and monetization of unpaid work. Time use surveys also clearly show what prevents certain family members (mostly women and girls) from increasing their individual social and economic status.

The issue of unpaid care work has become even more visible during the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Statistical Service of Armenia also calculated the gender aspect of unpaid care work. Unpaid care work is closely interlinked with such measurement categories as time use and total workload.

According to that data, **women spend more than twice as much time on unpaid domestic work, caring for children, and caring for family members who are sick, elderly or have disabilities, compared to men.** Overall, UN data suggests that **women spend 58.5 hours each week on domestic care work, while men spend 28.4 hours** on such work (UN Women, 2020). The high costs of child care pose a barrier to reducing women's disproportionate burden of unpaid work. Moreover, child care benefits are only available to one working parent (Congrave & Gomtsyan, 2020).

Social perceptions about the distribution of unpaid work are also reflected in the study of norms and stereotypes conducted by UN Women. 88% of women and 77% of men agree that women in their family are mainly responsible for unpaid domestic work (such as cleaning, cooking, and laundry). It is also interesting that more women than men believe that men should be equally involved in day-to-day childcare activities (98% of women vs 68% of men) (UN Women, 2022).

The time that women spend on unpaid domestic work depends on their status in the labor market. No such correlation appears to exist for men. In addition to the UN data cited above, in terms of hours spent on domestic care work in general, data from the World Bank indicates an even greater divide. The World Bank reports that **employed women spend 27.5 hours each week on domestic work, compared to 37.5 hours spent by women who are not employed, while men spend 11 hours per week on care work irrespective of their employment status** (Congrave, Gomtsyan, 2020). Despite these discrepancies, most women report that they do not want to change their daily lives. Most men and women, especially in rural areas, believe that the division of work between men and women is 'natural' and, therefore, 'unchangeable' (Congrave, Gomtsyan, 2020).

Gender Dimensions of Multidimensional Poverty

In the last few decades, international organizations and researchers started to use a multidimensional poverty index in order to understand the complexity of poverty and its impact on various marginalized groups. Multidimensional poverty includes the following dimensions: 1) Opportunities and choices (access to education, health care, clean water, infrastructure, etc.); 2) Resources (income levels, capital, land, social capital); 3) Power and Voice (respect for human rights, formal and informal discrimination, access to decision-making and control of the agenda for decision making); 4) Human Security (physical, sexual and psychological safety, freedom from conflict and violence) (Swedish International Development Agency, 2020). In addition, the concept of multidimensional poverty also takes into account political and institutional context, economic and social context, environmental context, and conflict/peaceful *context*.

Since 2016, the Statistical Committee of Armenia has calculated the rate of **multidimensional poverty** in the country, albeit without sex-disaggregated data. Nevertheless, some trends shed light on the intersections between gender, economic status and vulnerability. More individuals living in households that are considered multidimensionally poor reside in rural areas (29%) than in the capital city of Yerevan (18%) or other urban areas (22%).¹⁰ Multidimensional poverty indicators reveal that the most significant deprivations in Armenia are related to: 1) decent jobs, 2) a dignified life, with the funds to buy, when necessary, food and/or clothes, 3) healthy heating (i.e., households which use wood, carbon or other sources as their primary source for heating), and 4) centralized sanitation and garbage disposal.

27% of the Armenian population is poor; 51% of the poor population lives in rural areas, 48% in urban areas. Women comprise 52% among poor (The Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2020). According to the World Bank Data, the percentage of people living below \$5.50 per day in Armenia consists 43%.

Please find presented below the gender aspect of each element of multidimensional poverty in Armenia.

Opportunities and Choices

In the majority of countries, education is closely linked with the economic status of a person or a group of people. However, in Armenia, and in other countries in the wider region, the situation is the opposite. There are more girls studying in general and primary schools, and almost at all other levels of education with the exception of doctors of science.

At the same time, there are more women than men who are neither in education, nor in employment (NEET) in Armenia (40% vs 23%). The difference is especially salient in the age group of 25-29 years of age (58% vs 31%).

Another important indicator of multidimensional poverty is from the perspective of opportunities and choices. Maternal mortality is higher in the rural areas of Armenia. One of the biggest health issues for women in Armenia remains malignant neoplasms. This problem is especially noticeable in the age group of 25-34 years of age.

When it comes to the subjective evaluation of state of health, it is interesting that much more men than women describe their health as very good (21% vs 9%). In addition, more women than men evaluate their state of health as fair, poor, and very poor (World Value Survey Wave 7 (2017-2020)). It is also worth mentioning that more women than men in Armenia mentioned that in the past 12 months they or a respective family member have gone without needed for medicine or treatment (table 1) World Value Survey Wave 7 (2017-2020).

Table 1. *In the past 12 months, how often have you or your family gone without needed for medicine or treatment, %*

	TOTAL	Sex		Age		
		Male	Female	Up to 29	30-49	50 and more
Often	6.7	4.8	8.4	3.0	5.3	10.0
Sometimes	9.0	7.6	10.2	4.0	11.4	9.5
Rarely	8.3	7.6	8.9	7.3	8.3	8.9
Never	75.6	79.6	72.2	85.7	74.8	71.0
Don't know	0.2	0.2	0.3	-	0.3	0.3
No answer	0.1	0.2	-	-	-	0.2
Missing; Not available	-	-	-	-	-	-
(N)	(1,223)	(555)	(668)	(257)	(465)	(501)

51% of women compare to that of 31% of men are outside of the labor market. According to the data provided by the National Statistical Service of Armenia, there are more widowed and divorced women than single women, married women, and men among the working age population of Armenia. 99% of women and only 1% of men mention family circumstances as a factor of not being active in the labor market. More women are not active because of illness and disability (61% vs 39%). However, more men are planning to go abroad for a job and that's why they are not active in the labor market at the moment (84% vs 16%). The majority of women in Armenia are involved in the relatively low paid sectors, such as services, public administration, education, health and social work. Whereas more men are occupied in construction, industry and trade. More women are also involved in the public sectors of economy (less paid), whereas more men work in non-public sectors.

There is a large gender gap in favor of men among employers in Armenia, as 76% of employers are men, while only 24% are women. Moreover, women are almost twice as likely as men to be engaged as contributing family workers (68% of whom are women, while 32% are men). There are also much more self-employed men than women in Armenia (65% vs 35%) (The Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2020).

Obviously, this situation results in the gender differences among wages. In 2020, women's earning comprised 65% of men's earnings, which results in a gender pay gap of 35%.

The retirement age is another exacerbating factor for becoming poor. The average pension is very low. In 2020, it was 42 847 AMD (105 USD) for women and 45 731 AMD (112 USD) for men. Given the fact that women comprise 61% of all pensioners, they are at a greater risk of becoming poor (The Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2020)

Power, Voice and Agency

According to feminist sociologists, all institutions are gendered and “no aspect of politics can be understood without an understanding of the ways that gender influences underlying assumptions and dynamics”. According to the sociologist, Joan Acker, gender is an inevitable part of processes, practices, images, ideologies, and distribution of power within them (Shahnazaryan, Aznauryan, Saghumyan, 2016).

Power imbalance among women and men in Armenia is quite visible, and gendered public-private binary still remains quite high. After Snap Parliamentary elections in 2021, the percentage of women in the Parliament reached 30%. There is only one woman in the Minister of Health, and none of the three bodies subordinate to the Prime Minister – the National Security Service, the police and the State Control Service – if it is headed by a woman. Moreover, none of the eleven bodies subordinate to the Government if it is headed by a woman (European Union, 2021). After the establishment of gender quotas for the judicial system, the number of women judges has been increased to 28%. There are no women members of Council of Central Bank of Armenia.

The representation of women on the level of regional governance is also quite low. There is only one woman governor, and only nine women head of communities, and only 9% of women are members of council of communities.

When it comes to the perception of women in the leadership positions, more than half of the Armenian population believes that a person's gender doesn't make any difference in respect to the top positions in business. However, more women than men feel comfortable with a female boss (UN Women, 2022). Similarly, more men than women believe that men make better political leaders.

Half of all respondents would not like to see more women in national politics. It is quite disturbing that these attitudes are more widespread among the younger generation. Respondents aged 18-29 are more likely to share this view than older respondents. 45% of female and 56% of male respondents stated that they would not like to see more women in national politics. However, views on women in local or community politics are more positive. Half of the respondents want to see more women in politics at these levels. At the same time, again there are more young women among those who don't want to see women in local and community leadership. It is also very telling that almost 30% of respondents did not recall having a woman whom they admired when growing up.

Gender Based Violence and Human Security

In literature about gender and poverty, gender-based violence (GBV) is also considered as one of the contributing factors to female poverty. Understanding GBV's impact on women's lives is also broadening the conceptualization of poverty. Gender based violence is seen as a factor that prevents women from self-development, education, and entering the labor market. It also negatively affects mental health and skills of psycho-social resilience. Many studies proved that there is a close relationship between poverty and violence. On the one hand, poverty can be an exacerbating factor for gender-based violence. While on the other hand, violence in the household and in the society in general slows the development of a given society.

The low economic status of women in the Armenian society is an exacerbating factor of domestic violence. A large number of victims of domestic violence are unemployed. According to the data of one of the surveys conducted by Armenian NGO, 85% of respondents agreed that "many women have to choose to live alone and be poor, or to stay in the home where they are being battered" (UN Women, 2022). 19% of ever-partnered women mentioned that their male partners forbade them to get a job or earn a living in one way or another (Coalition to Stop Violence against Violence, 2019).

Domestic violence remains widespread in Armenia. Over 700 cases of domestic violence cases are reported each year, and women's organization's hotlines receive around 3,000 calls per year. However, survivors of domestic violence do not receive appropriate support. There are no state-run shelters, and both law enforcement officers and judges are not properly trained to process cases of domestic violence. Between 2010 and 2020, **at least 83 women were killed by a current or former intimate partner, spouse or other family member in Armenia**, according to women's rights organizations (European Union, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women reported an alarming increase in domestic violence. This coalition of civil society organizations, including organizations which provide services to women who experience domestic violence and their children, noted that direct reports of violence increased by 30% during the state of emergency in March 2020, and by 50% in April. This increase was also reported by the rapid assessment commissioned by UNFPA, conducted in April–May 2021 (European Union, 2021).

According to the UN Women's survey, the most common types of violence in Armenia are physical and psychological. 15% of respondents reported having experienced physical violence in adulthood, and 13 % reported having experienced psychological violence. Perception of gender-based violence as a private matter makes women even more vulnerable and unprotected. Around 70% of Armenian population believes that conflicts between a husband and wife should remain private, even if conflict involves violence (UN Women, 2022).

Another aspect of multidimensional poverty is a person's safety and security. More women than men in Armenia (58% vs 42% respectively) are extremely worried about themselves and their family's physical safety. Moreover, 45% of women compare to 31% of men don't feel secure in their neighborhood (Caucasus Barometer, 2021). Women are less willing to carry much money with them for security reasons (53% of women and 37% of men), and less likely to go out at night alone (62% of women vs 24% of men answered yes to the statement "preferred not to go out at night for security") (World Value Survey Wave 7 (2017-2020). Women are also more concerned with the lack of peace in the country than men (62% vs 38%) (Caucasus Barometer, 2021).

Social perceptions, gender inequality and poverty

Gender stereotypes may be found behind the reported picture of sharing the household chores. In fact, according to the Gender Barometer Survey, 2015, men were perceived to have successful careers and a good profession in order to be able to provide for their families, whereas women were expected to be more educated, and have some occupation and keep the traditions. It is worth mentioning that women themselves (87% of female respondents) do not believe in existence of men who are ready to contribute equally to domestic duties according to the Gender Assessment conducted by Asian Development Bank in 2015.

Gender inequality and the distribution of gender roles in the society is closely interlinked with the social perceptions about men and women's roles, expectations from ascribed gender roles, and understanding of gender justice. This is clearly demonstrated in the World Value Survey conducted in Armenia in 2017-2020, recent Baseline study of Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership (2022) conducted by the UN Women, and other surveys on attitudes and perceptions (Caucasus Barometer, Gender Barometer, researches and surveys of local women's organizations, etc.).

According to the 2021 database of Caucasus Barometer (table 2), 70% of women didn't have any personal income in the month previous to survey. Moreover, women have more income than men only in the category of USD 251-400.

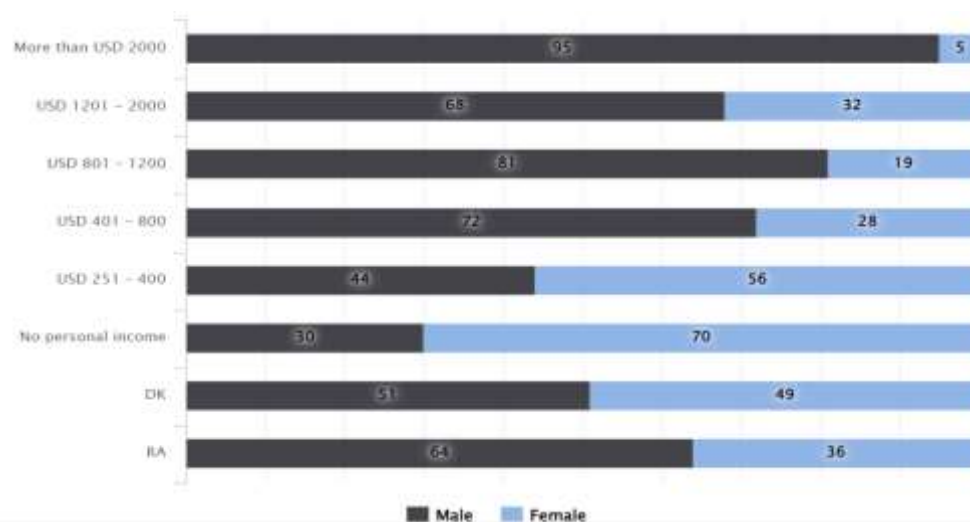


Table 2. Personal income last month by gender, %

The data also shows the low levels of women's ambitions when compared to those of men in regards of minimal monthly income for normal life. More women than men (63 % vs 37%) believe that USD 250 or less could be a minimal monthly income for normal life (table 3). Even more women than men (70% vs 30%) agree that USD 251-400 is a minimal monthly income for them to have normal life.

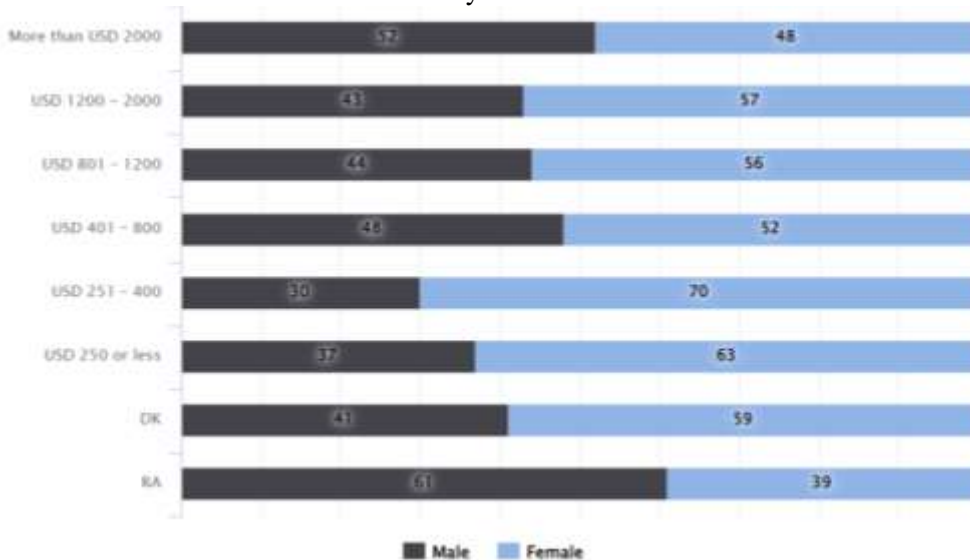


Table 3. Minimal monthly income for normal life (by gender), %

It is interesting that more women than men in Armenia identify themselves as very poor and poor, and at the same time more women perceive their economic conditions as very good. Men seemed to be more moderate in their self-economic identification, and agree that their economic situation is fair or good (table

4).

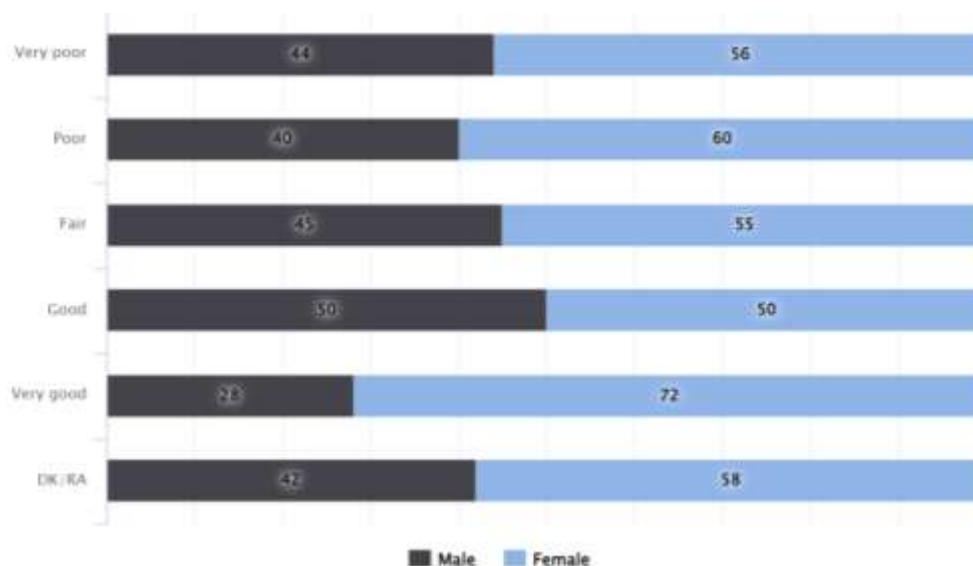


Table 4. Perceived relative economic condition (by gender), %

Relatively speaking, more women than men mentioned that in the last 12 months their respective family have often gone without food to eat (4.6% vs 3.6%), or sometimes (8.1% vs 5.4%). Similarly, more women than men (13.6% vs 9.9%) said that in the last 12 months they or they family often have gone without a cash income. In addition, more women than men (44.2% vs 36.7%) said that their family just get by during the past year, whereas more men than women (18.2% vs 15.9%) managed to save money in the last year. Another indicator of poverty is lack of access to the necessary medical treatment. 8.4% women compare to 4.8% mentioned that in the last 12 months they often gone without needed medicine or treatment. At the same time, more men said that they never had such experience in the past year (World Value Survey Wave 7 (2017-2020)). It is also worth mentioning that more women than men (55% vs 45% respectively) answered that their household doesn't have any savings (Caucasus Barometer Survey, 2021).

More men than women (59% s 50%) agree or strongly agree with the statement: “when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women”. Similarly, more women than men strongly disagree with the statement stating that it is a problem if wife's income is higher than the income of husband. However, an interesting tendency is observed here; namely, that more young people (up to 29 years old) disagree with this statement (49%) than people in the higher age groups.

Some gender differences are also observed in such indicators of poverty, as not having food to eat or having a cash.

When it comes to the class of self-identification, the majority of the Armenian population identify themselves as upper middle class, and lower middle class. Relatively more men describe themselves as upper class; however, women attribute themselves to the upper middle class.

Data in regards to attitudes show that men in Armenia have more conservative perceptions about women's role than women do. For example, more men than women agree that it is better for a pre-school child if her/his mother doesn't work (75% m. vs 66% w. respectively), career advancement is more important for men than women (53% m. vs 49% w. respectively), and that jobs in any industry can be done by women and men with the same success (69% m vs 85% w. respectively) (UN Women, 2022). Perceptions about “outdoor” and “indoor” activities of men and women could also contribute to the low economic status of women.

It should be noted that COVID-19 continued to reinforce existing gender stereotypes about division of labor and household's chores. Society decides that the division of work between men and women should be done starting from early age. Therefore, between the ages of eight to nine, girls are expected to be involved in domestic work, such as setting the table, cleaning the house, bringing water if they live in the villages, etc. So basically, in Armenian households, there is a clear division between “indoor” and “outdoor” work, and the indoor work is associated mainly with women. It includes cleaning the house, cooking, taking care of children, which includes their education. Moreover, there are obvious control mechanisms meant to ensure that household work is properly performed by women and girls. These mechanisms and often discriminatory treatment contain the potential to impact the wellbeing of women and girls. In crisis and highly stressful situations, the impact on the physical and emotional wellbeing will be obviously even more

severe. Moreover, the existing unequal distribution of household activities combined with discriminatory attitudes towards women, make women even more vulnerable in crisis situations. Women and girls may become so-called “scapegoats” and targets of more physical and psychological pressures in the situation when every member of the household is already under the stress, fear, social-psychological pressure, and financial difficulties.

By assigning the domestic sphere to women, the sexual division of labor causes an “inequality of opportunities for women, as a gender, to gain access to material and social resources (ownership of productive capital, paid labor, education and training), and to participate in decision making in the main political, economic and social policies” (Bravo, 1998 p. 63). In point of fact, women have not only relatively fewer material assets, but also fewer social assets (the income, goods and services to which people have access through their social relationships) and fewer cultural assets (the formal education and cultural knowledge that enable people perform in the human environment), all of which places them at greater risk of being poor.

Conclusion

For a long time, poverty was perceived and analyzed by scholars as something universal and non-categorized. Feminist perspective on poverty brought to light an understanding of impoverishment as a deeply gendered and intersectional phenomena. The main cause of the feminization of poverty remains patriarchy, with its various structures and forms of oppression. As Suzanne M. Spencer-Wood mentions in her commentary on how feminist theory increases our understanding of the archaeology of poverty, “gendering of poverty resulted from patriarchy and its gender ideology, in which women were supposed to be economically dependent on their fathers and husbands... Historically, patriarchal capitalism structurally impoverished women by legalizing men’s traditional appropriation of women’s labor, earning and possessions” (Spencer-Wood, 2011). Moreover, women who don’t work outside of the house, were and are still considered “unskilled”, despite their time, knowledge and skills put into housekeeping, taking care of children and often old and sick members of the family. Third wave feminism also revealed that poverty can’t be disentangled from class, race, ethnicity. Poverty is produced not only through low representation of women on the labor market, but also through the historical exclusion of certain ethnic groups from public domain.

In Armenia, women are still poorer than men, and have lesser power and access to decision making, which makes them vulnerable and protected in the face of gender-based violence and discrimination. In addition, institutional gendered poverty is clearly reflected on the level of social perceptions and attitudes in the Armenian society.

In order to address various, often latent, manifestations of poverty, it is important to start from the collection of gender desegregated data on poverty, improve measurements revealing the reality of unpaid house work, women’s unemployment and underemployment on the labor market, and advocate for the development of policies that will help women and girls from various backgrounds to have dignified lives.

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