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**“The Influence of Women’s Political Representation on Political Decision-making:
Qualitative Case Study of Azerbaijan”**

Master’s thesis

Supervisor: Alar Kilp, PhD

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Authorship Declaration

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

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Abstract

Gender inequality issues persist in both the descriptive and substantive representation of women in the political arena. Even though the developed countries have made significant improvements in addressing gender inequality issues in politics, the issue is still at a critical level in developing countries. Azerbaijan is a post-Soviet country where most of the population is Muslim. High levels of the gender wage gap, underage and forced marriage issues, domestic violence, and social stereotypes against women in Azerbaijani society create a need for improvements in the substantive representation of women in politics. Additionally, the descriptive representation of Azerbaijani women is still low. In this research, the author aims to identify the link between the descriptive and substantive representation of women in politics in the case of Azerbaijan. By doing so, the author will clarify if there is a need to increase the number of female MPs in the Azerbaijani parliament, to increase women's substantive representation in politics.

Using the qualitative data from the Codes of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the transcripts of parliamentary meetings, interviews, and surveys, the author identifies how female MPs impacted the policy agenda and output on women's issues and to what extent male MPs represented the issues of women. The findings suggest that female MPs bring more issues of women to the political agenda and can affect policy output on women's issues more compared to male MPs. Without female MPs, male MPs do not represent women's issues enough. While male MPs discuss more on unemployment of women, women's reproductive health, human trafficking, and violence against women, they do not represent health issues of women other than reproductive health, forced marriage, underage marriage, women's participation in political decision-making, unequally divided household responsibilities, and social stereotypes against women.

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List of Abbreviations

ADB - Asian Development Bank

ICT - Information and Communication Technologies

IPU - Inter-Parliamentary Union

MP - Member of Parliament

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

SCFWCA - State Committee on Family, Women, and Children Affairs

SSCRA - State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan

UNDP - United Nations Development Program

Introduction

Improvement in women's political representation has been considered as one of the most important prerequisites to address the existing gender inequality issues. Gender inequality is one of the issues that is persisting historically and catches increasing attention in the political agenda. Males and females are still facing different standards in social life, family, workplace, and politics where females are disadvantaged. Increasing the number of female politicians can lead to the increased attention on gender inequality issues and affect political decision-making. However, existing literature is missing strong empirical evidence on the relationship between women's political representation and its impact on political decision-making, especially for developing countries.

Azerbaijan is a good example to understand the impact of the increase in the number of female politicians. Considering the traditions of the Soviet Union and the rules of Islam, it is not surprising that gender inequality issues are critical in Azerbaijan. Women's issues regarding domestic violence, education, family, children, and health are still persisting and women benefit less than men from the economic development of the country (Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2019). There is a lack of female politicians to raise the women's concerns, issues, and interests in the political arena. Considering the role of politics in solving the issues of population, it is important to understand if female politicians are able to change the political agenda and bring more women's issues under the attention of government and parliament. In this research, the author aims to understand if the descriptive representation of women in the Azerbaijani parliament transforms into substantive representation and whether female members of the Azerbaijani parliament (*Milli Majlis*) are able to affect the decision-making process and political output. Considering the author's purpose, this research is aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Do female members of parliament (MPs) bring more women's issues and interests to the political agenda?
2. Are female members of parliament able to affect the political output (passed laws, legislation, and decisions) closer to Azerbaijani women's expectations?

3. To what degree have women's issues and interests been promoted without female members of parliament?

To be able to answer the research questions, the author will conduct the qualitative analysis based on the data from interviews, surveys, Codes of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and transcripts of the meetings of the Azerbaijani parliament. Qualitative content structuring analysis and thematic analysis are used as data analysis methods to analyze the data for the purposes of this research. Interviews have been conducted with female business owners, public sector employees, and NGO head in Azerbaijan. Survey data has been collected from Azerbaijani women living in shelters and Azerbaijani women studying law and politics.

The analysis results suggest that women's descriptive representation in the Azerbaijani parliament increases women's substantive representation as female MPs bring a variety of topics on women's issues to the parliamentary agenda that are not addressed by male MPs. However, while female MPs are more successful in affecting the policy output on women's issues, the impact is not big enough. Considering the substantive representation of women by male MPs, the topics brought by male MPs are very limited, and therefore, male MPs are not able to substantively represent women in politics enough without the female MPs.

In order to answer the research questions, the research consisted of three main parts. The first part reviews the existing literature on female representation in different fields, women's representation politics, female political representation in Azerbaijan, and gender inequality issues in Azerbaijan. The second part consists of an explanation of the chosen research methodology, background on the case of Azerbaijan, and data collection process for the purposes of research. In the third part, the results of the data analysis have been provided which is followed by an overall assessment of the country on women's political representation. The research finishes with the concluding remarks of the author, policy suggestions, and information on the limitations of the research.

1. Political Representation of Women: Review of Literature

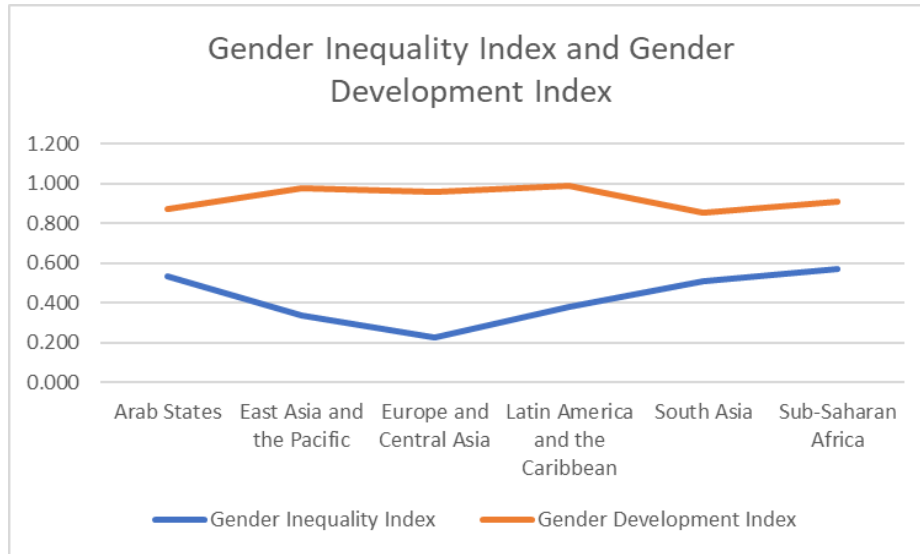
1.1. Female Representation in Different Fields

The gender inequality issues faced by women are an ongoing problem existing in the whole world not depending on the development level and socio-cultural environment of different countries. According to Mukhtarova et al. (2021), women are better represented in the public sector compared to the private sector where women cover around 30% of all employees. ILOSTAT (2020) presents data on the percentage-wise representation of males and females in different fields. The data reveals the fact that women are overrepresented in the health, care, teaching, and food industry while men have dominance in ICT, science, engineering, building, and others. The historically existing stereotypes of women and men are still existing as women are mainly employed in care-related jobs while men are employed in jobs where physical strengths, technology, and science are involved according to the information provided by ILOSTAT (2020).

The regional differences in the advancement of gender equality issues are better illustrated in Figure 1. It represents the Gender Inequality Index and Gender Development Index for 2021. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is a measure of unequal opportunities and treatment for men and women where a higher value of the index indicates a high level of inequality (UNDP, 2021a). Gender Development Index (GDI) measures the differences in achievements made on health, education, and economic resources by gender (UNDP, 2021b).

Huyer (2015:85) provides information on the low share of women researchers. The author suggests that while women's share in bachelor's and master's degrees is bigger (53%) when it comes to Ph.D. studies, men gain a bigger share. Supporting the findings of Huyer (2015:86), Meyer et al. (2015:1) point to the fact that females are underrepresented in the fields that require an inner talent, and therefore, even if women get the same education as men, this stereotype causes men's dominance in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). When it comes to researchers, women represent lower than 30% of total researchers.

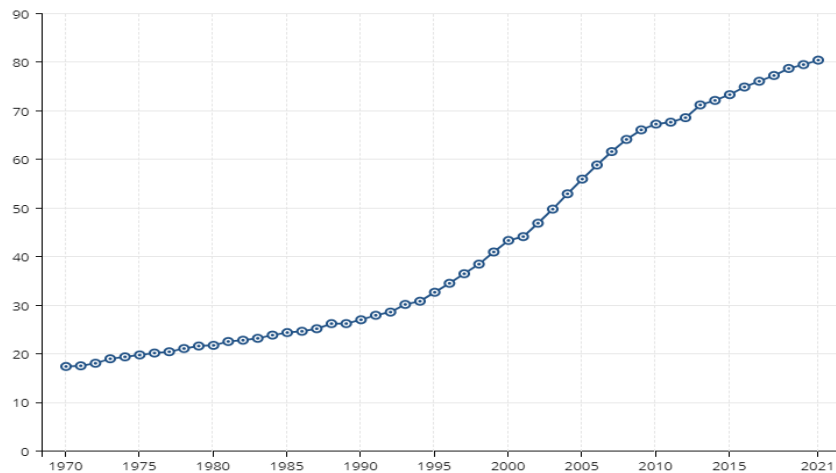
Figure 1: Gender Inequality Index and Gender Development Index by region



Source: UNDP (2021a), UNDP (2021b)

Women, Business and the Law Index values (World Bank Gender Data Portal, 2021) range between 0 and 100 and it has 8 dimensions. Figure 2 represents the trends of the workplace indicator of the index. The data shows that there has been significant improvements in tackling workplace gender inequalities between 1970 and 2021.

Figure 2: Women, Business, and the Law: Workplace Indicator Score



Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal (2021)

Although women are underrepresented in many fields, the female underrepresentation is on a critical level in politics and understanding the reasons behind the underrepresentation in politics and how to tackle it will help to decrease gender inequalities in other fields too (Zohal & Mariana, 2020:7). IPU (2021) analysis suggests that while the number of women in politics is increasing the rate of increase has become slower over time. The data provided by IPU Parline (2023) presents that while the percentage of women in national parliaments increased from 13,9% in 2010 December to 24,3% in 2019 January, there is approximately 2% increase from 2019 January to 2023 January. While the number of women in politics increases, the rate of growth is not the same in all countries while still some countries miss critical steps to empower women in politics (Prihatini, 2020:33).

Bush and Zetterberg (2020:1) suggest that the increase in the number of female politicians is associated with the spread of the gender quotas in different countries with an attempt to tackle gender inequality issues. According to Bush (2011:103), the aim of governments in adopting gender quotas, in especially emerging economies, is to present the level of democracy in the country. Analyzing the implementation of the gender quotas in national parliaments, Freidenvall et al. (2013:170) found only 2 European countries where national parliaments are gender balanced which are Finland and Sweden.

1.2. Causes of Women's Underrepresentation in Politics

It is important to understand why women are underrepresented in politics to be able to achieve a gender-balanced political environment. While it is claimed that women should have equal opportunity as men to participate in politics to be representative of the population, there is a need for evidence to justify what differences would female participation in politics make to gain support for women's political empowerment. In this subsection, causes of the underrepresentation of women in politics are explained by the lower level of competitiveness of women, voter bias, gender-based stereotypes, and family and children-related responsibilities of women.

There is no obstacle in legislation that prevents women from getting political positions in most of the countries but the public opinion, existing socio-economic conditions, and vulnerability of females are the main reasons why women are underrepresented in politics (Hazarika, 2008: 354). According to Zohal and Mariana (2020:3), one of the reasons for women

to not participate in politics is their low level of intention to be involved in competitive situations. This argument is not claimed to affect only women's political representation but also overall participation in the labor market (Buser et al., 2021:11). By conducting laboratory experiments, Niederle and Vesterlund (2011:325-326) found out that men intend to participate in competition more compared to women and when competing, the performance of men increases as opposed to women. Lackner (2016) suggests that imposing gender quotas is not an effective way to eliminate gender inequality in representation if the reason for female underrepresentation is the unwillingness to compete because this attitude is created in childhood.

Existing gender-biased violence toward women politicians is another reason why women are less willing to participate in politics to protect themselves and their families (Fawcett Society, 2018). In the case of developing countries where the protection of women's rights is not addressed well by the government and society, the situation is even worse as female politicians face sexual harassment in the workplace (Tamale, 2000:8). Fawcett Society (2018) report suggests that female politicians are asked questions regarding their families and personal lives which is not the case for their male counterparts. This, in turn, leads to concerns regarding loss of privacy for female politicians which decreases the willingness of women to aim for political positions (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). Lawless and Fox (2008) conducted a survey involving both females and males with different professional backgrounds to understand the reasons behind differences in political ambition. According to the results, women perceive the potential problems associated with political participation, including loss of privacy, as more critical compared to men.

Flannelly (2002:398) mentions that there are still biases existing in female candidates in elections which depend on many different characteristics of voters, including age, gender, ethnicity, and others. One of the interesting findings of Flannelly (2002:398) is the unwillingness of older men to vote for women in elections. Kukolowicz (2013:234-235) conducts regression analysis on Polish data to find out if there exist stereotypes toward female candidates. The results show that voters have negative ideas about the qualifications of female candidates based on the stereotypes of women's abilities. Findings of Huddy and Terkildsen (1993:119) conducted an analysis on approximately 300 people to identify which traits they would prefer in politicians if those traits are grouped as masculine and feminine traits. The results suggest that people prefer

masculine traits in politicians and therefore, they are more likely to vote for male candidates in elections.

In contrast, Dolan (2014:96) conducted a survey data analysis on US data and found out that voters' decisions are not affected by gender stereotypes in general, but the party that they provide their candidacy from is a more important determinant for voters. Golder et al. (2017:126-128) support the findings of Dolan (2014:96) by finding that voters support female candidates in European Parliamentary Elections. Additionally, Clayton et al. (2019:601) analyzed survey data from Malawi where the authors found that female candidates are preferred over male candidates. McElroy and Marsh (2010: 822) could not find any evidence of discrimination against female candidates based on gender stereotypes.

1.3. Benefits of Gender Equality

Fighting against gender inequality issues and trying to increase gender representation in economics and politics are more than only human rights issues. There are various benefits of increasing gender equality. In the following subchapter, the benefits of achieving gender equality in a group, especially, in a political decision-making group have been discussed. The benefits of ensuring gender equality have been identified as a higher level of economic performance, increased effectiveness in brainstorming, better compliance with ethical rules, lower level of corruption, and better representation of women's issues in politics.

The existing literature suggests that gender diversity is an important contributor to high-level performance. Existing gender inequality in the labor market is a source for inefficiencies and lower levels of economic growth (Esteve-Volart, 2004). While a part of the literature argues that all types of diversity lead to conflict and therefore, affect the company's performance negatively, another part argues that diversity brings diverse skills and knowledge to the team which is important for high performance (Herring, 2009: 208). As proposed by DiStefano and Maznevski (2000:57), diversity means differences and differences can bring either conflict or effective brainstorming which depends on the structure of the team and how it is managed.

As males and females have different attitudes toward many issues, the existing literature suggests there are gender differences also in attitudes toward ethics. Becker and Ulstad (2007)

conducted an analysis of students' attitudes towards cheating and found out that male students are more inclined to conduct unethical behavior to be able to achieve their goals compared to female students. Supporting this finding, Bernardi et al. (2002:30) identified a higher level of sensitivity from female professionals towards unethical marketing practices compared to males. The survey data analysis based on Indian data also suggests that women are more ethical and trustworthy compared to men (Inderpreet, 2016:1063). Female politicians believe that their involvement in politics increased the level of trust in politics (Waring, 2007). However, this is also empirical evidence from Canadian data that gender differences in ethical views are very small (Loo, 2003:169).

In the case of politics, ethical behavior is very important and Cowper-Cowles (2021) mentions that women's participation in politics is associated with lower levels of corruption. Bauhr et al. (2018:10-59-1061) conducted an analysis of European data and found that women in politics are less likely to be involved in corruption. However, the authors also suggest that this is maybe only because of the fact that new female politicians do not have well-settled connections yet and in the future when their network is improved, the corruption level can increase again even in the case of high-level female political representation. Sundström and Wangnerud (2014:360-362) found evidence for the impact of corruption level on the number of elected female politicians. According to the authors, when the corruption level is high, it means the male in political positions have an existing network and they exert power on political parties to not include new candidates, especially female candidates, that can potentially break the good-performing corruption network.

From the analysis of the existing literature above, it is obvious how important gender diversity is for the overall high performance of all teams. In the case of politics, the National Democratic Institute (2018) report clarifies reasons why women's participation is important. According to the report, female political representation affects the range of the proposed and accepted policies positively which means that the government becomes enabled to touch more areas to increase the living standards of the population. Waring (2007:160) surveyed the female politicians and asked what they would bring to politics that is not brought by men. Most of the respondents suggested a difference in the political views of men and women which in turn brought a change in the traditional political process and outcomes through the involvement of women (Waring, 2007:155). Githens and Prestage (1978:264) surveyed female politicians in

which policy areas they feel more confident. The results showed that females see themselves more confident in education, healthcare, and welfare policies which are still associated with the traditional roles of women. Only a few respondents answered that they feel confident about fiscal, business, economics, and other policy areas.

As an addition to all reasons presented in the existing literature on benefits of female representation in politics, it is especially important for representation of women's issues in political areas which is supported by the findings of Wangnerud (2000:67). By analyzing Swedish parliamentary data from the 1990s, the author found out that the increase in the number of females in Swedish parliament led to the change in political agenda and increase in attention to women's issues. However, the author also mentioned that the case of Sweden is different from most of the other countries as Sweden has a higher level of female political participation rate compared to other countries. Mackay (2010:167) analyzed the parliamentary data from Scotland and England. The findings suggest that high-level female participation in the Scottish parliament leads to better handling of women's issues. According to the author, the involvement of women in policymaking makes violence against women not only be handled in crime-related legislation but also leads to the implementation of different programs and campaigns that decrease violence against women.

1.4. Women's Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Politics

Women's political representation can be analyzed in 2 different directions - descriptive representation and substantive representation. While descriptive representation is concerned with the number of females in politics, substantive representation discusses how the women in politics affect the political agenda and outcome (Wangnerud, 2009:51). Freidenvall (2020:169) explains descriptive representation as numeric representation. According to Stockemer (2015:402-404), the descriptive representation of women depends heavily on the development level of the country.

Existing literature suggests that there should be a certain number of female politicians in order to get a decent representation of women's issues in political agenda which points to the importance of descriptive representation of women in politics (Dahlerup, 2006:514). In contrast, Childs and Krook (2008:725) claim that Critical Mass Theory is misinterpreted by earlier

literature in the case of women's political representation. According to Childs and Krook (2008:734), the incorrect claims regarding the importance of having a certain number of females in politics caused the implementation of gender quotas in politics. However, the authors think that even if the descriptive representation of females in politics is important, it is important to focus on each politician's own substantive representation of women's interests.

Mansbridge (1999:628) presents 4 contexts where descriptive representation is crucial to generate substantive representation. One of these contexts is when the interests of a group of people are not represented well enough. Considering the fact that still in some countries women are not treated equally as men and the fact that men and female politicians are shown to have different political interests in the existing literature, one can conclude from Mansbridge (1999:628) that women are among those groups which need descriptive representation to achieve substantive representation. There is a link between descriptive and substantive representation in the case of women's political representation (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005:407). Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005:412) suggest that an increase in women's descriptive representation improves the substantive representation for all underrepresented groups.

As also mentioned by Wangnerud (2009:52), there is a huge amount of research existing in the previous literature on descriptive political representation of women while research on substantive representation is limited. The main reason why substantive representation is not analyzed as well as descriptive representation is the fact that in most of the parliaments, the number of females has been very small historically which makes it difficult to observe which impact women politicians bring and the difficulties in understanding what is the dependent variable - the measure of female's impact on politics.

1.5. Female Politicians in Decision Making and Policy Making

Previous literature analyzes the practices of female politicians, what types of policies they support, and what are the outcomes of their political work. Existing low descriptive representation of women in politics leads to low-quality substantive representation of females in the political arena as previous literature suggests that women are likely to have different interests and expectations from politics compared to men (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2009:512). Thomas and Welch (1991:450-453) did not identify any differences in the performances of male

and female politicians in their activities while the authors identified differences in the policies they support and prioritize. The findings suggest that women are not equally distributed in the state and parliamentary committees which prevents females from being involved in business and economics-related policy and decision-making. Female politicians also give attention to the gender inequalities in the labor market, the gender pay gap, and unequal access to resources for women (Cowper-Cowles, 2021).

Based on the analysis of data from 6 Latin American countries, Heath et al. (2005:420) identified that when female candidates are elected for political positions, still male politicians delegate responsibilities to them, and in most cases, family, children, and women issues are assigned to female politicians which limits the capabilities of female employees to provide a greater impact on policymaking and legislative agenda. Female politicians claim that they are concerned about different fields that are not addressed well enough in politics by male and their interests are not limited to women and family issues (Waring, 2007). Cowper-Cowles (2021) mentions that an increase in women's political involvement will increase the overall welfare in society as women are mainly focused on healthcare, education, and other policies which are important for achieving decent standards of living in the country. However, the analysis done on the campaign websites of US Senate candidates shows that there are no statistically significant differences in the policy priorities and interests of female and male candidates according to the campaign content (Dolan, 2005:31).

Thomas (1991:958) mentions the differences in the attitudes of female and male in political decision making as female involvement increases the focus on women, children, and family issues. Talking about the issues of women, legislation on abortion is one of the most important and ongoing topics. Berkman and O'Connor (1993:102) found evidence that an increase in the number of female politicians affects the state policy to not restrict the choice of women.

Svaleryd (2009:186) suggests that female politicians make the government spend more on childcare and education compared to male politicians. Burchi and Bagavathinathan (2020:7) analyzed the Indian data to understand the relationship between the increase in the number of female politicians and the educational attainment level of students. The analysis results showed that more female politicians mean more people are able to finish their educational degree they

are participating in. Cowper-Cowles (2021) suggests that the focus of female politicians on education is still a part of traditional roles attached to women as a caregiver to children.

Another field that is associated with the traditional roles of women in healthcare and existing literature suggests that female politicians set healthcare as a high-priority topic (Cowper-Cowles, 2021). Barrett (1995:223) analyzed the differences in the attitudes of white and African American females as politicians and found out that both give the highest priority to education while different from white women, African American women politicians also have agreement on the importance of healthcare. Braendle and Colombier (2016:1051) aimed to understand what is driving the government expenditure on healthcare over the period between 1970 and 2012 on Swiss data while controlling for healthcare reforms. The results suggested different reasons for increased expenditure on healthcare which also included the increase in the number of females elected for parliamentary positions. According to the findings of Rehavi (2007), healthcare is actually the only area where female politicians increased public spending significantly. The author also found that female politicians can hold different attitudes towards health-related policies from their parties.

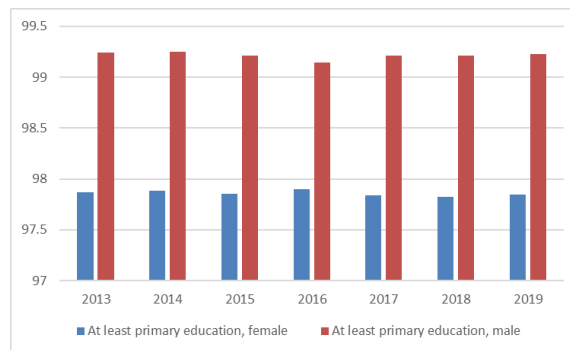
1.6. Women's Political Representation in Azerbaijan

Traditionally, Azerbaijani women are expected to act according to the social norms existing for women in the country which provide limits to the personal life, marriage, clothes, and speech of females. These norms are associated with Islamic thoughts as most of the Azerbaijanis are Muslim. To be able to align with society's expectations, women avoided advancing in their education and career (Heyat, 2007:1).

The UNDP (n.d.) report explains the current situation and challenges faced by Azerbaijani women. According to the report, while the gender gap has decreased significantly, there are still critical challenges that limit women's economic empowerment. According to Klaveren et al. (2010), women's skills are not well utilized in the country which is a big challenge to the efficiency of the labor market. Baskakova (2012) suggests that the main issue is the population's unawareness of the gender equality legislation which prohibits the unequal treatment of males and females in all areas of socio-economic environment.

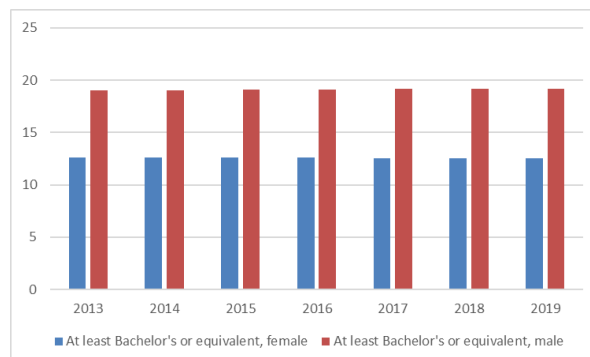
SSCRA (n.d.) provides data on gender indicators which shows the statistics on different demographics, health, education, science, employment, labor force, agriculture, living standards, parliament, and crime indicators by gender. The data shows that there are still issues of underage marriage in Azerbaijan even though the minimum age of women for marriage increased to 18. SSCRA (n.d.) data also shows the existence of problems in accessing medical services for pregnant women. The sex-selective abortion causes a significant decrease in the number of born girls in the country (Frostier-Walker, 2015). Azerbaijani government has made important steps for removing the gender gap in education to empower women’s economic and political participation (UNDP, n.d.). However, as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4, female educational attainment level is still significantly lower than that of males. As mentioned by Aghayeva (2012:21), women face different challenges in advancing their education, especially after secondary education.

Figure 3: Educational Attainment, at least primary education



Source: World Bank (2023a)

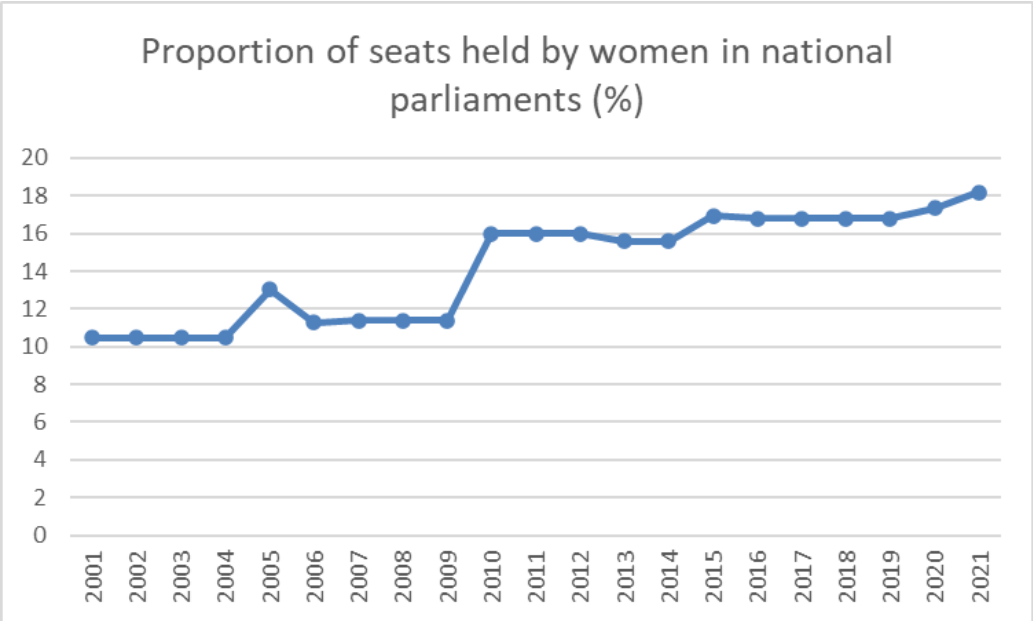
Figure 4: Educational Attainment, at least Bachelor’s and equivalent, by gender



Source: World Bank (2023b)

Stereotypes existing regarding the traditional roles attached to women are barriers for Azerbaijani women to be in politics (Hasanova & Aliyeva, 2021:1). Because of the existing gender quotas in parliament during the Soviet period, women captured one-third of the parliament while the number decreased significantly to lower than one-tenth after independence (Asian Development Bank, 2019). Currently, 18.64% of the Azerbaijani parliament (*Milli Majlis*) is female (IPU, 2023). While there are politicians who are against women's political empowerment and the need for it, most of the members of the Azerbaijani parliament agree that women should increase their political participation at least by using the existing resources and opportunities (UNDP, 2007). Figure 5 represents the dynamic of the percentage share of females in the Azerbaijani parliament. While the share of Azerbaijani women in parliament is still under 20%, it has almost doubled since 2001.

Figure 5: Percentage share of females in the national parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan



Source: World Bank (2023a)

2. Research Methodology

In this section, the author focuses on the research design and methods employed in current research in order to answer the research question. Following the research design, the background of the Republic of Azerbaijan is provided. Information on the data collection and analysis process and chosen sample is also a part of this section.

2.1. Research design

Considering the existing gender inequality issues, low level of female political representation, and difficulties of women to bring their interests into the political agenda, current research analyzes women's substantive representation in the case of Azerbaijan. As the importance and challenges of female politicians in bringing women's issues to the political agenda and parliamentary debates have already been widely discussed in existing literature, there is a need to understand a real world example to see how the theory works. A case study is a qualitative research method that tests the validity of the theory in natural settings (Harling, 2012:1-2). In this research, the author aims to test the validity of the importance of political representation of women which leads to substantive representation. It is important to conduct a case study analysis if the topic of interest is an existing issue in a modern world (Patnaik & Pandey, 2019:163). Otherwise, it will not be possible to observe the tested issue which will make the research irrelevant and research questions will not be answered.

While a case study uses mostly qualitative methods, it aims at a deep study of the chosen case and can employ multiple methods (including descriptive quantitative data). According to Crasnow (2012: 658), a case study is a more suitable research method for helping politicians to make informed decisions and it is an acceptable and successful research method in political science (Peters, 1998:137).

Women's issues have not been analyzed well in the case of Azerbaijan which makes the country a good candidate for case selection. There is no pre-existing documentation and analysis on the performance of female politicians used in this research. A case study is a qualitative research method where the author does not employ quantitative methods to test the phenomenon

under discussion. Jackson et al. (2007:21) define qualitative research as follows: “*Qualitative research is primarily concerned with understanding human beings' experiences in a humanistic, interpretive approach*”

Interviews and case studies are not exclusively methods of qualitative research (Aspers & Corte, 2019:139). The current research uses both qualitative and (descriptive) quantitative data analysis. While the author uses the quantitative data to support the empirical evidence generated from interviews, analysis of documents, parliamentary discussions, and others, it will also generate valuable insights about the women who are not open to interview discussions or when the author needs more information from the same group of people to understand demographic differences. The collected quantitative data will only be analyzed descriptively.

Analysis of existing documents is one of the qualitative research methods (Bowen, 2009:27-28). The official website of the *Milli Majlis* of the Republic of Azerbaijan is “*meclis.gov.az*”. The website provides important documents that are needed for the purposes of this research. It is possible to access the agenda of all meetings of the Azerbaijani parliament since 2011. In order to understand the topics that have been brought up by female MPs and to what extent they addressed women’s issues and interests, the author will use the shorthand reports of meetings of *Milli Majlis*. Shorthand reports of all meetings since 2005 are present on the website of *Milli Majlis*. In the reports, everything that has been told by each MP is presented clearly. Hereby, the author will also check if male MPs have discussed anything related to women’s issues which will help to understand if women’s substantive representation in politics can only be achieved through an increase in the number of female politicians.

2.2. Case Selection: Azerbaijan

Located between Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan is a post-Soviet country with more than 10 million population (Kintsurashvili & Kresic, 2019). While being a secular state, 95% of Azerbaijanis identify themselves as Muslims. According to the data from the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SSCRA) (n.d.), the share of females and males in the Azerbaijani population is exactly the same as of 2022, January. However, boys have 53% share among children born in the last 12 months. In contrast, the share of women exceeds the share of men among people over the age 30.

The legislative body of the Republic of Azerbaijan is the National Assembly (*Milli Majlis*) which is the parliament of the country. Until now, the parliamentary elections have been held and members have been selected 5 times and the number of members has been 125 in all 5 calls. The elections are held once every 5 years. Current head of Azerbaijani parliament is a woman called Sahiba Gafarova. She is the first female head of Azerbaijani parliament since 1992 after Elmira Gafarova - the first head and the first female head of Azerbaijani parliament. There are 15 committees under the parliament and one of them is The State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Family, Women, and Children Affairs. Most of the MPs are the representatives of the New Azerbaijan Party as the president of Azerbaijan.

While the number of female MPs was 39 on the first call of Azerbaijani parliament after the independence, the number decreased sharply to 6 because of removal of gender quotas, decrease in the living standards because of the transition period, and women's unwillingness to participate in politics (Sabi, 1999:111). After independence, the country joined the "Convention on the Political Rights of Women" in 1992 (Shahverdiyev, 2015).

Unemployment rate in Azerbaijan is very high for the population aged between 15 and 24 while the rate is even higher for females in the same age group (Klaveren et al., 2010). As of 2021, the female unemployment rate is 7.0% and male unemployment rate is 4.9%. SSCRA (n.d.) provides data on the wages by sector of the economy for male and females. In most sectors of the economy, women get a higher level of salary in the private sector. In all fields of the economy, not depending on the public or private sector, men earn significantly higher than women. However, the gender pay gap diminishes as the educational attainment level of women increases (Maharammli, 2018:22).

The data is also present on the number of women in political positions - in other words, leadership positions in Azerbaijan. Since 2017, there is only one female minister in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The number of the deputy ministers increased from 3 to 9 over the period between 2016 and 2021. One more female was appointed as head of local executive government in 2021 which became 2 in total. There are 2 female heads of state committees but both of them are the heads of the State Committee on Family, Women, and Children Affairs - one for the Republic of Azerbaijan and one for the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. The share of women is still less than 20% among judges in the country. Considering the low level of female participation in politics and lack of attention in the political arena on women's issues, Azerbaijani women are

forming associations, seminars, and gatherings to increase the awareness of women on their rights and increase their political participation (Najafizadeh, 2003:302-303).

2.3. Sample and Methods of Analysis

The research includes the analysis of Codes of the Republic of Azerbaijan, parliamentary meetings of the National Assembly, interviews, and surveys. A different sampling and analysis method has been used for each type of data.

2.3.1. Analysis of the Codes of the Republic of Azerbaijan

To be able to understand how Azerbaijani legislation covers the women's issues and interests, all Codes of the state were analyzed by the author. While the main legislative document of the Republic of Azerbaijan is its constitutions, the changes discussed in the parliament are mainly reflected in the Codes. In order to access the Codes, the author will use "*e-qanun.az*" as the main source. This website is an online open-access database of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan. There are 13 Codes presented on the website but not all of them have something related to gender. The analysis was done on the following predefined themes based on the existing issues of women in Azerbaijan:

- 1) Family-related issues: childcare, decision-making on personal life, household responsibilities, forced marriage, underage marriage, domestic violence
- 2) Work-related issues: gender unequal pay, unemployment of women, employment of pregnant women and women with underaged children, unequal career development opportunities, workplace physical and psychological harassment
- 3) Social life and health-related issues: physical and psychological violence, forced pregnancy and abortion, participation in political decision making, women's reproductive health, overall gender equality in society

2.3.2. Analysis of the Meetings of the National Assembly

To understand how the issues and interests of Azerbaijani women who have been represented in the Azerbaijani parliament, the transcripts of all meetings of the National Assembly have been analyzed in detail. The official website of the National Assembly of the Republic of Azerbaijan

presents transcripts for all meetings since the third call of the National Assembly (end of 2005). Considering the huge content existing, the author conducted two-way analysis:

- 1) The author searched the text for the words “woman” (“*qadın*”) /”women” (“*qadınlar*”), “man” (“*kişi*”) /”men” (“*kişilər*”), and “gender” (“*cins*”, “*gender*”) and analyzed the content of discussions around these words and the gender of the speaker.
- 2) The author searched for the names/surnames of female MPs in the text and analyzed what they discuss on women’s interests and issues.

Qualitative Content Structuring Analysis method is used for the analysis purposes of the parliamentary meetings. As described by Mayring (2014:104), while using this method, the researcher takes out the specific content dimensions from the text under investigation and prepares an analysis of each dimension from the text. In the context of this thesis, each content dimension will be related to the issues and interests of women or gender as the author will specifically analyze the discussions related to women and gender.

2.3.3. Sampling Strategy of Interview Respondents

Previous empirical analysis suggests that the increase in the number of women in national parliaments has a positive impact on the development of political views and ideas on the importance of politics of the female population of that country (Bühlmann & Schadell, 2012:27). The countries with more women in national parliaments are found to be more likely to discuss and pass laws and policies on women’s issues (Asiedu et al., 2018). In this research, the author aims to understand what differences do female MPs make in the case of Azerbaijan. In order to do this, interviews will be conducted with women from different segments of Azerbaijani population. The author will interview female business owners, women employees of the public sector, female NGO head, and women working at Ministries. By interviewing these women, the author tries to understand if they have felt any change in politics and addressing of women’s issues. Interviewees will be asked specifically if they are familiar with the political interests and actions of female MPs and which topics they bring to the political agenda. The questions used in the interviews are presented in Appendix 1. The interviews are conducted on telephone calls and online video calls. More information has been presented on the professions of interviews in Table 1. Each interviewee has provided their consent either verbally or through the sign of the consent form. Before the interviews, the respondents have been informed about the

confidentiality of their personal data and their right to stop interviews anytime. Table 1 presents the information on each interviewee and the length of the interview.

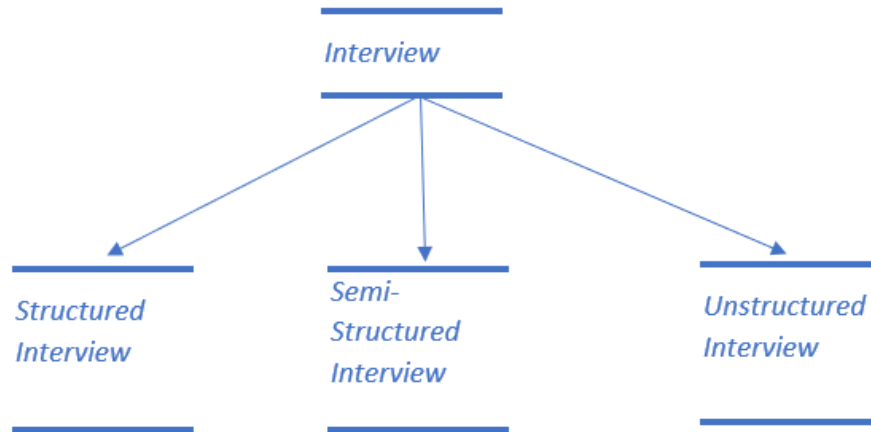
Table 1: Descriptive Information on Interview Type, Duration, and Respondents

Interviewee	Target Group	Profession	Interview Type	Length
Interviewee 1	Public sector employee	Teacher	Video call	32 minutes
Interviewee 2	Public sector employee	Teacher	Video call	27 minutes
Interviewee 3	Employee at Ministry	Employee at Ministry of Economic	Phone call	30 minutes
Interviewee 4	Public sector employee	Employee at Regional Development Public Union (RIIB)	Video call	35 minutes
Interviewee 5	NGO employee	Head at NGO	Phone call	40 minutes
Interviewee 6	Business Owner	Business owner	Phone call	29 minutes
Interviewee 7	Business Owner	Business Owner	Phone call	27 minutes

Saunders et al. (2020) suggests that there are 3 main types of interviews which are represented in Figure 6. In semi-structured interviews, while the interviewer prepares all the questions beforehand, the order and content of the questions can change depending on the respondent and flow of conversation. For the purposes of current research, the semi-structured employees will be conducted. The main reason is the differences in the occupations of the women that will be interviewed. This means that all women included in the study may face different issues and they may have different levels of knowledge about politics. The interviewer needs to be partly flexible to better understand the differentiated interests, issues, and attitudes. The interview analysis method is the analysis of interview transcripts. By employing thematic analysis method, the author will identify the themes regarding women's descriptive and

substantive representation from interview transcripts and provide the summary in a systematic way.

Figure 6: Structure of Interview Types



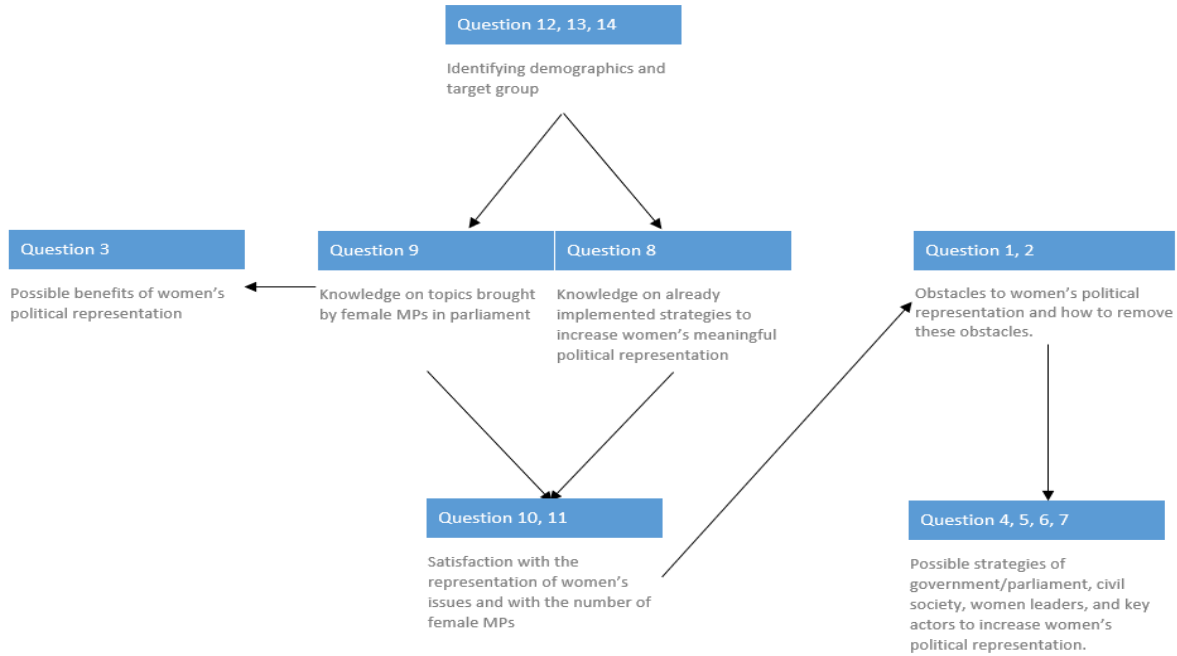
Source: Saunders et al. (2020)

2.3.4. Sampling Strategy of Survey Respondents

Alongside with interviews, the current thesis will also rely on the data collected through survey to understand the attitudes of women from different segments of Azerbaijani population with potentially different views on gender-sensitive laws and gender issues on women's political representation in Azerbaijan. While interviews will make the author ask more detailed questions to a smaller number of interviewees, by using surveys, it will be possible to reach out to more people and have a general overview of the thoughts of Azerbaijani women on the topic under analysis.

The survey data was collected from 2 different segments which include women living in shelters for women and children, and female university students studying law and political science. Survey questions are presented in Appendix 3. The completion of the survey was expected to take approximately 20 minutes. Survey data has been collected between April 1 and April 10, 2023. 10 people are surveyed for each group of respondents. The respondents are randomly selected based on their own interest in participating in the survey.

Figure 7: Descriptions of survey questions

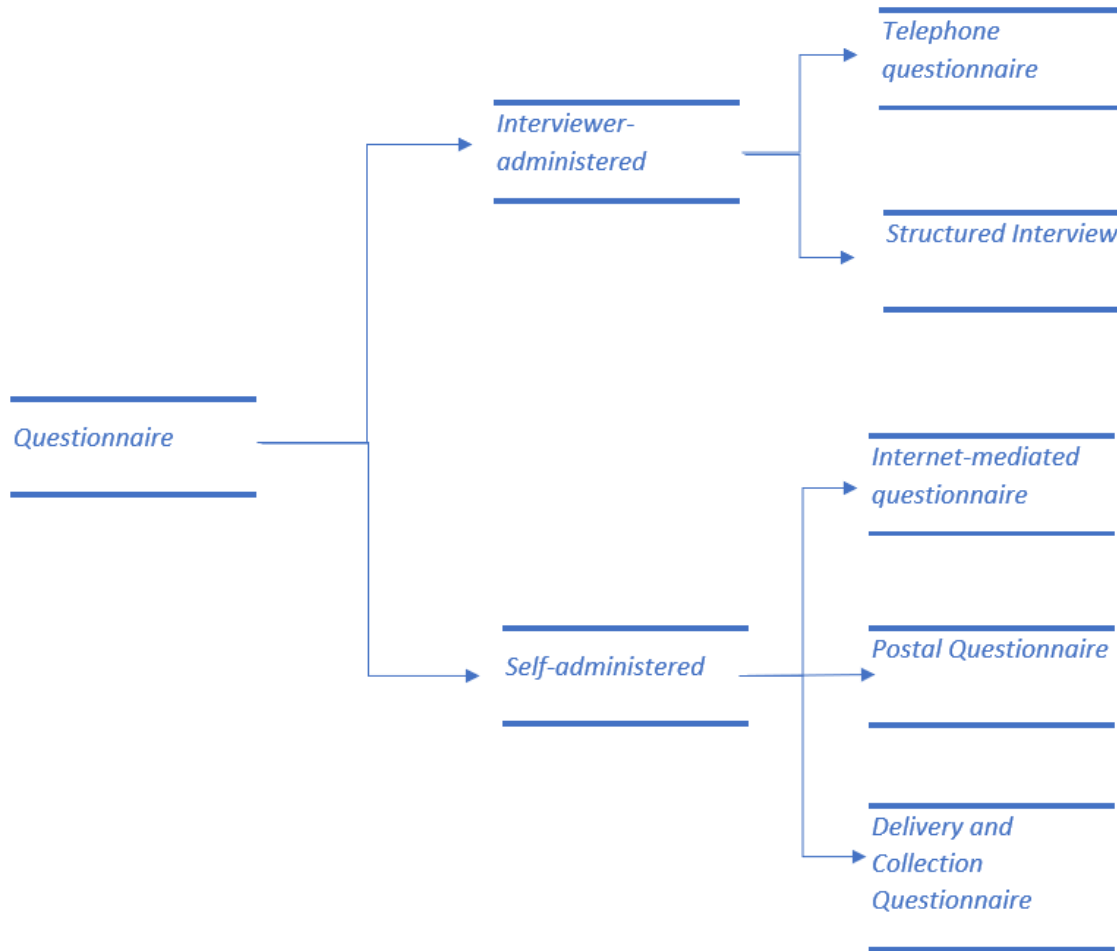


Source: Author's Compilation

The author has used an existing survey “Questionnaire on Women’s Representation and Political Participation for Civil Society” by UNDP for the Arab Region excluding some questions. Figure 7 describes survey questions and how these questions are related to each other. After identifying whether the respondent is in the target group or not, the author will clarify what Azerbaijani women with different backgrounds see as a challenge for women’s meaningful political participation. By mentioning “meaningful political participation”, the author means the opportunities and abilities of female MPs in representing women’s issues. Additionally, respondents are also asked to provide their ideas on possible strategies to remove obstacles and increase women’s political representation in Azerbaijan. Surveys can take two main forms - while some surveys are self-administered, others are administered by the interviewers (Saunders et al., 2020). Figure 8 presents different types of self-administered and interviewer-administered questionnaires. In this research, the surveys will be self-administered. The responses from university students are collected through an online questionnaire. It corresponds to the

internet-mediated questionnaire type from the questionnaire types provided by Saunders et al. (2020).

Figure 8: Types of Surveys



Source: Saunders et al. (2020)

For the women living in shelters, the survey was delivered on paper. This is the delivery and collection questionnaire type. Considering that university students have better access to the internet compared to women living in shelters, an online survey was found to be more suitable for them. The summary of questionnaire types (paper or online) and sample population are presented in Table 2.

Women in Azerbaijan are accepted to shelters when they do not have any other place to live or when they face physical and psychological violence in the family. It is important to get feedback from these women because they are the ones who are actually facing the issues that

need to be addressed. By getting their responses, the author was able to understand how their issues are taken care of and if they feel any difference compared to the past. The author aimed to collect survey responses also from Azerbaijani women studying law and political science in Azerbaijan because of the fact that this group can see the addressing of gender issues more objectively.

Table 2: Type of questionnaire applied by target group

<i>Target Group</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Type of Method</i>
Women living in shelters	Self-Administered Questionnaire	Delivery and Collection
Women studying politics and law	Self-Administered Questionnaire	Internet Mediated

The analysis method for the survey is thematic analysis. According to thematic analysis, the researcher identifies the topics of interest that should be discussed with the respondents, and the respondents should be asked relevant questions to identify their understanding on these specific themes (Mayring, 2014:104). In this paper, the survey questions concentrated on the following themes:

- 1) Potential benefits of women’s political participation
- 2) Strategies for government and/or parliament to promote women’s political representation
- 3) Strategies for civil society to promote women’s political participation
- 4) Strategies for women leaders to promote women’s political participation
- 5) Strategies for civil key actors to promote women’s political participation
- 6) Already implemented strategies by key actors in the country to promote women’s political representation

3. Empirical Analysis and Findings

In this section, the empirical analysis of the qualitative data will be conducted. The section consists of 4 main parts. The first part of this section includes the analysis of the Codes of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Each Code will be analyzed separately and recent changes that have been made regarding the rights and issues of women will be discussed in detail. The next section includes the analysis of the work of the State Committee on Family, Women, and Children Affairs. The next two sections will include the analysis of responses to the survey and interview questions. The section will end with a discussion of the findings of the analysis of 4 different sources and their implications for the research question.

3.1. Review of Codes

Men and women are treated equally by the law in Azerbaijan. The Elections Code of the country gives equal opportunity to elect, not depending on gender (Section 1, Article 3). The Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Azerbaijan covers the regulation on identification and punishment of illegal actions that do not include criminal activity. According to the code, its responsibility is to prevent illegal activities that can damage the freedom, health, rights, property, security, and economic interests of the population of Azerbaijan. The Code has been approved and is in force since 2015. It provides different privileges for pregnant women and women that have underaged children. This group of women cannot be assigned to imprisonment and public work because of administrative offenses (Section 1, Article 28, Article 30). It is not allowed to bring pregnant women to the governmental facilities for the investigation purposes (Section 2, Article 87). Overall, being pregnant decreases the level of punishment that women would get on administrative offenses (Section 1, Article 32). To provide equal education opportunities for all, it is prohibited to deprive the right of any person to get education (Section 6, Article 181). Considering the high level of underaged marriage of women and unwillingness of providing women with education by families in rural areas of Azerbaijan, it is an important step to ensure that nobody, both male and female, cannot be deprived of the opportunity of education.

Since the approval of the Code, there have not been any critical changes to the Code to address women's interests and issues other than the following changes have been done to the Code that is related to women's issues:

- 1) An addition was made to the Code in 2017 to punish physical and legal people to advertise, share, or spread artificial food products for infants among pregnant women, women with underaged children, and at medical institutions (Section 6, Article 213).
- 2) As of 2021, a financial punishment has been placed on the use of the female labor force not according to the labor law of the country on legal and physical persons (Section 6, Article 539).

The amount of financial punishment is between 250 AZN and 750 AZN for the first change and between 1000 AZN and 2000 AZN for the second change. There is a separate discussion needed to understand if the amount of financial punishment is enough to make business to align with the new changes. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that there have been changes made to the Code to equalize the rights of men acting as a single parent with the rights of women with underaged children (Section 1, Article 28, Article 30). It can also be considered as an action to decrease the gender inequality issues from the perspective of men. Additionally, with a change made in 2021, the mediators who are working to solve the issues between different parties in an equally beneficial way need to inform the local governmental bodies in case there are any kind of issues and arguments inside the family that can affect the life quality of children negatively (Section 3, Article 68). However, no punishment has been placed on not informing the government officials about the critical family issues that can lead to physical and psychological violence for the families without any children.

Code of Crime regulates the illegal actions which include criminal activity. One of the main principles of this Code is the equality of all individuals who commit crime, not depending on any factors, including gender (Section 1, Article 6). However, the Code provides several privileges for female crime committers. The punishment for crime is lightened up when the committer is pregnant (Section 3, Article 59). The punishment is aggravated when the crime is committed against a pregnant woman (Section 3, Article 61). Additionally, it is not possible to punish women with lifelong imprisonment (Section 3, Article 57). According to the Article 108 of the code, the commitment of sexual violence and forcing to do sexual work is punished with

an imprisonment between 12 and 20 years. Committers of sexual violence may also be sentenced for lifelong imprisonment.

The violence against women inside the family is still existing in Azerbaijan. Report from UN Women (n.d.) suggests that 13.5% of Azerbaijani women have faced physical or sexual violence from their partner at least once in lifetime while 9.8% of them have faced the physical and sexual violence during last 12 months. According to Article 133 of the code, physical and psychological torture is punished with limitation of freedom or imprisonment up to 2 years. However, if the violence is conducted against pregnant women, then the punishment may be extended up to 5 years. There is not any separate indication of torturing the partner and any specific punishment on it.

The issues of pregnant women are heavily addressed in the Code of Crime. According to the code, forcing a woman to become pregnant may be punished with an imprisonment up to 20 years or with a lifelong imprisonment (Section 7, Article 108-1). It is not allowed to conduct artificial insemination on underaged women or without the agreement of women (Section 8, Article 136). Preventing women from being pregnant is also considered as a crime if it is done without her agreement (Section 8, Article 136). However, the punishment on forcing and preventing pregnancy is not strict enough as it can take the form of fines up to 7000 AZN.

Code of Crime also deals with the illegal activity of mandatory labor which prohibits forcing pregnant women to work with a possible punishment up to 12 years (Section 8, Article 144-2). According to the Code (Section 8, Article 164), it is not allowed to cancel the employment contract of pregnant women and women with children aged up to 3 years. However, the punishment on this crime is financial and the amount is not significant which increases the possibility of illegal activity. According to the Code (Section 8, Article 176-1), it is prohibited to force women to marry and the punishment on it is stricter if the marrying woman is underaged.

No critical changes have been made in the Code of Crime that are related to the women's issues and interests. In some cases, the amount of fines has increased or the upper limit for the duration of imprisonment increased by 1 or 2 years. Instead, as for the Code of Administrative Offenses, the changes have been made to equalize the rights of men acting as a single parent with underaged children and women with underaged children. The issues regarding sexual violence, torture, forced pregnancy, forced marriage, and other issues of women are addressed since the first time the Code has become into force in 2000. The existing data on underaged women's

marriage, violence inside family, and sexual violence against women in Azerbaijan show the ineffectiveness of the existing regulation. In the next subsections, by analyzing the speeches of MPs in the parliament, it will be possible to understand whether the changes to address the women's issues are suggested and not accepted or not suggested at all.

Considering the existing discrimination against women in Azerbaijani labor market, high level of gender pay gap, and higher unemployment level of women, Code of Labor is an important source to understand how these issues have been addressed in politics. The Code has been approved by the president and came into force in 1999. While it is prohibited to make discrimination in the labor market when concluding an employment contract, according to Article 16 of the Code, the compromises, privileges, and additional benefits provided to women are not considered as discrimination.

The Labor Code gives everyone the same opportunity to choose the field and profession they want to work according to their skills and abilities (Section 1, Article 16). A section of the Labor Code is dedicated to the importance, preparation, and purposes of collective contract (Section 2). According to the Code, a collective contract is signed between the labor union and employer based on the need identified by the labor union. A collective contract can be requested by the labor union to increase the working conditions of the female employees and employees under 18.

Different privileges have been provided to pregnant women to improve their working conditions. One of these privileges is about the probation period upon the recruitment of new employees. While the Code allows for the possibility of probation period up to three months, with the change made in 2009, Article 52 prohibits the application of probation period for pregnant women. Employers are allowed to conduct attestation - tests to check the employees' level of proficiency in a particular position they are working. However, Article 66 prohibits the conduction of attestation on pregnant women and women who came back from maternity leave during the last 12 months. According to Article 79, the employment contract of pregnant women and women with a child aged up to 3 years cannot be canceled by the employer. With the change made to this article in 2009, the same privilege is applied to men acting as a single parent for a child under 3. Pregnant women and women with a child under 3 are entitled to have a shorter work week as it is not allowed to make women from these categories work more than 36 hours in a week (Section 4, Article 94). Women under the same categories are not allowed to be

employed to work during night shifts (Section 4, Article 97). Women with two or more children under 14 are entitled to use additional two or five days of vacation depending on the number of children (Section 5, Article 117). Not only the women giving birth, but also the women who adopt children born within the last two months are allowed to use 56 days of vacation directly after the birth or adoption (Section 5, Article 126).

The original version of the Labor Code included Article 241 which prohibited the employment of women in certain job areas. In particular, women were prohibited to be employed in jobs that require heavy physical work and work that should be conducted underground. Women could not be employed in the jobs that required the carriage of items weighing over 10 or 15 kilograms. This article was removed from the Code in 2022. Article 244 requires the additional 30 minute breaks in each three hours for women with a child born in the last 6 months to feed the child. This time should be calculated as a working time and an average salary should be paid by the employer.

Overall, the analysis of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan includes different privileges for women who are pregnant or who have underaged children. It also includes a possibility for the signing of the collective contract to improve the working conditions of female employees. The ongoing issues of discrimination towards female employment, career development, and sexual harassment against women are not addressed enough to make a proper legal enforcement (Zeynalov, 2013). The Code does not include any rules and regulations for the reporting of discrimination and harassment toward women at the workplace which is especially important in Azerbaijan as women are not encouraged enough to speak up about issues they face at the workplace (Zeynalov, 2013).

Considering the important role of women as a caregiver in the family, the dominant role of men in decision making inside the family, and existing issues of physical and psychological violence toward women, the Family Code is a valuable source to understand how these issues have been addressed. According to the Code, the regulation of family issues by the law should be according to the principles of voluntary marriage, the equality of the rights and participation in the decision making on family issues for wife and husband (Section 1, Article 2). In 2011, the change was made to the Code to equalize the minimum age for marriage (Section 2, Article 10). With the change, both men and women should be at least 18 to be able to marry while it was 17

for women before the change. Other than that, no critical change has been done to the Code to address the existing issues that women face in the family.

In addition to the Codes discussed above, there are 13 more Codes of the Republic of Azerbaijan on property, water, land, migration, housing, urbanization and construction, trade shipping, execution of punishments, and taxes. However, none of these Codes include any articles and comments related to specific gender. For the execution of these Codes, both men and women are treated equally. Codes that have been discussed above are the main regulations that can be subject to the changes to address women's interest and issues.

In conclusion, The Criminal Code and Code of Administrative Offenses are the main Codes that have covered the issues of women. Code of Labor also covered many issues that women and specifically, pregnant women face in the labor market. Code of Family also covers the issues regarding the minimum age of marriage, principle of voluntary marriage, equal power in family decision-making for male and female. All other Codes provide the same rights and responsibilities to men and women without providing any privileges by gender. The main problem in the Azerbaijani society that is at the root of all gender equality issues is the traditionally developed model of Azerbaijani women which has not been addressed in any of the codes. Family code should address the equality of responsibilities for men and women in a more detailed way. Equality cannot be only in decision making, but also in the responsibilities as parents and partners. None of the related Codes (Code of Administrative Offenses, Criminal Code, Code of Labor) addressed the fact that men restrict the opportunity to work for women as parents and partners. The same Codes also do not include any regulation on the management of income. However, there are many cases where women cannot access their own income as their cards are held by their partners or parents.

While the Codes cover equal opportunity of education for everyone, not depending on gender, women's choices are strictly affected by their families. Parents are less likely to allow their daughters to study outside the city or abroad. While forced marriage is prohibited, the Codes do not define "forced marriage" well enough. Most important issue is about the sanctions created as punishments as in most of the cases the illegal activity toward women is punished with fines and the amount of the fines is quite low. Additionally, women are not likely to go to police because of the social pressure and possible physical and psychological violence they may face.

Combining these 2 facts, there is a very high probability that illegal activity toward women will not be punished at all.

Table 3: Themes of Substantive Representation in Codes: Family

Themes of Substantive Representation	Code of Administrative Offences	Code of Crime	Code of Labor	Code of Family
Childcare	-Prohibition on the advertisement of artificial food product for children	Not addressed	-Paid maternity leave, additional vacation days for pregnant women and women with underaged children.	-Gender equality of responsibilities
Decision making on personal life	-Prohibition on depriving the right of education	-Forced marriage and pregnancy are prohibited	Not addressed	-Ensure the equality of decision making rights
Household responsibilities	Not addressed	Not addressed	Not addressed	-Gender equality of responsibility
Forced marriage	Not addressed	-Prohibition on forced marriage	Not addressed	-Voluntary marriage principle
Underage marriage	Not addressed	-Prohibition on underage marriage	Not addressed	-Minimum age requirement
Domestic Violence	-Responsibility on mediators to inform relevant governmental bodies	-Prohibition on sexual violence	Not addressed	-Not addressed

Table 4 represents how the themes of substantive representation on work-related issues of women have been represented in the four main Codes of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Table 4: Themes of Substantive Representation in Codes: Work

Themes of Substantive Representation	Code of Administrative of Offences	Code of Crime	Code of Labor	Code of Family
Gender-based unequal pay	Not addressed	-Not addressed	-Prohibition on gender discrimination	Not addressed
Unemployment of women	Not addressed	Not addressed	-Allowing compromises for women during recruitment	Not addressed
Employment of pregnant women and women with underaged children	Not addressed	-Prohibition on forcing pregnant women to work -Prohibition of canceling the employment contract of pregnant women	-Additional vacation days for women with underaged children -Exemption from probation period and certification exam for pregnant women and women back from maternity leave	Not addressed
Unequal career development opportunities	Not addressed	Not addressed	-Prohibition on gender discrimination in promotion	Not addressed
Workplace physical and psychological harassment	Not addressed	-Prohibition on torture and sexual violence	-Opportunity for the signing of collective contact to protect the rights of female employees	Not addressed

The themes of substantive representation on women's issues regarding social life and health are represented in Table 5.

Table 5: Themes of Substantive Representation in Codes: Social Life and Health

Themes of Substantive Representation	Code of Administrative of Offences	Code of Crime	Code of Labor	Code of Family
Physical and Psychological Violence	Not addressed	-Prohibition on Physical, Psychological, and Sexual Violence	Not addressed	-Requirement on mediators to inform relevant governmental authorities
Forced pregnancy and abortion	Not addressed	-Prohibition on forced pregnancy, artificial insemination, and forced abortion	-Not addressed	Not addressed
Participation in political decision making	Not addressed	-Equal rights of women to work in the area they choose, but no specific discussion on political participation	-Right to choose the field a person want to work and have necessary skills and abilities	Not addressed
Women's Reproductive Health	Not addressed	-Prohibition on forced abortion, pregnancy, and artificial insemination	-Compromises for pregnant women	Not addressed
Overall Gender Equality in Society	Not addressed	Not addressed	-Gender equality in employment, career development	-Gender equality in family decision making

3.2. Review of Meetings of National Assembly

To identify the topics of interest for female MPs and the discussions on women's issues and interests in Azerbaijani parliament, in this subsection, the review of the transcripts of

parliamentary meetings will be analyzed. By doing so, it will be possible to identify to what extent the issues of Azerbaijani women have been discussed and addressed. In addition, by analyzing specifically the issues of female MPs, it will be clarified what topics are important for female politicians in Azerbaijan. The official website of the National Assembly provides the transcripts for the meetings that have happened since the end of 2005 which corresponds to the third call of parliament.

3.2.1. Meetings of the Third Call of National Assembly

The first meeting of the third call of the National Assembly, which included 14 female MPs, happened on 02.12.2005. The head of the National Assembly, Asadov (male), emphasized the importance of taking legislative actions to support state policy on women in this meeting. Muslumov (male) pointed to the 12 years differences in the retirement age of male and female and suggested equalizing the retirement age during the meeting on 30.12.2005. At the same meeting, Mahmudov (male) discussed the lack of financial support to mothers with many children which decreases the growth rate of Azerbaijani population and suggested implementing new incentives that were existing during the USSR.

Hasanguliyev (male) provided his concerns on the usage of bad language when talking about Azerbaijani women in one of the Turkish television channels and pointed to the necessity for taking an action which is also supported by other male MPs at the 14.11.2006 meeting. Pashayeva (female) presented a significant increase in the number of women suffering from breast cancer in Azerbaijan and brought the fact that free medical aid is provided to the women only at the last stages of cancer which leads to the increased death rate at the 19.12.2006 meeting.

Suleymanov (male) discussed one of the problems that is faced by women in Azerbaijani labor market by focusing on one of the contradictions of the Law “About Non-State (Private) Security Activities” on 16.02.2007. MP suggests that while the law allows for all Azerbaijani citizens over 21 to become private security guards, it also prohibits the people who did not complete the mandatory military service to become private security guards. To make women also able to work as private security guards, Suleymanov suggested an addition to the law which does not require the completion of mandatory military service from the groups which are free from

mandatory service. Aghazade (male) mentioned the case where the security guard conducted a physical violence towards a woman and while his identity was known, he was not punished at the 25.04.2008 meeting. He asked the head of parliament to work on this issue and require the punishment according to the legislation. During a meeting held on 16.11.2007, Akhundova (female) mentioned the need for providing MPs with service cars and if it is not possible to provide all MPs with cars at the same time, then, it is needed to give the service cards to the female MPs first.

Considering the high level human trafficking and the fact that women are the main victims of it, Huseyn (male) discussed the importance of coordination on work to identify and punish the leaders of criminals to protect Azerbaijani women during a meeting held on 31.10.2008. On 12.11.2008, Ahmadova (female) mentioned the increased number of mother and child deaths during birth and pointed to a need for an improved examination system for pregnant women and for free medical aid and vaccination. On 19.12.2008, the Law on Reproductive Health and Family Planning was discussed. Cabrayilov (male) made the following quote on the law: *“I cannot see an Azerbaijani woman in this role, in the role of a technical storekeeper, a technical carrier, a surrogate mother.”*

However, at the same meeting, Pashayeva (female) described why there is a need for this law in the country, by referring to the high divorce rates generated from infertility issues. Also, she suggests that there is nothing against the role of Azerbaijani women as the law suggests that the woman can be surrogate only in case when her officially married husband agrees and in this case, it is only their own family issue. At the end, the Law on Reproductive Health and Family Planning was accepted as 95 MPs supported it.

The Law “On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Persons Detained in Prisons” was discussed at 03.04.2009 meeting again and Bakhshaliyeva (female) argued Article 30 of the Law and mentioned that the rules for female criminals should be softened because in most of the cases they are forced to commit crime because of the physical and psychological violence they are facing and bad family and economic conditions. On 26.05.2009, Mirzazada (male) argued that in most of the cases, older women are not accepted for certain positions and it is not correct to not accept the candidacy of women because of their age. He suggests considering the potential performance of the candidates when making a decision to ensure the successfulness of the work.

Huseyn (male) mentioned that it is not correct to increase the retirement age and the minimum working experience requirement for the pension payment for women which was suggested by another MP (Hadi (male)) at the 20.10.2009 meeting. He argues that it will contribute to violation of women's rights. He also makes the following comment: *"It is the duty of an Azerbaijani man to take care of his mother, sister, and grandmother."*

On 20.10.2009, Bakhshaliyeva (female) suggested a change to Article 67 of the Labor Code about the compromises made to pregnant women and women with underaged children on certification and attestation. According to her, the law on not requiring certification from pregnant women and women with underage children should not be applicable for female employees in the medical sector as it can jeopardize the health of patients. However, this article still exists and provides the compromise on certification also for employees in the medical sector. On 13.11.2009, Atayev (male) argued the differences in the retirement age of male and female and suggested that if Azerbaijani parliament accepts gender equality, it should also accept the equal retirement age. As a doctor, he argues that women's bodies are stronger than that of men which creates a doubt on the applicability of lower retirement age for women. However, because of the huge impact of changes on retirement age on around 1.3 million people, the discussion on the change in retirement age was closed considering the existing recession in the economy.

The 8th of March is officially celebrated as Women's Day in Azerbaijan since the USSR. During a meeting held on 01.02.2010, Akhundova (female) argued that there is not any need for having special day for women by making the following comment:

"I believe that the holiday celebrated by the German communist Rosa Luxemburg as the day of women's rights in the 19th century is not so important for people living in independent Azerbaijan in the 21st century. There is almost no women's problem in Azerbaijan, women have equal rights with men. The Law "On Gender Equality" is a clear proof of this." (Akhundova, female)

Aghamali (male) discusses the ineffectiveness of the work done by Suleymanova (female) as an ombudsman in addressing the issues of female prisoners who rights needs to be protected and accuses her not include any information on female prisoners in her report even though she is also a woman at the 02.04.2010 meeting of the parliament.

On the 25.05.2010 meeting, the head of the Human Rights Committee of the National Assembly, Aslanova (female), presented the Draft Law “On the Prevention of Domestic Violence”. According to Article 4 of the Law, it covers the violence against family members, married wife and husband, unofficially married wife and husband, and all the relatives living with them. Aslanova also suggests the creation of “safe houses” which aims to gather all family members together and understand and minimize or eliminate the reasons of domestic violence in the family. She also points to the importance of women’s education in the Azerbaijani society considering the fact that mainly, women are suffering from domestic violence and without an education, they are not able to leave the violent household as they lack economic freedom. Jabrayilov (male) supports the draft law and argues that the law is not only addressing violence against women, but also violence against children and people with disabilities which increases its necessity. Ahmadova (female) suggests that instead of taking suffering women from their homes and bringing them to the shelters with their children, it would be better to take the violent men from their houses and bring them to the rehabilitation facilities. Ahmadova also suggests amendments to the law to cover the forcing of women to prostitution and begging by their families. However, according to Novruzov (male), the draft of the Law is directed to the issues of females and does not cover the issues of men facing domestic violence. Orujov (male) mentions that even though the women and men will be given the equal rights by the law, women and men in the society will never be equal because “*God did not create man and woman equal*”. He mentions that while he supports women’s participation in decision making and management, this should not be achieved by worsening the role of men:

“Of course, I am one of the supporters of women having the most prominent position in social life, in all management issues. But we should not do this at the expense of weakening men. This is my fundamental position.” (Orujov, male)

At the end of discussion, the Law passed as 101 out of 103 of MPs voted in favor of the law. The summary of the women’s issues discussed in meetings of the third call of the National Assembly provided in Table 6.

Overall, the third call of the Azerbaijani parliament has discussed issues on domestic violence, reproductive health of women, and gender inequality issues. Both women and men

MPs supported gender equality while some of the male MPs are concerned about the weakening of the men's position in the society with the acceptance of the Law on Gender Equality. Both men and female MPs were referring to the role of Azerbaijani women and mentality in Azerbaijani society. Female MPs were more focused on health issues and issues of imprisoned women.

Table 6: Summary of the Meetings of the Third Call of National Assembly on Women's Interests and Issues

Meeting Date	Speakers	(Number of Identified Gender and Women Related Sections) Discussed Themes	Example Quotes	Status
02.12.2005	Asadov, O. (male); 14 out of 14 female MPs were silent 109 out of 110 male MPs were silent 1 out of 110 male MPs participated	(1) -State Policy on Women (Overall Gender Equality in Society)	"Necessary legislative measures should be taken for the implementation of the youth and women's policy of our state". (Asadov, O.)	On Agenda
30.12.2005	Muslumov, S. (male) Mahmudov, Y. (male); 14 out of 14 female MPs were silent 108 out of 110 male MPs were silent 2 out of 110 male MPs participated	(2) -Retirement Age by Gender (Overall Gender Equality In Society) -Women/Families with Many Children (Childcare)	"In most European countries, the retirement ages for men and women are now equal. But we have this left and we considered 12 years, i.e. 144 months". (Muslumov, S.) "The rate of growth of the Azerbaijani people has slowed down considerably. Regarding women with many children, such numbers have been set that these people should be provided in advance. Will the woman and the family who gave birth to those children be able to keep these children alive? It is not right to erase the positive results of the Soviet era. Now it is necessary to do so that we can provide security to these women and families in advance". (Mahmudov, Y.)	Both on Agenda
14.11.2006	Hasanguliyev, G. (male); 14 out of 14 of female	(1) - Usage of Bad Language Towards Azerbaijani	"All Azerbaijani women were accused of immorality on the Turkish TV channel "D". This is a very serious	On Agenda

	MPs were silent 109 out of 110 male MPs were silent 1 out of 110 male MPs participated	Women (Physical and Psychological Violence)	insult. The whole society is talking about it. I believe that either the Armenians are behind this, or some big forces have a hand in this matter. This is sowing seeds of enmity between two brotherly nations". (Hasanguliyev, G.)	
19.12.2006	Pashayeva, G. (female); 13 out of 14 female MPs were silent 1 out of 14 female MPs participated 110 out of 110 male MPs were silent	(1) - Breast Cancer and the Law "About the Oncological Help" (Women's Reproductive Health)	"How do they solve this problem in the world? Women are screened for breast cancer at least once every two years, which increases the effectiveness of the measures taken. We provide free primary medical care to these women after they fall into a serious condition. Rather than giving them free primary care, isn't it better that we take preventive measures to prevent disease and eliminate this problem? The world is moving towards it. I am asking you to amend the Law "About the Oncological Help" and put it this way". (Pashayeva, G.)	In policy output
16.02.2007	Suleymanov, T. (male) Mustafayev, F. (male); 14 out of 14 female MPs were silent 108 out of 110 male MPs were silent 2 out of 110 male MPs participated	(2) -Law on "Non-State (Private) Security Activities" and mandatory military service requirements on women (Unequal Career Development Opportunities)	"According to Article 9.1 of the draft Law on "Non-State (Private) Security Activities", which we discussed, citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan who have reached the age of 21 are accepted for the position of security guards. So, according to logic, along with men, women are accepted as guards. Article 9.4.3 of the law states that persons who have not completed actual military service cannot be accepted as security guards. It turns out that women cannot be accepted as security guards because they have not completed active military service". (Suleymanov, T.)	On Agenda
16.11.2007	Akhundova, E. (female); 13 out of 14 female MPs were silent 1 out of 14 female MPs participated 110 out of 110 male MPs were silent	(1) -Providing female MPs with service cars (Overall Gender Equality in Society)	"We have only 13 women MPs. Five of them have service vehicles. I request that 8 female MPs be given a service car and, if possible, a driver's position as an exception. I understand that it will be difficult to provide cars to all 121 MPs at once. Maybe you should respect the ladies. This will be a big deal for us. I believe that the rest of the deputies will not be offended by us". (Akhundova, E.)	On Agenda
25.04.2008	Aghazada, I. (male); 14 out of 14 female MPs were silent 109 out of 110 male MPs were silent	(1) -Violence against women (Physical and Psychological Violence)	"A 63-year-old refugee woman was recently beaten by a security service and died in the Central Medical Hospital. It is a pity that while the identity of the person who injured him was known, his	On Agenda

	1 out of 110 male MPs participated		arrest did not take place”. (Aghazada, I.)	
31.10.2008	Eyvazov, V. (male) Huseyn, P. (male); 14 out of 14 female MPs were silent 108 out 110 male MPs were silent 2 out of 110 male MPs participated	(2) Human trafficking (Physical and Psychological Violence)	“Progress in this field (i.e., human trafficking) will be felt when the number of Azerbaijani women arrested for prostitution as victims of human trafficking in foreign countries will decrease”. (Huseyn, P.)	In Policy Output
12.11.2008	Ahmadova, G. (female); 13 out of 14 female MPs were silent 1 out of 14 female MPs participated 110 out 110 male MPs were silent	(1) -Maternal and child death (Women’s Reproductive Health)	“Maternal and child mortality remains an actual problem in the field of health care. One of the main reasons for this is low health care costs in the budget. In order to reduce the mortality rate among infants and mothers, the examination system of pregnant women and children should be improved”. (Ahmadova, G.)	On Agenda
19.12.2008	Jabrayilov, R. (male) Guliyev, M. (male) Mammadov, I. (male) Pashayeva, G. (female); 13 out of 14 female MPs were silent 1 out of 14 female MPs participated 107 out 110 male MPs were silent 4 out of 110 male MPs participated	(4) -Female infertility (Women’s Reproductive Health) -Law on “Protection of Reproductive Health and Family Planning” (Women’s Reproductive Health)	“I cannot see an Azerbaijani woman in this role, in the role of a technical storekeeper, a technical carrier, a surrogate mother”. (Jabrayilov, R.)	In Policy Output
03.03.2009	Bakhshaliyeva, G. (female) Asadov, O. (male); 13 out of 14 female MPs were silent 1 out of 14 female MPs participated 108 out of 110 male MPs were silent 2 out of 110 male MPs participated	(2) -Law “On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Persons Detained in Prisons” (Physical and Psychological Violence Against Women) -Amnesty of women (Overall Gender Equality in society)	“Experience shows that women rarely commit crimes, but usually they are serious crimes. I believe that our legislation should show compassion towards women. You will agree with me that in most cases women are forced to commit crimes”. (Bakhshaliyeva, G.)	On Agenda
26.05.2009	Mirzazada, A. (male); 14 out of 14 female MPs were silent 109 out 110 male MPs were silent 1 out of 110 male MPs participated	(2) -Age of female candidates (Overall Gender Equality in Society, Unequal Career Development Opportunities)	“How many times have there been proposals to replace women who are over 70 years old? But let's see, what is our purpose? To place people of a certain age in positions and elected bodies, or to achieve the election of people who can successfully cope with	On Agenda

			that task?”. (Mirzazada, A.)	
20.10.2009	Bakhshaliyev, G. (female) Huseyn, P. (male); 13 out of 14 female MPs were silent 1 out of 14 female MPs participated 109 out 110 male MPs were silent 1 out of 110 male MPs participated	(2) -Retirement age (Overall Gender Equality in Society) -Certification of female health personnel (Employment of pregnant women and women with underaged children)	“Mr. Hadi also presents this as social justice (equalizing retirement age for male and female). Allegedly, social justice between men and women of Azerbaijan will be violated. It is the duty of an Azerbaijani man to take care of his mother, sister, and grandmother. How long will Azerbaijani men trample the rights of Azerbaijani women?”. (Huseyn, P.)	Both On Agenda
13.11.2009	Atayev, H. (male) 14 out of 14 female MPs were silent 109 out 110 male MPs were silent 1 out of 110 male MPs participated	(2) -Retirement age (Overall Gender Equality in Society) -Female fertility (Women,s Reproductive Health)	“The retirement age of mothers with many children is reduced. I do not understand the logic of this, I would like them to explain it to me. Why? I believe that if a woman gives birth to many children, she is a healthy woman. It goes without saying that a healthy woman can give birth to many children.”. (Atayev, H.)	On Agenda
01.02.2010	Akhundova, E. (female); 13 out of 14 female MPs were silent 1 out of 14 female MPs participated 110 out 110 male MPs were silent	(1) -8th of March - Women’s Day (Overall Gender Equality in Society)	“I believe that the holiday celebrated by the German communist Rosa Luxemburg as the day of women's rights in the 19th century is not so important for people living in independent Azerbaijan in the 21st century. There is almost no women's problem in Azerbaijan, women have equal rights with men. The Law "On Gender Equality" is a clear proof of this”. (Akhundova, E.)	On Agenda
02.04.2010	Suleymanova, E. (female) Aghamali, F. (male); 13 out of 14 female MPs were silent 1 out of 14 female MPs participated 109 out 110 male MPs were silent 1 out of 110 male MPs participated	(2) -Elected women as head of municipalities (Unequal Career Development Opportunities) -Amnesty of women (Overall Gender Equality in Society)	“There are women who live a life of conviction for one reason or another. Why isn't the name of even a single female convict, Mrs. Elmira, mentioned here?” (Aghamali, F.)	On Agenda
25.05.2010	Aliyeva, J. (female) Ahmadova, G. (female) Novruzov, S. (male) Akhundova, E. (female) Orujov, Z. (male)	(11) -Law “On the Prevention of Domestic Violence” (Domestic Violence) -Violence against women (Physical and Psychological Violence)	“If a woman and a child are abused in a family and they are sent to a shelter, we are consciously violating their rights a second time. It is clear that the child will miss out on education, the woman will face problems at her workplace and many problems related to the right to	In Policy Output

	Aghamali, F. (male) Guliyeva, A. (female) Pashayeva, G. (female); 9 out of 14 female MPs were silent 5 out of 14 female MPs participated 107 out 110 male MPs were silent 3 out of 110 male MPs participated	-Underage marriage of women (Underage Marriage) -Gender inequality in the legislation related to domestic violence (Overall Gender Equality in Society)	live in general.” (Ahmadova, G.)	
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3.2.2. Meetings of the Fourth Call of National Assembly

The fourth call of the National Assembly included 19 female MPs. On 01.02.2011, Ibrahimqizi (female) suggested the MPs provide their opinion and position on the issues and threats faced by Iranian women. Ahmadova (female) mentioned her happiness with the increased number of female MPs while she did not see the same tendency in the number of female heads of municipalities during a meeting held on 11.02.2011. On 04.03.2011, she also suggested that as it is not according to the mentality of Azerbaijani society for women to seek assistance from police on domestic violence issues, there is a need for a mobile application where women can easily report the issues they face and seek help. However, no comments or further discussion were made on this suggestion later. Pashayeva (female) called the increase in the number of women who use cigarettes in Azerbaijan “a devastating fact” as it is not according to the Azerbaijani mentality and causes critical health issues for women's bodies during the 17.05.2011 meeting.

During the 24.06.2011 meeting, Ahmadova (female) argued that it is not correct to treat an corruptive activity as illegal if it happened in a country where the activity is not illegal. According to her, if Azerbaijani parliament wants to take the example of Scandinavian countries and implement laws similar to theirs, then it is better to start with 40% of female MPs. The concerns on the minimum age of 17 for being married for females were provided by Pashayeva (female) on 30.09.2011. According to her, all people under 18 are considered as children by United Nations (UN) regulation which means that Azerbaijani regulation allowed for child marriage.

The changes to the Law On Mental Health Services has been discussed during the 25.10.2011 meeting where Aslanova (female) mentioned the increase in the number of females

suffering from depression and lack of measures to address and provide aid to suffering people. Ibrahimqizi (female) addressed a question to the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan who participated at 28.10.2011 meeting as a guest. The question was focused on the fact that women do not tend to report domestic violence issues to the police as most of the Azerbaijani police are men. Therefore, she suggested working on increasing the number of policewomen and if there was any policy or strategy planned to be implemented for this. Eyvazov (male) answered the question as no strategies have been implemented or planned for the future to increase the number of policewomen while additional privileges have been provided for women.

Feyziyev (male) discussed the importance of providing equal opportunities for men and women in science and research at the 15.11.2011 meeting by referring to the problem of mandatory military service requirements on male Master's degree students. According to him, most of the people in research are women which is a good indicator, but for different reasons, women cannot use their full potential which leads to worse than expected results. Here, he refers to the traditional roles and responsibilities assigned to the women in Azerbaijani society which is an extra burden on women and affects the productivity of them when conducting their job responsibilities. Bakhshaliyeva (female) presented her concerns on the increased usage of *hijab*, head covers for Muslim women, in the regions which may lead to the strengthening of Islamic powers in the country. At the same meeting, Huseynli (male) discussed the changes suggested to the Criminal Code on the criminalization of forcing women to get married by adding the punishment in forms of both fines and imprisonment. Without any further discussion, the change was accepted by all MPs participating in the meeting.

Another comment from Hasanguliyev (male) made at the meeting held on 22.05.2012 which focused on the roles and responsibilities assigned to women in Islam. The comments from Iran on the possibility of the gay parade in 2012 when Eurovision would be hosted by Azerbaijan made Hasanguliyev (male) to make the following comment:

“Iran is living the last days of its life. All Islamic values have been eroded there. See the statements made by Iranian officials. Yesterday I read on a media website that about 25 percent of Iranian schoolgirls smoke water hookah. Before that, we read that a very large percentage of

women there live a family life before getting married. In such a case, they have no right to come and give us moral lessons.” (Hasanguliyev, male)

In his comment, he refers to the Islamic restrictions on women's smoking and living with a man before getting married to him.

During the meeting held on 29.06.2012, Huseynli (male) presented the suggested changes to the Criminal Code. One of the changes was about removing the beating of family members from the Criminal Code and making it a part of the Code of Administrative Offenses. Huseynli explained the need for change as a high number of beating towards women inside the family and resulting unwanted high level imprisonment on domestic violence. However, Hasanguliyev (male) argued that if there is an increase in beating of women, then it is not a solution to exclude it from the Criminal Code. There is a need to implement stricter sanctions on violent family members. Huseynli (male) answered Hasanguliyev (male) that if the beating will result in the harm to the body, then, it will be handled in the Criminal Code. None of the female MPs made any comments on the suggestions. 90 of 96 MPs participating in the meeting voted in favor of the suggested changes and changes were accepted by the parliament.

Another issue that has been discussed widely by female MPs in Azerbaijan is the problems related to the payment of alimony to divorced women. On 16.10.2012, Akhundova (female) proposed to put restrictions in passing the borders of the country on men who do not pay the alimony regularly. Aliyeva (female) mentioned the lack of shelters for women and children in Azerbaijan who suffered from domestic violence and suggested SCFWCA (State Committee on Family, Women, and Childrent Affairs) to work on increasing the number of shelters on 13.11.2012. The suggestion has not been discussed further during the meeting. On 31.05.2013, Hasanguliyev (male) suggested the prohibition of revealing the gender of a child to the parents before birth because of the impact of it on demographics in Azerbaijan. Mustafayeva (female) supported his opinion and mentioned that reveal of the gender causes disbalances in the birth rate of male and female.

On 30.09.2013, Bakhshaliyeva (female) brought up the problem of increased instances of domestic violence in the rural areas of the country and questioned why it is not addressed well enough and how long it will continue in the same way. In the same meeting, she also pointed to the increased abortion rate when the gender is revealed as female. Mustafa (male) pointed to the high level of female unemployment rate in the regions which should be included in the regional

development program. On 04.03.2014, discussed the importance of increasing the number of policewomen. On 28.10.2014, Oruc (male) pointed to the necessity of analyzing the factors behind the low level of educational attainment of females in the southern part of the country. Also, he mentioned his concerns on increased use of hijab in the same region and the fact that most of the girls are forced by their families to wear hijab. During the meeting held on 20.11.2014, Mustafa (male) described an undesirable situation in the labor market towards women. His analysis brought out the fact that private companies explicitly mention in the vacancy advertisements that they are looking for women under 25 and unmarried. According to him, in this case, the father's earnings are not enough to take care of the family in most of the cases and the government aid to the unemployed mothers is not enough to cover the expenses of mother and newborn child. On 16.12.2014, Mustafa (male) pointed to the importance of working with families which have drug or alcohol addicted members which will otherwise cause an increase in the number of physically injured women.

To conclude, the issues and interests of women have been discussed more during the meetings of the fourth call of Azerbaijani parliament. Female MPs have been more active in this call compared to the third call. Different issues regarding, female health, female unemployment, issues of mothers with underaged children, human trafficking, and forced religious expectations on women have been discussed. Although some of the male MPs were discussing the models of "Azerbaijani women" and "Muslim women", female MPs also pointed to the mentality of Azerbaijani society and existing ethical rules for women. Domestic violence which has mainly female victims and need for shelters for women and children were also among hot topics. However, the tendency towards neglecting and not discussing the suggestions of female MPs on women's issues was also existing.

Table 7: Summary of the Meetings of the Fourth Call of National Assembly on Women's Interests and Issues

Meeting Date	Speakers	(Number of Identified Gender and Women Related Sections) Discussed Themes	Example Quotes	Status
01.02.2011	Ibrahimqizi, M. (female) 18 out of 19 female MPs were silent 1 out of 19 female	(1) -Violence Against Women in Iran (Physical and Psychological Violence)	"The fact that a number of women have been subjected to extremely serious threats and death sentences in Iran has seriously worried the international women's organizations as	On Agenda

	MPs participated 105 out of 105 male MPs were silent		well as the entire world community.” (Ibrahimqizi, M.)	
11.02.2011	Ahmadova, G. (female) 18 out of 19 female MPs were silent 1 out of 19 female MPs participated 105 out of 105 male MPs were silent	(1) -Number of female in municipalities (Unequal Career Development Opportunities for Women)	“Today, the number of women in the <i>Milli Majlis</i> has increased. But it is not possible to see this trend in municipalities.” (Ahmadova, G.)	On Agenda
04.03.2011	Ahmadova, G. (female) Suleymanova, E. (female) 17 out of 19 female MPs were silent 2 out of 19 female MPs participated 105 out of 105 male MPs were silent	(2) -Domestic violence against women and children (Domestic Violence) -social stereotypes (Overall Gender Equality in Society) -Increase in number of female MPs (Political Participation of Women)	“Today, whether women or children complain to the police, the Azerbaijani mentality does not accept it.” (Ahmadova, G.)	On Agenda
17.05.2011	Akgundova, E. (female) Pashayeva, G. (female) Novruzov, S. (male) 17 out of 19 female MPs were silent 2 out of 19 female MPs participated 104 out of 105 male MPs were silent 1 out of 105 male MPs participated	(3) -Payment of Alimony (Childcare) -Retirement of unemployed women (Unequal Career Development Opportunities) -Usage of cigarettes by women (Women’s Reproductive Health)	-”The basis of social pensioners is also women. That is, they retired by age, not by work. Their labor activity should be shown from the date they started a family to cover the household responsibilities they handle, and these changes should be applied to them as well.” (Novruzov, S.)	On Agenda
24.06.2011	Ahamova, G. (female) 18 out of 19 female MPs were silent 1 out of 19 female MPs participated 105 out of 105 male MPs were silent	(1) -Quota on share of women in parliament (Political Participation of Women)	“Scandinavian countries today let women into parliament with a quota of 40 percent. Let's accept that.” (Ahmadova, G.)	On Agenda
30.09.2011	-Pashayeva, G. (female) 18 out of 19 female MPs were silent 1 out of 19 female MPs participated	(1) -17 years as minimum age of marriage for women (Underage Marriage)	“According to legislation, our girls can get married at the age of 17, there are still exceptions. They abuse those exceptions a lot.” (Pashayeva, G.)	On Agenda

	105 out of 105 male MPs were silent			
25.10.2011	-Alanova, R. (female) 18 out of 19 female MPs were silent 1 out of 19 female MPs participated 105 out of 105 male MPs were silent	(1) -Number of female suffering from depression (Women Health)	“It is known that 26 percent of women suffer from depression. When we talk about psychiatric help, we should take into account not only these points, but also prevention.” (Aslanova, R.)	On Agenda
28.10.2011	Ibrahimqizi, M. (female) Jabrayilov, R. (male) 18 out of 19 female MPs were silent 1 out of 19 female MPs participated 104 out of 105 male MPs were silent 1 out of 105 male MPs participated	(4) -Number of policewomen (Unequal Career Development Opportunities) -Human trafficking (Physical and Psychological Violence)	“In the developed countries of the world, as well as in brotherly Turkey and neighboring Georgia, they have already begun to attract more women to the police structure. In particular, these female police officers are involved in cases related to domestic violence, juvenile affairs, as well as the fight against human trafficking.”(Ibrahimqizi, M.)	On Agenda
15.11.2011	Feyziyev, C. (male) Bakhvshaliyeva, G. (female) Huseynli, A. (male) 18 out of 19 female MPs were silent 1 out of 19 female MPs participated 103 out of 105 male MPs were silent 2 out of 105 male MPs participated	(3) -Family responsibilities of women (Household Responsibilities) -Time spend on childcare (Childcare) -Overall Gender Equality in Society (Overall Gender Equality in Society) -Changes to the Code of Crime for criminalization of forced marriage (Forced Marriage)	“However, as everyone knows, a certain number of women who want to work in the field of science, perhaps the majority, cannot engage in scientific activity for objective reasons, and this situation does not guarantee that their scientific activity will be as effective as desired.” (Feyziyev, C.)	Forced marriage on Policy Output, Household Responsibilities and overall gender inequality issues On Agenda
29.06.2012	Hasanguliyev, G. (male) 19 out of 19 female MPs were silent 104 out of 105 male MPs were silent 1 out of 105 male MPs participated	(1) -Combating against domestic violence (Domestic Violence)	“We say beating is too common, so let's get it out of the Criminal Code. On the contrary, if it is widespread, the sanctions against tattooing should be tightened a little to prevent it.” (Hasanguliyev, G.)	In Policy Output
16.10.2012	Akhundova, E. (female) 18 out of 19 female	(1) -Payment of Alimony (Childcare)	“In addition, in some Western countries, another effective method is used against alimony defaulters. In	On Agenda

	MPs were silent 1 out of 19 female MPs participated 105 out of 105 male MPs were silent		those countries, information about such conditions is transferred to the border service, and these people are not allowed to go abroad for vacation or business trip. I believe that such measures could be applied in our country. Only with the implementation of such a strict and fair mechanism can we achieve a partial solution to the problem of women who are condemned to live alone with their children. ” (Akhundova, E.)	
13.11.2012	Aliyeva, J. (female) 18 out of 19 female MPs were silent 1 out of 19 female MPs participated 105 out of 105 male MPs were silent	(1) -Number of shelters for women (Physical and Psychological Violence Against Women)	“As a result of a family conflict, a woman is mercilessly thrown out into the street with her baby in her arms and, so to speak, becomes a street dweller. We witness many such incidents. The State Committee on Family, Women and Children's Problems provides legal and moral support to those women.” (Aliyeva, J.)	On Agenda
31.05.2013	Hasanguliv, G. (male) 19 out of 19 female MPs were silent 104 out of 105 male MPs were silent 1 out of 105 male MPs participated	(1) -Abortion when the gender is revealed as female (Women’s Reproductive Health, Overall Gender Equality in Society)	“Indeed, the issue of determining the gender of children in advance has been discussed in society for a long time. The vast majority of the population is against doctors telling pregnant women the sex of the child before birth. I think that we, as a legislative body, can consider this position of the public and prohibit it by legislation.” (Hasanguliv, G.)	On Agenda
30.09.2013	Bakhshaliyeva, G. (female) 18 out of 19 female MPs were silent 1 out of 19 female MPs participated 105 out of 105 male MPs were silent	(2) -Killing of women inside the family (Domestic Violence, Physical and Psychological Violence)	“The second issue concerns women. We often read in the press that in some villages a husband beheaded his wife, in some villages a brother killed a sister, a father killed his daughter. How long will this last?” (Bakhshaliyev, G.)	On Agenda
04.03.2014	Suleymanova, E. (female) Muradova, B. (female) 17 out of 19 female MPs were silent 2 out of 19 female MPs participated 105 out of 105 male MPs were silent	(2) -Women Death when giving birth (Women’s Reproductive Health) -Increase in the number of policewomen (Unequal Career Development Opportunities)	“In most cases, taking into account the deaths of children and mothers as a result of caesarean section in pregnant women without vital instructions, their disability, and the birth of babies with defects, it was suggested to take serious measures to prevent this operation.” (Suleymanov, E.)	In Policy Output

28.10.2014	Oruc, Z. (male) 19 out of 19 female MPs were silent 104 out of 105 male MPs were silent 1 out of 105 male MPs participated	(1) -Wearing of Religious Clothes forced by family (Decision Making on Personal Life)	“An Azerbaijani woman or girl is dressed in different religious clothes. These reasons should be analyzed. Of course, I am not against religious dresses worn by a person's voluntary decision.” (Oru, Z.)	On Agenda
20.11.2014	Mustafa, F. (male) 19 out of 19 female MPs were silent 104 out of 105 male MPs were silent 1 out of 105 male MPs participated	(1) -Unemployment of women (Unequal Career Development Opportunities) -Pregnancy and maternal leave during employment (Employment of Pregnant Women and Women with Underaged Children)	“Most of the private companies in Azerbaijan do not hire women over 25 years old, in many cases married women. I say this with reference to the announcements.” (Mustafa, F.)	On Agenda
16.12.2014	Mustafa, F. (male) 19 out of 19 female MPs were silent 104 out of 105 male MPs were silent 1 out of 105 male MPs participated	(1) -Increasing violence against women because of increased alcohol usage (Domestic Violence, Physical and Psychological Violence)	“Because if we don't solve these problems today in an environment where so much brutality is taking place, we will witness enough damage to the family institution in Azerbaijan, children, especially women, will be injured and sacrifice their lives.” (Mustafa, F.)	On Agenda
02.02.2015	Abdullayeva, L. (female) Akhundova, E. (female) 17 out of 19 female MPs were silent 2 out of 19 female MPs participated 105 out of 105 male MPs were silent	(2) -Gender distribution of teachers (Overall Gender Equality in Society) -Mothers with many children (Childcare)	“The official figures of the Ministry of Education also show that the vast majority of secondary school teachers in our country today are women. Female teachers predominate in almost all subjects, which even includes subjects traditionally taught by men today.” (Abdullayeva, L.) “In my opinion, the status of mothers with many children should be significantly raised at the state level.” (Akhundova, E.)	On Agenda
13.10.2015	Samadzada, Z. (male) 19 out of 19 female MPs were silent 104 out of 105 male MPs were silent 1 out of 105 male MPs participated	(2) -Extending areas where uneducated women can work (Unemployment of Women)	“There was a time when more than 50 thousand women worked in our light industry. This is not a very capital intensive field. Branches of this enterprise are already established in the regions. But there was a time when they created obstacles to the commissioning of this factory. Why? The labor capacity is high, women's labor is applied, wages are received, social issues are solved, and at the same time, it also gives positive results from an environmental point of	On Agenda

			view.” (Samadzada, Z.)	
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3.2.3. Meetings of the Fifth Call of National Assembly

21 female MPs have been elected to the fifth call of Azerbaijani parliament. On 05.04.2016, Suleymanova (female) discussed different topics that can increase the financial freedom of women in the regions of Azerbaijan. First, she mentioned the need for conducting training for increasing the skills and abilities of women who lack educational background to prepare them for employment. Next, the need for training on increasing the leadership skills of all women, including the women with high levels of educational attainment, was presented. Finally, she proposed the implementation of different incentives for female entrepreneurs to increase female activity in entrepreneurship. On the same meeting, she mentioned her concerns about the lack of work on implementation of Conventions on “Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence” and “Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence” by necessary government authorities.

On 29.04.2016, Akhundova (female) presented her suggestions on increasing the attention on the uneducated women that want to leave the country alone, as they can be the victims of human trafficking as a part of her comments on the report of coordinator of work on human trafficking. Considering the high volume of underage marriage in Azerbaijan, she also suggested considering the underage women as human trafficking to decrease the number of these cases. No further discussion was made on her suggestions. On 17.05.2016, the change to the Labor Code on application of shortened working hours for pregnant women and single parents raising his\her child up to 3 alone. According to the change, people from these categories cannot work more than 36 hours in a week.

On 29.11.2016, the comments on increasing use of tobacco products around the schools lead to the increased risk of cancer by Mustafa (male) as a part of his comments on the changes to the Law on Tobacco and Tobacco Products. He also mentioned the active advertisements of tobacco products near schools which attracts children. The head of the parliament, Asadov (male), mentioned that female should be involved more to solve the issue with the usage of tobacco products by children:

“This is not only a matter of health, but also of financial costs. It is a matter that benefits one's personal budget. Therefore, women can actively participate in this matter, but they must have your support (i.e. here, he points to the male MPs). I understand that this issue has become a women's issue, a women's problem.”

From his comments, the members of the Azerbaijani parliament still consider the issues of children as the issues of women and consider women as a main caregiver in the family. When it comes to the financial expenses of the family, Asadov (male) mentions the importance of involvement from male MPs.

On 30.12.2016, Pashayeva (female) presented her concerns on the lack of provision of protection by the relevant authorities to the women facing threats from their ex-partners. She gave different examples of the women that were killed because of the insufficient work done for protecting them even though they applied for it. None made comments on her concerns during the meeting. On 20.10.2017, Akhundova (female) argued the changes suggested to Article 213 of the Code of Administrative Offenses which prohibited the advertisement of artificial food products for children among mothers and within medical institutions. She suggested that it is actually good for mothers to see this kind of advertisement and evaluate which product is better. However, Guliyev (male) mentioned the Law on Infant and Young Child Nutrition considers this kind of advertisement as a crime and artificial food products can only be used based on doctors' suggestions, not on advertisements. Consequently, all MPs participating in the meeting voted in favor of the suggested changes.

The problems related to the economic freedom of women in the regions of the country has been brought to the agenda of the parliament again on 03.04.2018 by Mustafa (male). He mentioned the lack of vocational schools that can contribute the skills of women and suggested tax exemptions and other privileges in this sector to create incentives for entrepreneurs. On 12.06.2018, Rajabli (male) provided the statistics on the unofficial employment of women and presented the changes suggested to the Law on Employment to identify and tackle the unofficial employment. 88 out of 89 MPs voted in favor of the changes and they were accepted. Mustafazada (female) made comments on the recent examples of domestic violence towards a woman where her husband killed her in front of their child. She was concerned about the fact that many people, including some of the public figures, argue that the guilty one was the woman

and most probably, she did something wrong. Ibrahimqizi (female) politicized the comments of Mustafazada (female) and argued that it is not only the job of the government but also other parties work on this kind of issues.

On 22.10.2019, Pashayeva (female) suggested ratification of the The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). She explained that the fact that Azerbaijani government did not confirm this convention is used against Azerbaijan in world and European politics and damages the state's political image. Mollazada (male) also suggested the ratification of the Istanbul Convention at the same meeting. Novruzov (male) also joined the suggestions by supporting his claims with the increase in domestic violence issues and crime against women. Aliyeva (female) repeated herself again on the need for shelters for women and children in the face of increasing domestic violence issues. However, again, her suggestions were not discussed further. The importance of providing financial aid to unemployed women to increase their economic freedom and contribute to the child raising process suggested by Mustafa (male) on 25.11.2019.

Overall, the same topics on domestic violence and female unemployment have been discussed by the MPs of the fifth call of the National Assembly. However, there were also discussions on female entrepreneurial activity, vocational schools for women, and ways on increasing the educational attainment level of females in the regions of the country. While several male MPs have been quite active in presenting women's issues and interests, compared to the third and fourth call, fewer number of male MPs made comments related to women. The comments on the need for ratification of the Istanbul Convention has been made during the fifth call of the National Assembly.

Table 8: Summary of the Meetings of the Fifth Call of National Assembly on Women's Interests and Issues

Meeting Date	Speakers	(Number of Identified Gender and Women Related Sections) Discussed Themes	Example Quotes	Status
05.04.2016	Suleymanova, E. (female) Nakhchivanli, A (female) 19 out of 21 female MPs were silent	(4) -Trainings to increase the skills and abilities for women (Unemployment of women) -Trainings to Improve the Leadership Skills of Women (Political Participation of	“In order to increase the skills and activity of women, in addition to conducting trainings in the regions, organizing events on the training of women leaders, providing financial and organizational support to women entrepreneurs, providing them with	On Agenda

	2 out of 21 female MPs participated 103 out of 103 male MPs were silent	Women) -Financial Help to Female Entrepreneurs (Overall Gender Equality in Society)	suitable employment and encouraging people with disabilities and the elderly, giving them tax concessions, as well as providing loans would be useful.” (Suleymanova, E.)	
29.04.2016	Eyvazov, V. (male) Akhundova, E. (female) 20 out of 21 female MPs were silent 1 out of 21 female MPs participated 102 out of 103 male MPs were silent 1 out of 103 male MPs participated	(3) -Human trafficking (Physical and Psychological Violence) -Sexual Harassment (Sexual Harassment) -Involvement of women in radical religious groups (Physical and Psychological Violence) -Underage marriage forced by family (Underage marriage, Forced Marriage)	“Such women are often shown on a number of television channels. After being released from terrorist camps, they say that first they promise them marriage, they promise them jobs, and then they take them by deception and subject them to sexual exploitation in ISIS camps.” (Akhundova, E).	On Agenda
17.05.2016	Aliyeva, M. (female) 20 out of 21 female MPs were silent 1 out of 21 female MPs participated 103 out of 103 male MPs were silent	(2) -Amnesty of Women (Overall Gender Equality in Society)	“According to the draft of the ministerial act, all persons convicted of crimes that do not cause a great public danger will be released from punishment. In addition, women convicted of a number of crimes, minors, disabled, old and elderly, dependent minors, disabled children and some other categories of persons will be exempted from imprisonment.” (Aliyeva, M.)	In Policy Output
29.11.2016	Mustafa, F. (male) Asadov, O. (male) Pashayeva, G. (female) Akhundova, E. (female) 19 out of 21 female MPs were silent 2 out of 21 female MPs participated 101 out of 103 male MPs were silent 2 out of 103 male MPs	(3) -Use of cigarettes by women (Women’s Reproductive Health) -Increase in the domestic violence issues (Domestic Violence)	“It has been said that we expect support from women, but since most of the deputies are men, we expect more support from the men of the <i>Milli Majlis</i> . If they support, this issue can be resolved.” (Pashayeva, G).	Combating against Cigarette use In Policy Output Discussion on increased domestic violence On Agenda

	participated			
30.12.2016	Pashayeva, G. (female) Rzayev, R. (male) 20 out of 21 female MPs were silent 1 out of 21 female MPs participated 102 out of 103 male MPs were silent 1 out of 103 male MPs participated	(2) -Payment of Alimony (Childcare) -Limited response to female appeal on domestic violence (Domestic Violence)	“The woman's appeal was ignored and the necessary procedures were not carried out. Only a few days later, he cut her throat and killed her in front of everyone. Therefore, the issue of immediate implementation of appeals and decisions related to women subjected to domestic violence is very relevant in recent times.” (Pashayeva, G.)	In Policy Output
20.10.2017	Akhundova, E. (female) Huseynli, A. (male) Mustafa, F. (male) Ganizada, C. (male) 20 out of 21 female MPs were silent 1 out of 21 female MPs participated 100 out of 103 male MPs were silent 3 out of 103 male MPs participated	(4) -Advertisement of Artificial Food Products for children (Childcare) -Changes to the Criminal Code on the Punishment of Pregnant women (Problems of Pregnant Women)	“It is written here that it is forbidden to advertise artificial food products among pregnant women and mothers, in medical institutions, and a fine will be imposed for this. In my opinion, this is not the right approach. Because it is mothers and pregnant women, medical workers who should acquire information about artificial food products.” (Akhundova, E.)	In Policy Output
03.04.2018	Mustafa, F. (male) 21 out of 21 female MPs were silent 102 out of 103 male MPs were silent 1 out of 103 male MPs participated	(1) -Problems on Vocational education of Women (Unequal Career Development Opportunities)	“The specific problem of Azerbaijan is the issue of vocational education of girls and women. In the vast majority of regions, there are certain problems in getting secondary education. Entrepreneurs should be stimulated and exempted from taxes. It is necessary to create an opportunity to open vocational education lyceums and colleges.” (Mustafa, F.)	On Agenda
12.06.2018	Rajabli, H. (male) Guliyev, M.	(3) -Informal Employment of Women (Unequal Career	“Informal employment has a negative impact on women, low-income families, youth and migrants.” (Rajabli, H.)	In Policy Output

	(male) 21 out of 21 female MPs were silent 101 out of 103 male MPs were silent 2 out of 103 male MPs participated	Development Opportunities) -Equalizing the rights of male raising their children alone (Overall Gender Equality in Society)		
22.10.2019	Mollazada, A. (male) Novruzov, S. (male) Pashayeva, G. (female) Aliyeva, S. (female) 19 out of 21 female MPs were silent 2 out of 21 female MPs participated 101 out of 103 male MPs were silent 2 out of 103 male MPs participated	(3) -Increased issues of domestic violence (Domestic Violence) -Ratification of Istanbul Convention (Domestic Violence)	“It is unfortunate that we delay the relevant issues regarding violence against women. I expected that we Istanbul We will approve the Convention sooner.” (Mollazada, A.)	On Agenda
25.11.2019	Muradova, B. (female) Mustafa, F. (male) 20 out of 21 female MPs were silent 1 out of 21 female MPs participated 102 out of 103 male MPs were silent 1 out of 103 male MPs participated	(4) -Azerbaijani women suffering from domestic violence abroad without passport (Domestic Violence) -Assignment of social payment to housewomen (Household Responsibilities) -Informal employment of women (Unequal Career Development Opportunities)	“Many women are either in the hidden unemployment category, earns money informally. But they do not receive funds for maternity leave. We have to do it because of the attitude towards the child. That is, it is not the child's fault that, for example, his mother does not work, or the company she works for does not receive funds for her maternity leave.” (Mustafa, F.)	On Agenda

3.2.4. Meetings of the Sixth Call of National Assembly

21 female MPs have been elected to the sixth call of the National Assembly. Jafarova (female) and Arpadarai (female) presented the statistics provided by the UN on increase in domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic and suggested the conduction of the similar analysis in Azerbaijan to be able to reflect from a political perspective on 09.04.2020. On 24.04.2020, Karimli (male) made the following comment during the meeting which is a proof that still the gender equality in Azerbaijani politics is understood something that damages the model of Azerbaijani woman:

“Amnesty International” organization has issued a new statement, and it is stated in that statement that women in Azerbaijan bravely came out and held a rally demanding gender equality. They are not brave, they have demanded freedom for immorality. Our brave people are those who put flowers in the mouths of Russian cannons, those who participated in the national liberation movement, our brothers and sisters who died on the borders and fronts. They are not brave, they are immoral and...”

On 05.05.2020, Huseynova (female) pointed to the lack of women among judges and the need for attracting and training women in this field. On 06.08.2020, Pashayeva (female) mentioned the difficulties of divorced women to get alimony. The importance of prioritizing women acting as a single parent in unemployment policies by Aliyev (male). On 30.12.2020, Muradova mentioned the importance of educating women in decreasing underage marriage and female unemployment rates. On 09.03.2021, Karimli (male) mentioned the impossibility of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. According to him, the main reason is the fact that the Convention allows for homosexual marriage and it is strictly opposed to the traditions of Azerbaijani families. On 16.03.2021, Huseynova (female) mentioned the fact that while the parliament accepts different programs and laws to decrease female unemployment and stimulate female entrepreneurship, there are not enough kindergartens in the country to take care of underaged children and make women able to work. On 02.04.2021, she repeated the need for increasing the number of kindergartens to decrease female unemployment.

The reasons behind human trafficking and why the main victims of it are women has been addressed by Guliyev (male) during 23.04.2021 meeting. According to him, to decrease

human trafficking issues, the educational attainment level of women should be increased, underage marriage should be eliminated, and poverty and unemployment rate among women should be decreased.

Table 9: Summary of the Meetings of the Sixth Call of National Assembly on Women’s Interests and Issues

Meeting Date	Speakers	(Number of Identified Gender and Women Related Sections) Discussed Themes	Example Quotes	Status
09.04.2020	Arpadarai, N. (female) Jafarova, T. (female) 20 out of 22 female MPs were silent 2 out of 22 female MPs participated 102 out of 102 male MPs were silent	(3) -Increase in Domestic Violence during Covid-19 pandemic (Domestic Violence)	“However, there is one point that we have seen, that the spread of this pandemic in all countries of the world is accompanied by an increase in cases of violence against women. That is, this issue has escalated all over the world, and even the Secretary General of the UN made a report on this topic on April 5. That is, in this direction, of course, even when we met with women in the pre-election campaign, we heard about domestic violence.” (Arpadarai, N.)	On Agenda
24.04.2020	Huseynova, H. (female); 21 out of 22 female MPs were silent 1 out of 22 female MPs participated 102 out of 102 male MPs were silent	(1) -No payment for the additional documents of the victims of domestic violence living abroad (Domestic Violence)	“In practice, there are many cases when women living in a foreign country with their families and citizens of Azerbaijan are subjected to domestic violence and their documents are taken from their hands, destroyed, or they have to run away from home and remain without documents. In order for these persons to return to the country, it would be good not to charge a state fee for issuing a return certificate that replaces a passport.” (Huseynova, H.)	In Policy Output
05.05.2020	H. Huseynova (female); 21 out of 22 female MPs were silent 1 out of 22 female MPs participated 102 out of 102 male MPs were silent	(1) -Number of female judges (Unequal Career Development Opportunities)	“The second issue is the number of women judges. Of course, we understand that our judges are selected by the test system, but the number of women among them is still not enough. Now, what should be done here, how should it be done, these should also be considered” (Huseynova, H.)	On Agenda
06.08.2020	Pashayeva, G. (female) Aliyev, A. (male); 21 out of 22 female MPs were	(4) -Payment of Alimony (Childcare) -Attention on Employment of female	“Today, our MPs here, especially our female MPs, receive dozens of requests about mothers who cannot receive alimony every month. That is, it is very difficult for women, and there are hundreds of such women.” (Pashayeva, G.)	On Agenda

	<p>silent 1 out of 22 female MPs participated 101 out of 102 male MPs were silent 1 out of 102 male MPs participated</p>	<p>(Unemployment of Women)</p>		
09.03.2 021	<p>Huseynova, H. (female) Karimli, T. (male); 21 out of 22 female MPs were silent 1 out of 22 female MPs participated 101 out of 102 male MPs were silent 1 out of 102 male MPs participated</p>	<p>(2) -Ratification of Istanbul Convention (Overall Gender Equality in Society)</p>	<p>“Why Western values? Because they want to destroy our values and destroy our family institution. They want to take away our holiness. This cannot be allowed. Acceptance of the Istanbul Convention and calls to change the Family Code in that direction are absolutely unacceptable. ” (Karimli, T.)</p>	<p>On Agenda</p>
16.03.2 021	<p>Huseynova, H. (female); 21 out of 22 female MPs were silent 1 out of 22 female MPs participated 102 out of 102 male MPs were silent</p>	<p>(1) -Problems with the number of kindergarten (Childcare, Unequal Career Development Opportunities)</p>	<p>“Issues related to women's employment and the development of women's entrepreneurship are repeatedly raised. However, the lack of sufficient number of children's enterprises deprives women of opportunities to work and engage in entrepreneurship.” (Huseynova, H.)</p>	<p>On Agenda</p>
02.04.2 021	<p>Huseynova, H. (female); 21 out of 22 female MPs were silent 1 out of 22 female MPs participated 102 out of 102 male MPs were silent</p>	<p>(1) -Problems with the number of kindergarten (Childcare, Unequal Career Development Opportunities)</p>	<p>“There is still a need to increase the number of kindergartens in the country. Solving this issue can have a positive impact on early socialization and development of children, as well as on women's employment..” (Huseynova, H.)</p>	<p>On Agenda</p>
23.04.2 021	<p>Guliyev, M. (male) Novruzov, S. (male) Badamov (male); 22 out of 22 female MPs were silent 99 out of 102 male MPs were silent 3 out of 102 male MPs participated</p>	<p>(1) -Human trafficking (Physical and Psychological Violence) -Underage marriage (Underage Marriage) -Gender equal education Opportunities (Unequal Career</p>	<p>“What are the factors that lead to human trafficking? It is poverty, unemployment, early and unsuccessful marriages, failed families, low level of education of women and so on. We should start with these issues. If we analyze, the vast majority of women who are subjected to human trafficking and become victims in terms of structure are women with an average or lower education level. Among women with higher education, this is almost not found. Even if this is the case, the percentage is very small. They</p>	<p>On Agenda</p>

		Development Opportunities)	are also women who do not have a profession or whose family has failed.” (Guliev, M.)	
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3.3. Analysis of Interviews

To understand the perceived effectiveness of female MPs in representing women’s interests and issues in the parliament, the interviews have been conducted with different groups of women. Table 10 represents the summary of questions from Appendix 1 and the respective answers of each interviewee.

Table 10: Thematic Overview of Interview Responses

Interviewee	NGO Head	Business Owner 1	Business Owner 2	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Employee at Ministry	Employee at RIIB
Question In your perception, what aspects do you consider to be relevant for women’s issues in Azerbaijan? Why?	- Decisions are made by family - Low level of attendance in public-social life	- Low decision making power on women’s own lives - Gender inequality issues at universities and workplaces	- Family impact on decision making - Social barriers	- Difficulties managing work and family life - Male does not share responsibilities regarding family and children	- Work-life balance is not sufficient - Gender issues not addressed in schools - Domestic violence	- Career development - Not shared family responsibilities - Social pressure on marriage and having children	- Early marriages - Low decision making power - Harassment - Psychological abuse - Gender inequality
Question Of the aforementioned aspects, which ones do you	- Participation in politics - Overall, not	- Attempts from NGOs remain unanswered - No	- None	- None	- Health issues are widely discussed	- Yes, female MPs discuss issues on divorced women,	- Gender inequality

consider receive the most attention from the decision-makers/policy-makers in the last 2-3 years? Why?	sufficient attention on any topic	important issues discussed and addressed				unemployment , families of martyrs	- Early marriages
What are your perceptions about gender inequality in your current social environment, family, and work environment? Do you think that you are not treated equally because of your gender?	- No gender inequality issues at work or social life - Male dominated family	- No inequality issues in work, family, and social environment because of high level of awareness and actions taken for protection	- No, but aware of the fact that most of the women face these issues	- Equality in work - Inequality in social life and family	- Gender inequality in social environment and family	- Gender inequality at work about career growth - Gender inequality in society about the lifestyle, no possibility to walk outside alone in the night, and others - Gender equality in family	- Neither in family nor in work - Issues exists in social environment
When executing your current job, have you ever experienced any issues that would not be faced by the men executing the same job? If yes, can you please elaborate on the situation?	- Additional need for proving skills and knowledge	- No	- No	- Equal workload but male colleagues do not have family responsibilities	- Male teachers are less active, not concerned much about the students but paid equally	- Even if women work and contribute more than men, men are always promoted instead of women	- No
When executing your current	- Yes, career growth for	- No	- No	- No	- No	- No	- Yes, additional

job, have you ever experienced any benefits that would not be faced by the men executing the same job? If yes, can you please elaborate on the situation?	good performance						payment on Women's Day (March 8)
Do you feel that the improvements in political decision making may improve the gender inequality related issues in Azerbaijan?	- Yes, based on the contribution to female role model	- Yes, if they bring needed topics to the discussion	- Yes, but female MPs do not discuss proper issues	- Yes, if the implementations will be monitored	- No, because current female MPs do not contribute to gender equality	- Yes, it is not only about the participation of women, but the improvements are needed to the whole process	- Yes
Are you aware about the women MPs participating in the Azerbaijani parliament, the topics brought up by them during discussions, their policy recommendations, and others?	- Yes, issues on education, children, health	- Yes, but they are not so active	- Yes, they are making general comments and not good at suggestion solutions	- Yes, mostly social issues	- Yes, they have low power on discussing economic, financial, and world politics. Therefore, focusing on education, health, and other issues	- Yes, issues on female health, family, domestic violence	- Some, but not much because of the time constraint
Do you feel that the existence of women MPs in Azerbaijani	- Yes	- No	- No	- No	- No, male MPs are sometimes even more active on these issues	- Even though they try to bring some issues of females, no increase is	- No, female MPs discuss more on

parliament increases the discussion of gender inequality issues? If yes, why?						observed as the same issues are also brought by male MPs.	social issues
If your answer for the last question is yes, does it affect your choice during elections for parliament?	- No, because of the low impact					- A tendency to work for female, but not because of their contribution on female issues	
Have you experienced the implementation of any laws, policies, regulation recently that decreased unequal treatment to women in the social environment, family, or work environment?	- No	- No	- No	- No	- No	- No	- No

Based on the summary represented in Table 7, following common themes have been identified from the answers of interviewed women:

- Azerbaijani women suffer from low decision making power as most of the interviews commented it as one of the most important female issues. The issue is stricter inside the family as the traditional Azerbaijani family is male dominated. Most of the girls do not have power on deciding what and where to study, whom to marry, where to work (if working is allowed by male) (Business Owner 1).

- Women are still considered as the main (if not only) caregiver in the Azerbaijani family. Even if the woman is employed and contributing to family income, they still have the same responsibilities as unemployed women.
- According to the interviewees, female MPs in Azerbaijani parliament are discussed according to their socially assigned responsibilities as they discuss more on divorce, health, education, children, and so on.
- Gender inequality issues are more persistent in the social environment. Most of the interviewees do not face gender inequality issues in family and at work. It is mostly because the interviewees are mostly interested in politics, know their rights, and ready to protect their rights. However, even though the Labor Code prohibits gender-based unequal treatment, career growth opportunities for women are still limited (Employee at Ministry).
- Social pressure on marriage and having children is still existing and it affects the women's education, career development, family planning, and others.
- Most of the women believe that an increase in the number of female MPs can increase the representation of women's issues in Azerbaijani parliament. However, it can only happen if the female MPs focus on the real issues that Azerbaijani women face (Business Owner 1).
- As female MPs do not represent the issues of women properly according to the interviewees, their effectiveness in representing the issues of women is not affecting their voting decision in elections.
- None of the interviewees are aware of any of the legislative changes directed to women's issues and interests that affected their lives. It is either because there have been no legislative changes or the impact has been so small that it has not been observed (NGO Head).

Table 11 represents the findings on the identified themes from interviews. The table mentioned the themes from the interview transcripts and summarized the findings of how interviewed women view these themes' representation in parliament. If the interviewees answer that the specific themes discussed by female MPs, overall brought up in parliament, and reflected in the policy output, the respective columns get "Yes", otherwise, "No".

Table 11: Summary of Findings on Interviews

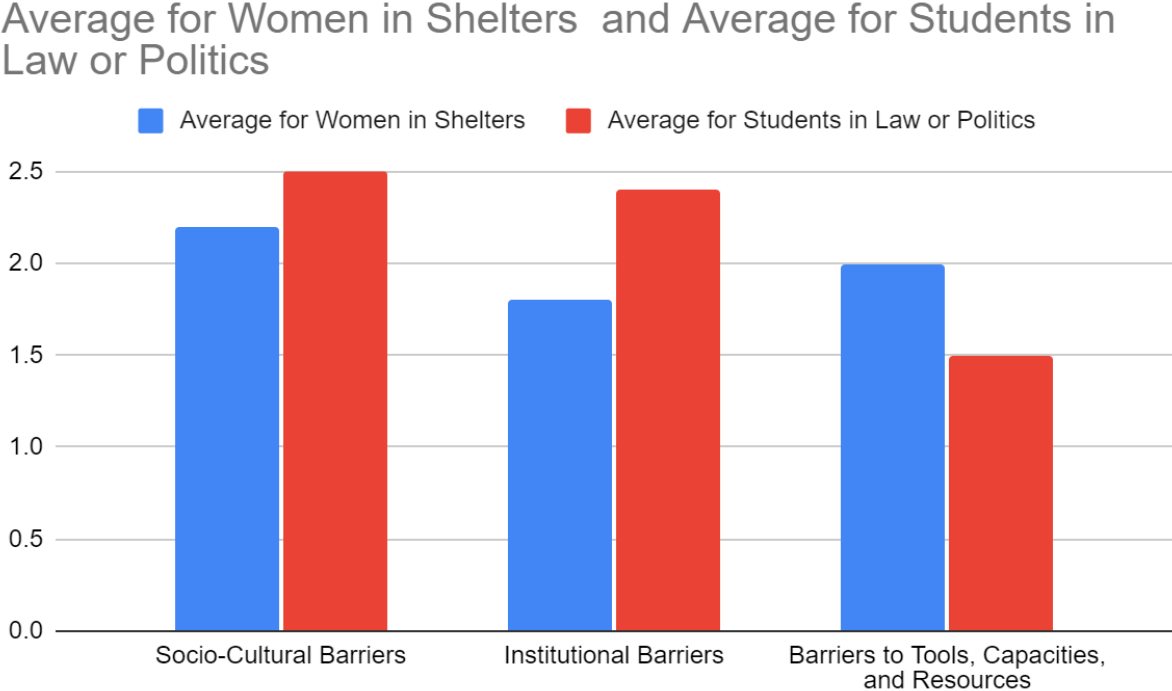
Theme	Discussed by Female MPs	Discussed in the Parliament (without women)	Awareness on policy implementation
Decision making power on personal life	No	No	No
Political decision making power	Yes	Yes	No
Gender inequality in education	Yes	Yes	No
Gender inequality in employment	No	Yes	No
Socio-cultural stereotypes	Yes	No	No
Work-life balance	No	No	No
Women's role in family	Yes	No	No
Early marriages	Yes	No	No
Physical and Psychological Abuse	No	No	No
Low attendance in public-social life	No	No	No

3.4. Analysis of Survey

To be able to get in touch with vulnerable groups (women living in shelters) and to understand the perspective of people who are more aware of the Azerbaijani legislation (women studying law, politics, or similar), the surveys are conducted. Figure 9 represents the results for the first question of survey on social barriers, institutional barriers, and barriers to tools and resources for women's political participation represented in Appendix 3. The ratings of the respondents on

barriers from each category have been averaged for women in shelters and female students studying law and politics and represented in Figure 9. The figure suggests that both women in shelters and female students consider the socio-cultural barriers as one of the most important obstacles for women in Azerbaijan to be represented both quantitatively and qualitatively in the political arena. Students consider the barriers to tools, capacities, and resources as less significant compared to women in shelters and vice versa is true for institutional barriers. The higher significance of institutional barriers for students can be explained by their higher level of awareness of politics and legislation.

Figure 9: Average scoring of barriers for women in shelters and women studying in Law or Politics



Source: Author’s Compilation

Note: Each respondent rated each barrier as one of the options from “Not at all”, “Not a great deal”, “Fair”, and “Significant” and the responses are enumerated by the author as follows: “Not at All” = 0, “Not a great deal” = 1, “Fair” = 2, “Significant” = 3. Overall, 20 respondents (10 women living in shelters and 10 female students studying law and politics) rated each barrier. Author enumerated the answers and found the average for each sample group.

According to the students, an educational approach should be taken to overcome socio-cultural barriers. Students suggest the implementation of different governmental projects to explain the need for female representation in politics. Women in shelters also point to the government's support in overcoming barriers but not in an educational way. According to them, the government should implement legislation on protecting women's representation by implementing quotas or specific parliamentary meetings for women's issues.

The answers to the question regarding the benefits of women's political representation of the survey suggest that women in shelters perceive that an increase in the number of women in politics will change the political agenda and promote gender equality. For female students, women's political representation will also contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. Both female students and women in shelters agree on the need for fighting with gender stereotypes and promoting a better understanding of gender inequality issues by the government to increase women's meaningful representation in politics based on the answers regarding the potential strategies for government and parliament. The answers regarding potential strategies for civil society to increase women's political representation show that both female students and women in shelters think civil society should encourage women to start and advance in their political careers and share information on benefits of women's political representation. While women in shelters think that to increase women's political participation women leaders should attract and hire more women into politics, female students did not choose this option as a strategy for women leaders. Instead, according to female students, it is important to also increase male awareness and involvement and create networks among other female colleagues to identify and work on most important gender issues. According to female students, key actors should develop mechanisms, increase public awareness, and include gender issues to the curricula to increase women's political participation. For women in shelters, promotion of work life balance alongside increasing public awareness are the two most chosen strategies for key actors. The summary of the survey data is presented in Table 12. The options given to the respondents on each theme are added with the number of respondents from the sample group who selected that specific option in their answers.

Table 12: Summary of Findings from Survey Data

Question	Theme	Votes	Votes	Total
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		From Female Studying Law and Politics	From Women Living in Shelters	Votes
In your opinion, what are the benefits of promoting influential political participation of women in your country?	Potential Benefits of Promoting Women's Political Representation	28	29	57
	<i>Increases public trust in the political system</i>	2	3	5
	<i>Impacts the policy agenda</i>	0	8	8
	<i>Expands the pool of women willing to run for office</i>	5	4	9
	<i>Contributes to socio-economic development</i>	6	2	8
	<i>Promotes better understanding of gender equality issues in society</i>	11	10	21
	<i>Improves the image and credibility of institutions (governments, political parties, parliaments)</i>	4	2	6
In your opinion, which strategies should the government and/or parliaments and local councils apply to effectively promote influential political participation of women and increase representation in your country?	Strategies for Government and/or Parliament to Promote Women's Political Representation	30	30	60
	<i>Develop and adopt temporary special measures</i>	0	6	6
	<i>Establish and ensure the effective functioning of gender equality mechanisms (Committees on Gender Equality, Research bodies, Gender Equality data collection tools)</i>	2	3	5
	<i>Ensure a gender-sensitive working environment and work towards Gender sensitive institutions/policies</i>	2	3	5
	<i>Work to develop and implement gender equality in processes (elections)</i>	3	1	4

	<i>Take initiatives to promote a better understanding of gender equality issues in society (discrimination, domestic violence, socio-cultural attitudes)</i>	8	7	15
	<i>Take initiatives to combat gender stereotypes</i>	10	8	18
	<i>Ensure gender-equal access to resources and infrastructure</i>	5	2	7
In your opinion which strategies should civil society apply to effectively promote influential political participation of women and increase representation in your country?	Strategies for Civil Society to Promote Women's Political Representation	30	30	60
	<i>Encourage women to enter politics and advance their careers</i>	7	8	15
	<i>Work with political parties to support women candidates</i>	5	2	7
	<i>Shape positive public attitudes toward women in politics</i>	8	10	18
	<i>Work with the media to combat gender-based stereotypes</i>	2	1	3
	<i>Work with academia to educate and inform the public about the benefits of women's political participation</i>	5	3	8
	<i>Engaging with executive and legislative powers to support the institutionalization of gender equality in structural and policy frameworks</i>	3	6	9
In your opinion which strategies should women leaders apply to effectively promote influential political participation of women and increase representation in your country?	Strategies for Women Leaders to Promote Women's Political	30	20	60
	<i>Plan their own political careers and learn to promote themselves through political party ranks</i>	5	2	7
	<i>Build partnerships with other women to act collectively on issues of concern</i>	8	5	13

	<i>Engage men as partners and gender advocates to act collectively on issues of concern</i>	9	6	15
	<i>Recruit other women into politics</i>	3	10	13
	<i>Learn to identify gender-based political manipulation</i>	3	4	7
	<i>Engage with executive and legislative powers to support the institutionalization of gender equality in structural and policy frameworks</i>	2	3	5
In your opinion, which strategies should be implemented by key actors to combat social-cultural barriers to influential political participation of women and increase representation in your country?	Strategies for Key Actors to Promote Women's Political Representation	30	30	60
	<i>Adopt policies to promote work-life balance to address women's multiple roles</i>	3	11	14
	<i>Reform education curricula to include gender-sensitive elements</i>	7	4	11
	<i>Conduct public awareness campaigns on the benefits of women's representation and influential political participation</i>	6	8	14
	<i>Work with media to combat gender-based stereotypes</i>	4	2	6
	<i>Create dialogue platforms focused on a religious discourse on women's rights</i>	2	3	5
	<i>Design and implement national accountability mechanisms for women's participation</i>	8	2	10
Can you provide examples of different strategies or initiatives you know of that key actors have taken in your country that have positively impacted on promoting women's	Already Implemented Strategies and Activities by Key Actors to Promote Women's Political Representation	3	1	4
	<i>NGOs attempt to increase the political decision making power of women and suggest new topics to parliament</i>	1	0	1

representation and influential participation?	<i>State Committee on Family, Children, and Women Affairs (SCFCWA) conducted Women's Forum</i>	1	0	1
	<i>Increased attention on attracting women by different political parties</i>	1	0	1
	<i>More female candidates participate in elections for local municipalities</i>	0	1	1

Note: Respondents chose 3 options out of all given alternatives. Therefore, each question has 60 votes in total, except the first question where the number of choices are not restricted for the respondents.

Conclusion

The need for improvements in women's political representation stems from the existing gender inequality issues in the society. In this paper, both descriptive and substantive representation of women have been discussed and their relationship with each other analyzed. Azerbaijan is one of the developing post-Soviet countries which have a mainly Muslim population. Even though the number of female MPs has increased over time in Azerbaijani parliament, the number is not high enough to provide equality in the gender distribution of MPs. The research questions have been developed to understand if female MPs bring more of women's issues to the parliament's agenda, if female MPs are able to affect the political output on the women's issues, and if male MPs are also representing the issues of women.

In order to answer the research questions, a qualitative data analysis has been conducted. The analysis of the Codes and the transcripts of the parliamentary meetings have been done as a document analysis. In the document analysis, the author identified the themes of substantive representation and summarized the findings from the Codes and the meeting transcripts. The thematic analysis method has been employed on interview and survey data analysis.

The analysis of the parliamentary meetings suggest that female MPs discussed more issues of women which have not been addressed by the male MPs. This fact represents that female MPs are more aware of the Azerbaijani women's problems, and therefore, they are more effective in representing these issues in the parliament. Therefore, it can be concluded that female MPs (descriptive representation) bring more issues of women to the political agenda (substantive representation). Consequently, in the case of Azerbaijan, the descriptive political representation of women positively impacts the substantive representation and signals the need for increase in the number of female MPs for better representation of women.

Considering the political output, even though the female MPs are more effective in changing the policy output according to the expectations of Azerbaijani women compared to male MPs, only on a few of the topics they discuss, they can impact the output. Interviewees answers on no observation of policy output to address women's issues clarify the need for more impact on policy output. Therefore, it can be concluded that descriptive representation of women can affect the policy output, but to a small extent.

Finally, male MPs of Azerbaijani parliament are not effective in bringing and discussing the issues of Azerbaijani women as they bring the similar topics over the time and not touch the specific issues of women which are brought up by female MPs. Again, it points to the need for increasing the number of female MPs in Azerbaijani parliament to achieve better substantive political representation of Azerbaijani women. The summary of the findings on research questions are represented in Table 13.

Table 13: Comparative Overview of Results by Types of Source and Research Questions

	Codes	Meetings of National Assembly	Interviews	Survey	Comparative Generalization by Research Question
Research Question 1: Do female members of parliament (MPs) bring more women's issues and interests to the political agenda?	Forced Marriage Underage Marriage Workplace Gender Equality Domestic Violence Problems of Pregnant Women <i>Psychological Violence</i> <i>Equal rights in decision making</i> <i>Equal rights at workplace</i> <i>Childcare</i>	Forced Marriage Underage Marriage Domestic Violence Women's Reproductive Health <i>Equal rights in decision making</i> <i>Childcare</i> <i>Social Stereotypes</i> <i>Political Participation of Women</i> <i>Household Responsibilities</i> <i>Sexual Harassment</i>	Underage Marriage Domestic Violence <i>Equal rights in decision making</i> <i>Childcare</i> <i>Social Stereotypes</i> <i>Participation in Public Social Life</i>	Promoting the better understanding of gender equality issues in the society Impacting policy agenda on women's issues	Female MPs bring more issues of women from different fields that are failed to be represented by male MPs, such as forced marriage, underage marriage, social stereotypes, women's political representation, sexual harassment, and problems of pregnant women.
Research Question 2: Are female members of parliament able to affect the political output (passed laws, legislation and decisions)	Forced Marriage Underage Marriage Workplace Gender Equality Domestic Violence Problems of Pregnant Women <i>Psychological Violence</i> <i>Equal rights in decision making</i> <i>Equal rights at</i>	Domestic Violence Forced Marriage Women's Reproductive Health <i>Unequal Career Development</i> <i>Opportunities</i> <i>Overall Gender Equality</i> <i>Childcare</i>	Female MPs are not able to affect the political output on any of the women's issues as interviewees did not observe any change in	Engage with executive and legislative powers to support the institutionalization of gender equality in structural and	Female MPs are more effective in impacting policy output on women's issues compared to male MPs. They impacted policy output on domestic violence, forced marriage,

closer to Azerbaijani women's expectations?	<i>workplace Childcare</i>		their life on the women's issues.	policy frameworks	underage marriage, and women's reproductive health but the impact is not enough to cover all other issues of women.
Research Question 3: To what degree have women's issues and interests been promoted without female members of parliament?	Forced Marriage Underage Marriage Workplace Gender Equality Domestic Violence Problems of Pregnant Women <i>Psychological Violence Equal rights in decision making Equal rights at workplace Childcare</i>	Overall Gender Equality Violence Against Women Unequal Career Development Opportunities Retirement Age Abortion Unemployment	Unemployment of Women	Women politicians should engage men as partners and gender advocates to act collectively on issues of concern	Male MPs bring general issues of women (domestic violence, unemployment, abortion) without extending the policy agenda on these issues based on the real issues of women. They are also less effective in affecting the policy output.
Generalization by Types of Sources	-Most important gender inequality issues addressed in general (forced marriage, underage marriage, domestic violence) -Specific issues on decision making power, political representation, work-life balance not addressed.	-Female MPs brought up more issues and interests of women (sexual harassment, childcare, domestic violence, and others) -Female MPs affected policy output on women's issues more compared to male MPs	-Many issues discussed by female MPs (underage marriage, domestic violence, unemployment) but still limited to cover most of the issues of Azerbaijani women -No policy output has been observed by interviewees	-Female MPs can impact policy agenda in general and they can impact policy output if they cooperate with male MPs.	-Most well-known themes of women's issues addressed in the Codes and Parliamentary meetings (domestic violence, forced and underage marriage, problems of pregnant women). -Female MPs affected the political agenda and policy output more even though it is felt by the interviewees.

Note: In bold are the key terms which describe themes that were widely present and strongly emphasized, in italics are the key terms which describe themes that were mentioned, but not strongly and persistently emphasized.

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Appendix 1 - Interview Outline

- 1) How long have you been in the current position (for female head of NGO and for female employees working in the public sector)?

How long have you been owning and managing your current business (for female business owners)?

- 2) In your perception, what aspects do you consider to be relevant for women's issues in Azerbaijan? Why?

Probe: Family, work, social life,

Do you think most women would agree with you (if so, why or why not)? Do you think most men would agree with you (if so, why or why not)?

- 3) Of the aforementioned aspects, which ones do you consider receive the most attention from the decision-makers/policy-makers in the last 2-3 years? Why?

How are these aspects reflected in political decision making (how were these aspects incorporated/prioritized by the implementation of new policies, changes to the Codes, acceptance of laws and regulations, and others by the parliament)?

- 4) What are your perceptions about gender inequality in your current social environment, family, and work environment? Do you think that you are not treated equally because of your gender?
- 5) When executing your current job, have you ever experienced any issues that would not be faced by the men executing the same job? If yes, can you please elaborate on the situation?
- 6) When executing your current job, have you ever experienced any benefits that would not be faced by the men executing the same job? If yes, can you please elaborate on the situation?
- 7) Do you feel that the improvements in political decision making may improve the gender inequality related issues in Azerbaijan?

- 8) Are you aware about the women MPs participating in the Azerbaijani parliament, the topics brought up by them during discussions, their policy recommendations, and others?
- 9) Do you feel that the existence of women MPs in Azerbaijani parliament increases the discussion of gender inequality issues? If yes, why?
- 10) If your answer for the last question is yes, does it affect your choice during elections for parliament?
- 11) Have you experienced the implementation of any laws, policies, regulation recently that decreased unequal treatment to women in the social environment, family, or work environment?
Can you please elaborate more on the impact of the implemented rules on your daily life?

Appendix 2 - Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

“The influence of Women’s Political Representation on Political Decision-making: Qualitative Case Study of Azerbaijan”

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study about “The influence of Women’s Political Representation on Political Decision-making: Qualitative Case Study of Azerbaijan”.

Nilufar Majidova, a master student at Tartu University, will conduct the research as part of her dissertation requirements. Your participation will entail an open-ended interview, which will last approximately 1 hour. The results of this research will be published in Nilufar Majidova’s master thesis. Direct quotes from your interview may be used to clarify research conclusions. By signing this consent form, you give the research permission to use statements you make during the interview.

No risks are anticipated with your participation in this study. You can stop the interview at any time. You may also withdraw from this study either during or after your participation without negative consequences. Should you withdraw, your data will be eliminated from the study and destroyed.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The informed consent form will be kept separate from the interview data. The interview data will be labeled with a number code, and your name and other identifying information will be changed in the write-up of the research results to protect your identity.

If you have any questions about this study or your involvement, please ask the researcher before signing this form.

A copy of this informed consent form has been provided to you. Please sign the form, indicating that you have read, understood, and agree to participate in this research.

Name of participant (please print)

Signature Date

Contact Information

Name, address and email of researcher: Nilufar Majidova, Õismäe tee 74-65, Tallinn 13512 Estonia, majidovanilufar0@gmail.com

Name, address and email of supervisor: Alar Kilp, Lossi 36-318, Tartu 51011 Estonia, alar.kilp@ut.ee

Appendix 3 - Survey Questions

Questionnaire on Women’s Political Representation in Azerbaijan

The following survey is conducted for the analysis used solely in the master’s thesis on “The influence of Women’s Political Representation on Political Decision-making: Qualitative Case Study of Azerbaijan”. The purpose of this research is to understand how women from different segments of the Azerbaijani population perceive the strength and perspectives of women’s political representation in political decision-making. The survey is used as a method to collect data on Azerbaijani women’s understanding and expectations of women’s political representation in the country. The expected duration of answering survey questions is 20 minutes. Both in online and in paper surveys, the participants are not asked for any private information. All data from all answers (both to close-ended and open-ended questions) is used in depersonalized and anonymized form. The participation is voluntary, and participants can stop the survey at any time and not submit it.

PART I: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION AND INFLUENTIAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

1. To what extent do the following pose challenges or obstacles for policymakers to increase women’s representation and qualitative participation in your country? <i>(Please tick the most applicable response for each challenge)</i>				
	Significant	Fair	Not a great deal	Not at all
Social-Cultural Barriers				
Cultural norms and stereotypes about women in society				
Religious beliefs/interpretation about women in society				
Discriminatory or sexist working culture in Government/Parliament/Sub-national legislature				
Women’s perception of the lack of safety and respect for women in the political sphere.				
Institutional Barriers				
Absence of gender equality policies/legal regulatory framework (constitution/election law) promoting women’s participation				
Legal discrimination of women				
Lack of social environment enabling influential political participation of civil associations and organized interested groups				
Gender-blind (i.e., ignoring gender differences) institutions (governments, parliaments, political parties) and processes (elections, judicial appointments)				

The unwillingness of political parties to promote women in their positions				
Biased media coverage of women				
Barriers related to Tools, Capacities, and Resources				
Lack of solidarity among women				
Lack of financial resources and skills (such as required on the labour market) among women				
Lack of education and literacy among women				
Lack of tools (manuals and guidelines) on gender equality and women's political participation				
Lack of reliable information/research on gender equality issues, including a lack of sex-disaggregated data				
<i>Please list any additional challenges or obstacles to women's representation and influential political participation in your country:</i>				

2. In your opinion, how can the challenges, that you considered most significant, be overcome?

3. In your opinion what are the benefits of promoting influential political participation of women in your country?
(Please tick all that apply)

- Increases public trust in the political system
- Impacts the policy agenda
- Expands the pool of women willing to run for office
- Contributes to socio-economic development
- Promotes better understanding of gender equality issues in society

	<input type="checkbox"/> Improves the image and credibility of institutions (governments, political parties, parliaments) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please specify</i>):
--	--

<p>4. In your opinion which strategies should the government and/or parliaments and local councils apply to effectively promote influential political participation of women and increase representation in your country? <i>(Please tick <u>the three strategies</u> most useful in your country's context)</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop and adopt temporary special measures <input type="checkbox"/> Establish and ensure the effective functioning of gender equality mechanisms (Committees on Gender Equality, Research bodies, Gender Equality data collection tools) <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure a gender-sensitive working environment and work towards Gender sensitive institutions/policies <input type="checkbox"/> Work to develop and implement gender equality in processes (elections) <input type="checkbox"/> Take initiatives to promote a better understanding of gender equality issues in society (discrimination, domestic violence, socio-cultural attitudes) <input type="checkbox"/> Take initiatives to combat gender stereotypes <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure gender-equal access to resources and infrastructure <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please specify</i>):
--	---

<p>5. In your opinion which strategies should civil society apply to effectively promote influential political participation of women and increase representation in your country? <i>(Please tick <u>the three strategies</u> most useful in your country's context)</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage women to enter politics and advance their careers <input type="checkbox"/> Work with political parties to support women candidates <input type="checkbox"/> Shape positive public attitudes toward women in politics <input type="checkbox"/> Work with the media to combat gender-based stereotypes <input type="checkbox"/> Work with academia to educate and inform the public about the benefits of women's political participation <input type="checkbox"/> Engaging with executive and legislative powers to support the institutionalization of gender equality in structural and policy frameworks
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please specify</i>):
--	---

<p>6. In your opinion which strategies should women leaders apply to effectively promote influential political participation of women and increase representation in your country? <i>(Please tick <u>the three strategies</u> most useful in your country's context)</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan their own political careers and learn to promote themselves through political party ranks <input type="checkbox"/> Build partnerships with other women to act collectively on issues of concern <input type="checkbox"/> Engage men as partners and gender advocates to act collectively on issues of concern <input type="checkbox"/> Recruit other women into politics <input type="checkbox"/> Learn to identify gender-based political manipulation <input type="checkbox"/> Engage with executive and legislative powers to support the institutionalization of gender equality in structural and policy frameworks <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please specify</i>):
--	--

<p>7. In your opinion which strategies should be implemented by key actors to combat social-cultural barriers to influential political participation of women and increase representation in your country? <i>(Please tick <u>the three strategies</u> most useful in your country context)</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt policies to promote work-life balance to address women's multiple roles <input type="checkbox"/> Reform education curricula to include gender-sensitive elements <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct public awareness campaigns on the benefits of women's representation and influential political participation <input type="checkbox"/> Work with media to combat gender-based stereotypes <input type="checkbox"/> Create dialogue platforms focused on a religious discourse on women's rights <input type="checkbox"/> Design and implement national accountability mechanisms for women's participation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please specify</i>):
--	--

8. Can you provide examples of different strategies or initiatives you know of that key actors have taken in your country that have positively impacted on promoting women's representation and influential participation?

Please cite any laws initiated/passed/amended; mechanisms established, any other activity/initiative

<input type="checkbox"/> By the government	
<input type="checkbox"/> By Parliament	
<input type="checkbox"/> By networks and associations civil society	
<input type="checkbox"/> By political parties	
<input type="checkbox"/> By political leaders (Women and Men)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	

9. How informed you are about the actions/topics/issues brought by women MPs in the Azerbaijani parliament?

- Informed
- Partly informed
- Not informed at all

10. How satisfied you are with representation of the gender related in the daily political arena?

- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Not satisfied

11. Do you think that there are enough women representatives in Azerbaijani parliament?

- Yes
- No

12. What is your age?

13. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

14. Please, choose the statement that is correct for you (choose more than one if more than one statement is correct for you):

- I am living in shelters.
- I am a university student studying law, politics, or other related academic field
- I am working at the Azerbaijani State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs
- Other

Thank you for your time and considered responses!

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