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Georgian immigrant women in Turkey: Ankara case†

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Abstract

This study addresses post-socialist Georgian immigrant women's lives and experiences as immigrants in Turkey. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many post-Soviet countries had serious threats in terms of economic development and political stability. These countries had to face with high unemployment and privatization because of these problems and also Georgia has been influenced due to these problems. In this way, especially, women of Georgia who try to find better ways for their economic conditions had to leave their homes, families and become a hero for their countries. Georgian female migrants have endured at least two enormous politico-economic changes in their lives: first, the transition from Soviet Georgia to a post-socialist, free market economy; second, the transition from Georgia to Turkey. Georgian women started to migrate since the 1990s to Turkey and Turkey has been a popular destination country for Georgian immigrant women. The reasons are the geographical closeness and flexible visa regime between Georgia and Turkey. The aim of this study is to listen to the personal experiences of immigrant women themselves, understand their working conditions and social life experiences in Turkey.

Key words: Migration, Georgian women, Georgia, Turkey

Türkiye'deki Gürcü göçmen kadınlar: Ankara örneği

Öz

Bu çalışma Türkiye'deki post-sosyalist Gürcü kadınların yaşamlarını ve göçmenlik deneyimlerini ele almaktadır. Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasından sonra birçok Sovyet sonrası ülke ekonomik kalkınma ve siyasi istikrar açısından ciddi tehditlerle karşı karşıya kaldı. Bu sorunlar nedeniyle bu ülkeler yüksek işsizlik ve özelleştirme ile yüzleşmek zorunda kalmış ve Gürcistan da bu sorunlardan etkilenmiştir. Böylece ekonomik durumlarına daha iyi çözümler bulmaya çalışan Gürcü kadınlar evlerini, ailelerini terk etmek zorunda kalıp ülkelerinin asıl kahramanları olmak zorunda kaldılar. Gürcü kadınlar hayatlarında en az iki büyük politik ve ekonomik değişikliğe göğüs gerdiler. Bunlardan birincisi, Sovyet Gürcistan'dan post-sosyalist serbest piyasa ekonomisine geçiş; ikincisi ise Gürcistan'dan Türkiye'ye geçiş. 1990'lı yıllarından itibaren Gürcü kadınlar Türkiye'ye göç etmeye başlamış ve Türkiye, Gürcü göçmen kadınlar için popüler bir varış ülkesi haline gelmiştir. Bunun nedeni Gürcistan ile Türkiye arasındaki coğrafi yakınlık ve esnek vize rejimidir. Bu çalışmanın amacı göçmen kadınların kişisel deneyimlerini dinlemek ve Türkiye'deki çalışma koşulları ve sosyal yaşam deneyimlerini anlamaktır.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Göç, Gürcü kadınlar, Gürcistan, Türkiye*

Introduction

To migrate internationally is to move from one country to another, temporarily or permanently. There are many reasons for migration including economic (subsistence, better employment and career opportunities) and political (war or internal conflicts), family reunification, and others. This study focuses on the recent migration of Georgian women to Turkey, and what kind of migration experiences they have. In the early 1990s, after independence from the Soviet Union, Georgia encountered economic and political crises; for many Georgians, particularly women, migration became a survival strategy. While earlier migration flows from Georgia were mostly Russia, Greece, the United States, Italy, and Germany, Turkey has also become an important destination, especially for Georgian women. In order to understand the increasing number of women migrants, I first trace the recent history of Georgia as well as its migration dynamics in the past few decades. Second, migration history of Turkey and how its linked Georgia. Therefore, this study has tried to receive the answers on following questions: why the women decided to migrate, why they chose Turkey as their destination country, what kind of work, family and social experiences they have in Turkey, what challenges they encountered when they came to Turkey and what human, social and economic resources they rely

† This article is derived from the master's thesis titled "Gender Norms and Post-Socialist Georgian Women's Experiences as Immigrants in Turkey", which was completed in 2017 at the University of Cincinnati, Department of Anthropology. The original thesis additionally included themes of how gender roles changed in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. This article focuses only on the immigration experiences of Georgian women.

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upon and also how these women became breadwinners and decision-makers as a result of their immigration experiences.

Background to the migration of Georgians to Turkey

In 1921, Georgia was forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union; the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic remained so until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Europa World Yearbook, 2004). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Georgian nation decided by referendum to declare independence on April 9, 1991 and gained its sovereignty, becoming the independent Republic of Georgia (Lohm, 2006, p. 9; Putkaradze, 2008, p. 174). In the early 1990s, the post-socialist transition period in Georgia was marked by territorial conflicts and armed civil confrontation. In addition, as with all post-Soviet countries' changing economic systems, in the first years of the transition to a market economy, Georgia faced corruption, inflation, unemployment and poverty (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012, p. 6). Both economic and political instability intensified migration abroad as a key strategy for Georgians (Hofmann & Buckley, 2012, p. 77).

Badurashvili and Nadareishvili (2012) classify international migration from Georgia as occurring in three waves, each marked by the peculiarities of political and socio-economic developments in Georgia in the specific time periods: collapse and conflict, corresponding to the period of 1990-1995; economic struggle, from 1996 to 2004; and hope and economic rebuilding, after 2004. In Georgia, although there are ambiguities in official statistics, all evidence suggests that after 1989, the country experienced a drop in industrial output, real income, consumption, capital investment, and virtually every other economic indicator. Between 1990 and 1994, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell by 72% (European Commission, 2011). As the result of economic and political stabilization, a phase of slow economic development began in Georgia in 1994, but this growth was neither strong nor sustained for the next decade. During this period, many people moved to low-productivity jobs in the agricultural, rural, and informal sectors. Also, since corruption was widespread, and the selective reform efforts that were initiated were not being sustained, the institutions of governance became increasingly weak. Finally, the government has been applying radical liberal reforms since 2004 and this is an unparalleled economic development in the recent history of Georgia (European Commission, 2011, p. 7). By 2004, there was a marked reduction in corruption, an improved tax collection system, and a decline in tax rates that enabled the government to increase the state budget six times its previous amount (European Commission, 2011).

Despite these economic gains, reigniting conflict between Georgia and breakaway regions also marks the post 2004 period. On August 26, 2008, after nearly a month of conflict that involved Russian troops, Georgia lost the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; Russia recognized both as independent states. Today, Russia and a small number of other countries continue to recognize them as independent states, while Georgia and the majority of the world designate them as the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and a part of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast, respectively (Antonenko, 2008; Cheterian, 2009).

The three periods of economic and political shocks displaced a majority of the Georgian population, both internally and internationally. Although many eventually returned to their place of birth, today, approximately 27.4% of Georgians still live elsewhere (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012, p. 7). Between 1989 and 2002, the country lost almost 20% of its population to international migration (Chindea *et al.*, 2008, p. 11). While many of these people were ethnic Russians who returned to Russia, those who have left come from all ethnic, geographic and socioeconomic sectors of Georgian society. According to another estimate, there are at least one million Georgians working abroad (out of a total population of 4.6 million) (Chindea *et al.*, 2008). While in 2005 41.3% of Georgia's migrants were women, that percentage increased to 55.5% by 2013 (Shinjiashvilli, 2005; Migration Policy Center, 2013). The majority of migrants from Georgia today are of productive age: 83.3% are 15-64 years old, 10.1% are under 15 years old, and 6.5% are over the age of 65 (Migration Policy Center, 2013).

International migration flows from Georgia in the 1990s were mainly directed towards seven countries: the Russian Federation (64.1%), Greece (16.2%), Germany (4.3%), the United States (3.8%), the Ukraine (1.8%), Israel (1.7%), and Turkey (1.3%) (Shinjiashvili, 2005). According to 2014 Georgian General Population Census the largest number of immigrants live in the Russian Federation (21.7%), Greece (15.0%) and Turkey (11.2%) (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2016). Russia remains the largest country of international residence for Georgian citizens because of the exodus to Russia in the 1990s. Today, however, Russia is becoming less attractive for Georgians (Chindea *et al.*, 2008, p. 11; Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012, p. 3; Hofmann & Buckley, 2012).

The majority of immigrants from the Republic of Georgia have gone to the Russian Federation because of these historical ties, as well as geographical and cultural proximity. However, increasing political hostilities and the irregular character of migration flows between

Georgia and Russia caused the emergence of barriers to Georgian migration. While the Russian government established and benefitted from a visa-free movement regime with most of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, a regional organization of former Soviet republics, a visa requirement was introduced for Georgian nationals by the Russian government in 2000. After that, many Georgians (mostly men) who were living in Russia were deported from the country on the grounds of violating immigration law, and increasingly reported harassment during a diplomatic dispute in 2006 (Badurashvili, 2004; Chindea *et al.*, 2008; Hofmann & Buckley, 2012, 2013). Visa issuance resumed in 2007, but because of armed conflict between Russia and Georgia, it stopped again in 2008 (Chindea *et al.*, 2008).

Turkey has historically been a country of emigration due to its unique location, but beginning in the early 1980s, it has become a country of immigration and transit, attracting mainly irregular migrants to the European Union from Asian countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan and also from former Soviet countries including Georgia. More than 1.6 million people immigrated to Turkey mostly from the Balkan countries between 1923 and 1997. During the Cold War, people fled from communist states in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to Turkey. In the late 1980s, asylum seekers began to arrive from Iran and Iraq. Between 1988 and 1991, almost half a million mostly Kurdish refugees from Iraq fled to Turkey as well as massive flows of Albanians, Bosnian Muslims, Pomaks, and Turks between 1989 and 1999 (Kirisci, 2007). Researchers distinguish four common types of foreign nationals entering Turkey today: transit migrants, who enter the country without the intent of staying; illegal labor migrants, who want to work in Turkey but do not have the proper documentation; asylum-seekers and refugees, who enter Turkey escaping war; and regular migrants, who enter the country with the appropriate visa. The majority of people entering Turkey are those in transit from Asia, Africa and the Middle East and come to Turkey with the intention of moving to a third country in the West (Içduygu, 2000, 2006).

Georgians mostly enter Turkey legally but remain as irregular migrants, crucial roles aided by the shared border and geographic proximity of both countries. The Sarp Land Border Gate which links Turkey and Georgia, has become Turkey's gateway to the East in recent years. This Gate was created as part of the 1921 Kars Treaty that defined the borders between Turkey and three Soviet republics that now constitute the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The gate was closed during the Cold War and reopened in 1988; crossings restarted in 1989 (Toktaş & Çelik, 2016).

When the Sarp Border Gate was opened in 1989, Turkey issued 1-month tourist visas for Georgian citizens (Ulukan & Ulukan, 2012 as cited in Kalça & Ari, 2016, p. 16). In 2006, as a result of political and economic negotiations Turkey and Georgia canceled the visa requirements for visitors from each country all together, further facilitating the entry of Georgians into Turkey; all passport holders were exempted from visa for their travels up to 90 days (Toktaş & Çelik, 2016, p. 6; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). The change in visa requirement especially benefited Georgian women, who became motivated to move to Turkey. In addition, in 2011 it became possible for Georgian and Turkish nationals to cross their shared border with a national identification card (ID) instead of passports, further facilitating travel between both countries.

In Turkey, Georgians could not stay more than 90 days in any 180-day period. However, in 2015, the Georgian government made an amendment allowing Turks to stay in Georgia for up to a year without any visa requirement (Toktaş & Çelik, 2016, p. 6). Today, traveling from Turkey to Georgia by crossing the border with an ID card and without a visa costs 50 TL. In this way, Turkey's proximity to Georgia as the main reason Georgian women migrated to that country. In particular, they liked that it would enable them to visit Georgia frequently and to save more money by having low traveling costs. They also recognized that the visa regime helps them travel easily between both countries, and they found the cost of living in Turkey to be convenient.

Research design and methods

I designed the project as a case study. Case studies are common in many fields including psychology, sociology, anthropology, social work and even business. This design helps researchers to understand and gather in-depth information on real-life phenomena. In a case study design the researcher uses single or multiple cases to examine a phenomenon in-depth and to answer how and why questions which are more explanatory (Yin, 2009). I conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews to collect my data. Semi-structured interviewing is flexible and can be extended and changed during the interview and can be improved during the research process by better tailoring them to the population of interest (Schensul *et al.*, 1999; Bernard, 2006).

Most of the women I interviewed are domestic workers. Most immigrant domestic workers in Turkey are women from different post-Soviet countries including Moldova, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (Dinçer, 2014), of which the latter two share a closely related culture, language and religion with Turkish people. Georgian women differ from other domestic workers in that they

come from countries with a drastically different language and religion than Turkey, despite their geographic proximity. However, much like migrants from those top-sending republics, Georgian women lived through drastic changes in the political and economic structures under which they resided, beginning with a childhood and sometimes adulthood in the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, followed by independence and the creation of the Republic of Georgia, and finally, the move to the Republic of Turkey as migrants. Using the community of Georgian women in Turkey as the case, I seek to understand how migration was constructed and experienced by them while living in Turkey.

I conducted my study with 23 adult women (18 years or older) who were born in the Republic of Georgia and who during my period of fieldwork lived in Turkey. I employed snowball sampling to locate them. Snowball sampling method involves relying on peer referral of research subjects. To locate the women, I first made contact with an acquaintance whose domestic employee is Georgian. He had only positive things to say about her but mentioned that she no longer worked for his family. Other similar attempts to contact Turkish individuals with Georgian house workers lead nowhere. This sort of obstacle in gaining access and entrance to the population of interest is a common obstacle in fieldwork. Eventually, I connected with a Turkish student who personally knew a Georgian student. This meeting was fruitful because through her, I was referred to all the Georgian women who eventually became a part of my study. It is important to note that the first woman I interviewed confessed that she initially evaluated me to see if she could trust me with a personal interview.

My questions first addressed the life experience of the women in Turkey followed questions about by why the women decided to migrate, why they chose Turkey as their destination country, what kind of work, family, and social experiences they have in Turkey, what challenges they encountered when they came to Turkey and what human, social and economic resources they rely upon.

Results

General information about Georgian immigrant women

I conducted interviews with 23 Georgian women between the ages of 30 and 56 who live in Ankara, the Turkish capital. Most are domestic workers, but one is a student, one is unemployed, and one is a certified translator, which means she can work for the Turkish government. The rest have similar domestic and care jobs: childcare, patient care, elder care, housework and cooking. While 21 of them have a work permit, two of them are working without it.

On average, the women are highly educated. Twenty graduated from university, two of them graduated from high school, and one of women has some college experience. While most of women's last job in Georgia was related to their major, some of the women's jobs were not. Those who studied education and nursing, two of the common majors among them, worked as various types of teachers and nurses. A telecommunications major, however, worked as a masseuse.

All of the women stated that their migration to Turkey was their first international migration experience. Nevertheless, for some of them it was their second time migrating to Turkey. For instance, one of them mentioned that she came to Turkey six years earlier to attend language school and during this period she also worked as secretary for a Turkish bus company that operates in both Turkey and Georgia. Another woman said that she was working as a saleswoman at Kemalpaşa, a town in Turkey near the Georgian border, and she traveled back and forth between both countries every day. Another lived in Turkey three years earlier, returned to Georgia, and after a year returned to Turkey. Finally, the currently unemployed woman worked as a child caretaker five years earlier in Turkey.

The migration decision and the choice of Turkey

All of the women mentioned the difficult economic circumstances and unemployment in Georgia as their main reason for migrating to another country. In addition, most of them mentioned that their children are currently enrolled in universities and they needed money for this, as education is very important for them. Lili, age 41, mentioned:

> One of the most important reasons is the children. First time my children were in Georgia. They are studying, which is good. I have a house in Georgia, I have everything (tools) but everything is broken time to time and you want to buy new goods, you want to give a good life to children so I came here.

Although the main incentive is to support their family and their children's education the women frequently mentioned feeling sad for leaving them. Nana, age 50, stated:

> My children were very young when I came here. I came here in 2008 and at this time my son was twelve years old. I left him and it was so hard. I felt too bad, but what can I do, I had to work.

In addition, they often highlighted their husbands' unemployment and their newfound responsibility as

women to find work, even if overseas. Lala, age 44, reflects this:

> I was married and my husband was working in a factory, but the crisis happened the owners sold their factories. After the factory was sold, it has not opened again. My husband did not want to send me to Turkey, but I had to come.

All of the women cited Turkey's proximity to Georgia as the main reason they migrated to that country. In particular, they liked that it would enable them to visit Georgia frequently and to save more money by having low traveling costs. They also recognized that the visa regime helps them travel easily between both countries, and they found the cost of living in Turkey to be convenient. For example, Tamara, age 30, mentioned:

> Turkey is our neighbor, it is close by and I do not want to be too far away from my family as I miss my mother too much. Second, Turkey is an economically strong country and it is not in a war.

Nani, age 41, acknowledged that Georgian women "go everywhere such as Germany, Spain, Italy, America, they went everywhere" but claimed that she chose Turkey because "It is close and there is no visa requirement. If I went to America, I could not go to Georgia for 5 to 10 years, but from Turkey I can visit my country every 3-4 months."

Similarly, Nana, age 50, states:

> [Why I came to Turkey] because if you go another country, you cannot come whenever you want. If I went another country, I could not go to see my family very often. Of course, Turkey is near (close). For example, if I take a bus this evening, I will be there tomorrow morning. In other words, I will be in Georgia after 16 hours. Before I was going to Georgia every three months, I worked a few years like that. After that, I got visa and maybe I am the first person who had visa, so I could come easily to Turkey. Hence, I choose Turkey to come and it was better for me as I can go to Georgia to see my children.

Family opinion

The global increase in the international migration of women forms part of the broader "feminization of survival" (Pettman, 1998; Sassen, 2000) whereby women have become increasingly responsible for the economic survival of their households. Migrating across international borders is one strategy in that survival. Therefore, Georgian women who migrate had to take more responsible for themselves and their families. As other immigrant women Georgian women also did not want to leave their families. Even if all families knew and experiences life conditions were bad, most of the women said that their family did not want them to leave but they felt they had no other option. So they had to leave their country and the families and they have become the primary breadwinners and decision-makers in their families. They even did not know what they will encounter and all of them said the feeling awful for them as they did not want to leave their children, family and country. Nani, 41 recalled:

> My family did not want me to go. I even fought with them. When my children wanted something and we could not afford it, they had to accept that it was best for everyone if I came to work abroad.

Tiko, age 50, recalled that period as being very emotional:

> Nobody could say to the women "do not go" since everybody knew we had to go. Yes of course it is hard, we were all crying while we were leaving. Even our husbands and children were also crying, but what could we do? I left my daughter, who is 23 years old, so of course she cries.

On the other hand, Nana, age 50, states that "My husband and I decided together (for coming here)." Also, Kristina, age 51 mentioned that "My husband and I decided together. Of course, we did not decide in one day, but we did not find another way."

Entering the country and settlement

Given that Turkey and Georgia are neighboring countries, it is no surprise that all of the women migrated by bus. Most traveled a friend, some came using the services of a job-placement agency, and a few already had relatives in Turkey. Two of the women went to Turkey with no help and without knowing anyone in the country, and one came after being accepted into a university. Many of them spoke of the fear they felt on the way to Turkey, in part based on negative ideas they had about the country's primary religion (Islam) and concerns about their lack of knowledge of the

language. Liona, age 56, state that "I came via agency. I was afraid because of history. Our history is not good with Turkey, so I did not know how people are here (they are good or bad)." Also, Lola, age 50, mentioned:

> I came here by bus [I have been here for 9 years]. The very first time I was afraid to come here, as we are Christian country and here is a Muslim country. It is not a secret so I will tell you. In Communism time people said that Muslims very bad and aggressive people for the Christian people so in my mind Muslims were like that. However, now I am not thinking like that and I like these people. I came first time to Ankara and I have been here for 9 years, my friends met me to a woman who was coming here so I came with her.

Some of the women said that finding a job was hard because of their Turkish language knowledge, and their relatively young age, which employers perceived as a lack of experience in jobs that involved elder care or childcare. For some, agencies placed them in jobs, and other relied on friends to recommend them for new positions. All of them were agreed that finding a job in Turkey is easier for women than men. Eliso, age 51, recounted her employment history in Turkey:

> My first job was childcare. I worked but my employer didn't have money, so she did not pay me. I worked there for 4 months for free. After that for 5-6 months I worked caring for patients, and now I have been at the same house for 3 years and I work as a domestic worker, childcare mostly. Finding a job is easier for women. There are no good jobs for men, and even there are, the salaries are so low.

Work definition, everyday routine and living conditions

The women in my study worked in childcare, patient care, elder care, housework and cooking. In reality, all admitted to doing a least some of the housework in the employer's home. Most of them live with their employers and all of them claimed to like their employer and said they did not have any problem with them, though some admitted to having Georgian friends who were in less happy work situations. Many of the women thought of themselves as part of the employer's family. Lala, age 50, recounted her behavior in past jobs:

> When I was a childcare worker, I was taking care of a little girl who was 18 months old. I had a separate room. If I heard her voice at night, I would run to see if she was ok. Her mother would tell me 'do not do that as you already have been working all day' but I really loved her so I felt like she is my daughter. Afterwards, I took care of an old woman and she was like a mother for me and we still communicate. I am like a relative to them. You know this may be a strange thing for you since European countries have rules about that. You have work hours in these rules and if you finish your work time, you can take a rest in your room. However, it is different here. For example, yes ok you are a worker at home, but also you are a family member here so you can work at night if you want and you do not say that it is not my working time. It is because of love. If you act like a cold person, you cannot work here. Yes, other countries are like that, but here sincerity is so important as you are a family member.

Eliso, age 51, stated that she liked her employers because unlike other Turkish ones, they did not force to wear a scarf or tell her to keep her legs closed when sitting. She described her workday as long but worth it because of the love she feels for the children she cares for:

> I always wake up at 6 am and sleep at 12 am sometimes at 1 am if we have guests. I feel so tired, but I love the kids who I care of. I know what I will do every day and week. I iron, clean, I prepare breakfast separately for everybody, the children and parents. When the youngest child sleeps, I do most of the cleaning. I do not like sitting. I feel tired but I love the kids.

Ele's sentiment was echoed by many of the women, including Keti, age 42, who mentioned that her employers see her as part of the family and gave her a TV, a computer, and internet access in her room,

though she admitted:

> I wake up 7.30 am. I prepare breakfast for everybody separately, as people wake up at different times, and I serve everyone in their room. After that I do routine housework until 9.00 pm but sometimes if they have guest I work until 10.00 pm.

It remains to be seen whether employers truly consider the women as "part of the family" as they claim to be. It is important to note that the women are aware of their grueling work schedule, but also justified it by saying that as a woman, they would be doing the exact same work and long hours in Georgia, with their families, but that they would not be paid for it. Irine, age, 46 said that "If I was in Georgia, I would do the same things at my home for free; at least I earn money here", and Tiko, age 50, claimed that "I work 24 hours! But I am so happy here, at least I earn money."

Earning money and sending remittance

Almost all of the Georgian immigrant women said that if they were in Georgia, they could have the same "job" as a woman, mother or wife (as an unpaid job). In other words, they explained that if they were in their country, they would have already done the same work without money in their house. Most of the women earn between 500 dollars to 700 dollars per month. Except for one, all of the women sent their salary to their family in Georgia. All of them have different reasons for sending the money, but mainly to pay for their children's college education and their family's rent. They have one day off, usually Sunday unless the employer prefers that it be another day, and on their day off they generally meet with their friends for coffee, to hang out, and to go shopping with them. Nana, age 50, stated:

> I have one day off and in this day I do shopping if I go out Sunday there are friends. I meet them. My day-off is not stabile so it depends on that. Most of work I do not use day off on Sunday sometimes it happens, if I go out except Sunday I visit my friends who are working in a restaurant. When we meet, we talk whatever we want.

Similarly, Eliso, age 51, mentioned:

> I have one day-off, but it changes. It depends on my employers. They sometimes go to conference to another countries so I do not use my day off in a specific day, but it is in general on Sunday. Also, if I need anything not only me but also they provide for me. I can go out for 1 hour and I can buy whatever I need. When I go out I do not see my friend too often.

Since the mothers have left the country to work abroad, the childcare is mostly provided by other female members of the household in the home country. Thus, while in the destination country domestic duties pass to the migrant women, in the home country these duties pass to the other female members of the family.

When the women left Georgia to work abroad, generally the parents or parents-in-law of the majority of them took over the care of their children. Generally, the children's grandmother is the one who cares for them. Such is the case of the children of Nani, age 41: "My children can take care of themselves, but still my mother-in-law helps a lot. She cooks and does laundry for them. We live together with parents-in-law in my country." A few of the women said their husbands take care of the children, and others mentioned their children were old enough to care for themselves.

On the other hand, one of the interviewees mentioned that she has hired a paid worker as a nanny of childcare services. She said "It is a funny world that while I was taking care of someone's children, someone also take care of my children. They pay me and I pay someone for the same job."

Conclusions

After Georgia became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991, a period of political and economic instability followed. Price liberalization and privatization led to a rapid decline in industrial output, and a drop in real incomes. Besides independence from the Soviet Union and the ensuing economic crisis, women signaled another state policy as shaping the gendered migration flow from Georgia: the 2006 visa liberalization agreement between Turkey and Georgia. This policy removed most barriers to the movement of people between both states, and expedited the increase in women's migration, who might have greater security concerns than men to undertaking clandestine migration in a context of tighter visa restrictions. Turkey has become a destination country especially for the women of the post-Soviet countries, and Georgia as a post-Soviet country is one of those countries, which has a high rate of emigration to Turkey especially in the last two decades. Women's main motivations to migrate are highly related to the economic difficulties in Georgia and choosing Turkey as a destination country

mostly stems from the geographical proximity and visa- free regime between Turkey and Georgia. Being an international migrant woman affects women's work and life experiences deeply in both sending and receiving societies; thus, it makes them more vulnerable to exploitation. On the other hand, being the only or the main working member of their families and the experiences they have got through migration locate the migrant women as active decision-makers both in their family and in their own life. In Turkey, women describe their lives as being job-centered and working more than full time, yet they claim to have good relationships with their employers and to be generally happy. The women in my study are all highly educated, a legacy of their Soviet state. In this way, they are not representative of the majority of immigrant domestic workers around the world, and their experiences are likely shaped in a positive manner by this educational level.

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