# REASONS, BARRIERS, AND CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE IN FEMALE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

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**Abstract**

Gender-based violence is one of the most widespread forms of human rights violation. It often occurs in societies, including Georgia, where women have less social and economic influence. Despite the steps taken over the past decade to combat gender-based violence, femicide, as the most severe form of gender violence, remains alarming. Analysis of femicide cases shows that women are often murdered by their husbands, partners, or former partners, which indicates that ending violent relationships (divorce) poses increased risks for women. The aim of the study is to analyze socio-cultural and structural factors that (1) influence the decision of female victims of violence to divorce, (2) create barriers in the process of divorce, and (3) increase the risk of violence after relationship termination. The study involved 12 in-depth interviews with female victims of violence and 4 interviews with the policy paper developers.

The results showed that most women identify themselves as victims of violence belatedly, which is linked to socio-cultural norms and stigma. Women's silence and fear of anticipated danger hinder help-seeking; institutional barriers and societal attitudes further complicate the situation. After divorce, women often remain isolated and under increased threat from former partners.

The findings suggest that preventing gender-based violence requires a comprehensive approach that considers socio-cultural, legal, and psychological factors.

**Keywords:** *gender-based violence, partner violence, barriers to divorce*

## Introduction

Gender-based violence represents one of the most widespread forms of human rights violations, which knows no national, economic, religious, geographical, or cultural boundaries. Despite this, gender-based violence is more prevalent in societies where women have less social and economic influence (Benson & Fox, 2002; Grigaitė et al., 2019). Georgia is considered one of those countries. According to annual data from the Global Economic Forum, Georgia ranks 76th among 146 countries worldwide in terms of gender equality, which is 21 positions below the previous year's indicator (World Economic Forum, 2023). Despite significant efforts over the past decades to combat gender-based violence, the situation regarding the most severe form of gender-based violence, femicide, is really

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alarming. Femicide refers to the murder of women because of their gender and is a lethal outcome of various forms of gender-based violence (Corradi et al., 2016). The motives behind these murders can vary and are often rooted in stereotypical gender roles in society, discrimination against women, unequal distribution of power between men and women, etc. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2021).

Despite positive changes and the recent steps taken in Georgia to combat violence against women and domestic violence, the prevention of gender-motivated femicide and the effective enforcement of justice and law enforcement still remains a challenge (Office of the Public Defender of Georgia, 2020). According to statistics published by the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, between 2014 and 2022, 186 women were murdered, of which 92 murders were committed with domestic motives, and 94 murders for other reasons. During the same period, 129 attempts to murder women were recorded, including 79 attempts with domestic motives and 50 attempts for other reasons (Government of Georgia Administration, 2022). According to the statistics, both femicide and attempted femicide are most often committed by husbands, partners, or former partners. The most frequently cited motives for committing femicide and attempted femicide are "revenge" and "jealousy" (Femicide Monitoring Report 2020).

In the report presented by the Public Defender of Georgia (Femicide Monitoring Report 2020), it is noteworthy that the cases of femicide are often related to former partners or spouses. This indicates that the end of violent relationships may not only fail to serve as a solution for women, but could also increase their risk. Given Georgia's realities, it is important not only to examine the socio-cultural and psychological factors that contribute to the increase of gender-based violence, but also to identify the factors that compel women to remain in abusive relationships due to the heightened danger associated with their ending.

Lethal forms of gender-based violence are rarely isolated incidents and are almost always preceded by less severe forms of violence or socially accepted forms of abuse (Marcuello-Servós et al., 2016; Zara & Gino, 2018). Therefore, any form of violence is a potential risk factor for more severe violence in the future, which can even result in a lethal outcome.

According to the national survey conducted in 2022 in Georgia, 26.5% of women who have ever been in a partner relationship have experienced violence from their partner at some point in their lives (at least one of the four forms of violence: physical, sexual, economic or psychological) (Statistical Office of Georgia, United Nations Women, 2022). For many women who are victims of violence, psychological violence is often the earliest form of abuse in partner relationships and includes controlling behaviors by their spouses/partners (Abramsky et al., 2011; González & Rodríguez-Planas, 2020). Partner violence, especially psychological violence, is closely linked to controlling behaviors such as constant jealousy and accusations of infidelity, restricting relationship with friends and family members, and monitoring communication with other people (WHO, 2021). According to the national survey conducted in Georgia, almost every fifth woman (18.8%) who has ever

been in a partner relationship has experienced at least one controlling behavior from her partner during her lifetime (Statistical Office of Georgia, United Nations Women, 2022).

The analysis of gender-based violence cases shows that ending an abusive partner relationship is associated with increased risks for women (Alhalal et al., 2012; Campo et al., 2020; Humphreys & Thiara, 2003). Although women often seek separation in hopes of restoring their autonomy and well-being, research indicates that life after separation is often characterized by continued violence, instability, and systemic setbacks (Ellis, 1990; DeKeseredy et al., 2018).

Knowledge about women victims' experiences after separation from spouse or partner remains quite limited. This points to deficiency in scientific knowledge observed in this area (Morgado, 2019).

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by identifying the factors that facilitate violence after gender-based separation, analyze the socio-cultural and structural factors that, on the one hand, influence women's decisions to divorce from violent relationships, and, on the other hand, create barriers to this process and increase the risk of subsequent violence.

## Is divorce the end of gender violence? Post-divorce violence, dynamics and outcomes

Breaking up with an abusive partner is often perceived as a significant step towards women's freedom, safety, and autonomy. However, numerous empirical studies show that for women, this decisive decision for separation may not lead to safety; instead, it can become the starting point for increased and prolonged violence (Bruton & Tyson, 2018; DeKeseredy et al., 2018; Ignjatović, 2019; Logan & Walker, 2004; Walker et al., 2004).

Post-separation period is a continuation of past violence in a modified form, including psychological coercion, legal manipulations, and economic control (Brownridge et al., 2008; Hardesty & Chung, 2006; Spearman et al., 2022).

Empirical studies indicate that violence does not cease after separation and even intensifies in many cases (Toews & Bermea, 2017; Spearman et al., 2022). The data suggest that over a third of women experience violence within 6–12 months after separation, which challenges the notion that leaving an abusive relationship automatically ends violence (Humphreys & Thiara, 2003). Specifically, women who have separated from their partners reported a sevenfold higher rate of violence than married women (Brownridge et al., 2008).

Predictors of post-separation violence include age, ethnicity, and past experience of violence, which increase the risk of post-divorce violence. However, the cases of violence can be also observed with women who did not experience violence from their partner during the marriage (Spiwak & Brownridge, 2005).

Researchers attempt to identify the factors that may motivate post-separation violence. It has been found that continued violence after separation is often driven by the perpetrator's desire to maintain control. Such violence frequently takes on a revengeful

character, especially when the separation is initiated by woman, and the abuser perceives a threat to his power (Ignjatović, 2019).

Post-separation violence is not limited to physical abuse: perpetrators continue to use economic leverage, including unpaid alimony, financial coercion, and employment sabotage (Toews & Bermea, 2017). These economic tools create difficulties in achieving stable housing. Empirical data show that 38% of women remained homeless after separation (Baker et al., 2003). Such circumstances are often accompanied by a loss of safety, further complicating social reintegration.

Separation is associated with significant psychological distress: especially when initiated by women, separation greatly increases the risk of fatal violence, trauma, and psychological harm (Logan & Walker, 2004). As a result, after separation women often experience acute psychological stress, anxiety, and depression, which are consequences not only of past violence but also of the systemic challenges encountered during their attempts to ensure their safety.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety symptoms can cause not only psychological discomfort but also become risk factors for recurrent violence.

Studies show that the experience of women who are the victims of violence does not often fit traditional PTSD framework, since trauma does not end with the conclusion of violent relationships (Hulley et al., 2023). In such cases, there is the evidence of continuous traumatic stress (CTS), which results from living under constant threat. It is important to understand that answering the question "Why didn't she leave if she was being abused?" should not only focus on victim's weakness, but also consider the functional role of fear in the decision-making process as a defense strategy (Bruton & Tyson, 2018). Despite the existence of legal and institutional mechanisms designed to protect women, these often fail to provide adequate response. Legal regulation of child contact, for example, is frequently exploited by abusers to restore control (Humphreys & Thiara, 2003; Hardesty & Chung, 2006). Moreover, perpetrators use "legal violence" against women during court proceeding: making groundless complaints, prolonging cases, and manipulating custody of children as a leverage (Douglas, 2021). These systemic setbacks lend legitimacy to the abusers' actions and further complicate the protection of women and children.

It is also crucial to understand the strategies women employ to achieve independence after ending abusive relationship. Although many turn to shelters and specialized services, the effectiveness of such strategies depends on the severity of violence, the relationship with the abuser, and cultural context (Goodkind et al., 2004). After ending abusive relationship, women face difficulties in finding and maintaining new safe housing due to permanent threat, constant surveillance, and legal hurdles. When children are involved, women need not only to survive but also to protect their children under conditions where violence does not end with the ending of relationship (Spearman et al., 2022). Finally, research confirms that post-separation violence is not merely a residual effect of the past abuse but a new phase of violence that differs in form but not in essence. Perpetrators' actions continue to serve the same purpose – maintaining power and control. Therefore, it is crucially

important to understand the real situation of women and develop policies based on their experiences; otherwise, effective prevention of violence cannot be achieved. Additional research is needed to support policies and programs that ensure women's safety after ending abusive relationship.

## Purpose and Method

The purpose of the given research is to analyze socio-cultural and structural factors which (1) influence the decision to divorce among the women who are violence victims; (2) create barriers to the divorce process, and (3) increase the risk of violence after the termination of relationship.

To achieve these objectives, 12 in-depth interviews were conducted with the women who are the victims of violence and who have contacted official agencies at least once. Additionally, 4 developers of the policy paper, who have been involved at the legislative level in gender issues policy, participated in the study.

### Research Instruments

For the purpose of the study, a semi-structured interview guide was developed, primarily focused on the personal experiences of women victims of violence, the characteristics of violent relationships, and the process related to the termination of such relationships. The developers of the policy paper evaluated the existing legal instruments and their implementation quality, which is also closely related to the prevention of violence against women.

### Procedure

After selecting the research participants, each of them was contacted individually to explain the general content of the research. Upon obtaining their consent, an agreement was made regarding the time and place for the interview preferred by the respondents. Interviews lasted one hour on average. Participants were provided with an informed consent form prior to the interview. The interview was audio-recorded with the participants' consent.

### Data processing

The textual data were processed using NVivo software, which is widely used in social sciences for processing textual information. For the purpose of data processing, a four-stage process was based on reflexive thematic analysis (Becker, 1992). First, each transcript was prepared for an in-depth analysis, focusing on experiences, emotions, words, meanings, outcomes, and subjective evaluations. According to the theoretical framework of the study, expected themes were identified and marked in each transcript. At the second stage, the identified themes were grouped and categorized so that they would not overlap and each theme would have a unique content. At the third stage, connections between

grouped themes and those identified in the study were established. Finally, relationships between the grouped themes were compared with the theoretical model of the study.

## Results and Analysis

Based on the research objectives, the main focus of the analysis was the process from the manifestation of violence in the relationship to its end. The thematic analysis shows that this process can be conceptualized into several main stages, characterized by specific processes. These are:

1. Reasons for divorce
– Manifestation of violence and its forms – from controlling behavior to physical violence
2. Barriers to divorce/end of relationship
– The victim's self-identification process
– Silence – feelings of shame and guilt, along with hopelessness and fear of impending danger
– Responding to violence – seeking help, involving law enforcement bodies, psychological assistance, etc.
3. Outcomes of the termination of relationship/violence for women victims
– Ending the relationship, resulting in social isolation, stigma, and a sense of constant/controlling threat from the former partner.

## Reasons for Divorce/Breakup: From Controlling Behavior to Physical Violence

Most female victims of violence participating in the study talk about the initial stages of violence and recall that violence almost always begins with controlling behaviors, gradually transforming into the forms that threaten the woman's physical safety. Additionally, it is common for partners to impose direct restrictions on interactions with other people, leading to the isolation of women from the outside world and depriving them of social support opportunities. Self-isolation is also a result of the psychological condition women find themselves in after experiencing violence. According to the national survey, controlling behavior is the most widespread form of violence, which is largely normalized within the societal frameworks of gender norms (Statistical Office of Georgia, UN Women, 2023).

One of the main forms of control is economic control, which goes beyond mere financial dependence. It also influences the perception of social norms and gender roles, often implying the dominance of men. Economic violence is not often recognized as violence until it escalates into more severe forms, making it difficult for victims to identify early signs of abusive relationship (Adams et al., 2008). Moreover, economic violence creates a foundation for other types of violence, as it is one of the most powerful tools for establishing dominance over the person (Grigaitė et al., 2019). Most study participants noted that during the relationship they were financially dependent on their partners, although they did not perceive this as violence. This was realized only after violence escalated into severe forms. One of the participants reported:

> "*It was a very painful experience for me, especially during winter when I had to darn my stockings . . . When I told my ex-husband that I needed money to buy stock-*

*ings, he would reproach me for not being able to wear the stockings properly, etc. That time, it seemed very natural to me, but now I realize he was reproaching me for three-lari stockings.*" (IDI1, female victim of violence)

In societies where men are considered authoritative figures and women's roles are strictly confined to family care and child-rearing, partner relationships are sharply skewed towards control and possession by men (González & Rodríguez-Planas, 2020; Heise & Kotsadam, 2015). This imbalance is often expressed through the idea that women represent the family's honor, and male family members have "entitlement" over them until these rights are transferred to the partner/spouse.

Obedience is valued in women within religious and cultural beliefs, which further exacerbates the issue and promotes the normalization of violence in society (González & Rodríguez-Planas, 2020; Saunders et al., 2023). Accordingly, most women find it difficult to recognize themselves as victims of violence. Only the most severe or physical forms of violence are seen as unacceptable, while other types are minimized or unnoticed. This cultural normalization not only hampers women from seeking help but also perpetuates the cycle of violence, which is difficult to break. Talking about their experiences, women mentioned that it was hard for them to realize that what was happening was wrong and that they were living under violence*:*

*"Understanding that it was violence was a bit difficult. In principle, you know something about violence in detail, but to identify yourself as a victim, you have to go a long way, and for me, that way turned out to be longer than for others." [IDI2, female victim of violence]*

The results from the national survey on gender-based violence show prevalent perceptions of gender norms and attitudes among the population. Nearly 60% of women surveyed believe that their most important role is caring for the family, indicating a strong emphasis on traditional gender roles in society. This is even more pronounced among men (74.7%). Additionally, over 20% of women and more than a third of men believe that a wife should agree with her husband's opinion, even if she does not personally agree. This points to a hierarchical view of family relationships that prioritizes the husband's opinion. Furthermore, more than half of women (55.1%) and the majority of men (77.6%) agree that men should control and lead the family, which even more reinforces traditional gender dynamics (Statistical Office of Georgia and UN Women, 2023).

This reality is clearly reflected in the stories of the study participants, who noted that not only their partners and the surrounding society, but even themselves "voluntarily" adhered to the traditional gender roles, which ultimately led to violence:

*"He had many negative traits, but the most important was the neglect of equality. As I mentioned, in his view, a woman's role was only to raise children, and she had to fulfill all traditional roles assigned to women. This meant not working or having friends or social relationships, social life, and all that outside these boundaries." [IDI4, female victim of violence]*

**Barriers to ending divorce/relationship**

Although recognizing oneself as a victim of violence is the first step towards ending relationship, a large number of women remains silent on this issue. Both globally and in Georgia, many women do not speak out about cases of violence, which is caused by several reasons (Pokharel et al., 2020).

Most of the violence women experience occurs behind closed doors, inflicted by their intimate partners, family members, or men they know. Additionally, victims of violence often do not want or fear reporting such incidents due to the negative reactions of their abusers (perpetrators) or family members and friends. Moreover, those women who speak out loudly about violence against women or seek help, especially in cases of domestic violence, are often blamed for their victimization (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). For these reasons, women generally do not disclose their history of violence (UN Women, 2016).

Most victims choose to remain silent because they anticipate complications and negative reactions, especially from male family members. Social and cultural norms also exert pressure, viewing domestic violence and talking about it as unacceptable and shameful. This trend is well reflected in a national study on gender-based violence, which shows that of the small number of women victims of violence who speak out, only 14% believes they can share this information with a male family member (UN Women, 2023). Women also remain silent because women victims are often blamed by their own family members. Such a response to violence only worsens the victim's situation and isolates her further from the outside world.

> *"When my father found out how that person behaved when I was pregnant, he didn't talk to me for two months." (IDI, female victim of violence)*

The psychological consequences of violence are linked to mental health problems, which further contribute to revictimization (J. C. Campbell, 2002; Coker et al., 2002; Ogbe et al., 2020; Roberts et al., 1998). Most victims blame themselves for the violence, which, in turn, hinders their help-seeking behavior and leaves them in abusive relationships (Wessells & Kostelny, 2022).

Submission to violence reflects the attitudes of people surrounding women victims. Women's responses are shaped by their individual and societal perceptions. Women who consider violence acceptable are more likely to blame themselves for the attack and less likely to seek help from legal authorities or report the violence to police, which leads to prolonged psychological and emotional distress (J. C. Campbell, 2002; Ellsberg et al., 2008; Liang et al., 2005). Many researchers believe that women with experience of domestic violence are at a higher risk of developing learned helplessness due to the chronic and traumatic nature of their experiences (Asadi et al., 2018; O. L. K. Campbell & Mace, 2022; Güler et al., 2022). Continuous violence at home can also lead to the feelings of guilt, shame, and low self-esteem, which exacerbate mental health issues (Ellsberg et al., 2008; Güler et al., 2022; Meyer, 2016). Interviews with the victims of partner violence also reveal feelings of shame for being unable to resist or escape abusive relationships. As a result, some women even stopped caring for themselves. Even after leaving an abusive

relationship, some women describe ongoing difficulties in finding harmony with themselves and feeling stable and safe (Statistics Office, United Nations Women, 2022).

## Outcomes of Divorce/Relationship Breakdown

Within the framework of the qualitative research, women who were victims of partner violence spoke about how the experienced violence had a long-term negative impact on their physical and mental health, as well as on their overall well-being. Most victims of violence reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and, at times, strong feelings of guilt and shame for having filed a legal charge or sending their abusive spouse/partner to prison (Statistical Office of Georgia, UN Women, 2022).

However, violence does not end after speaking out and asking for help. Respondents commonly highlighted the lack of appropriate treatment and assistance from law enforcement agencies and other state officials. Victims often encounter indifference and a lack of empathy from police officers, lawyers, prosecutors, judges, and other public officials. This kind of response not only fails to provide necessary support to victims but also fosters a broader sense of mistrust towards state institutions. Despite public statements that gender-based violence is a priority issue, discriminatory attitudes and statements of government officials exacerbate the problem, leading to a lenient judicial approach towards perpetrators. This is evident from policy makers' narratives:

*"In the last three years, it has become clear that the state does not treat violence against women and domestic violence with the seriousness they deserve. This attitude appears to be the result of passive policies or statements made by officials that are often discriminatory and sometimes laden with gender stereotypes." [IDI1, policy paper developer]*

The victims' testimonies emphasize not only personal traumas, but also systemic flaws that contribute to the cycle of violence and impunity. For instance, respondents describe psychological abuse by prosecutors aimed at minimizing offenders' sentences. Such practices not only enable abusers, but also hinder victims from seeking help.

*"Our country is unsafe for anyone. I was told officially that I am a victim and that a prosecutor should protect me. But the prosecutor called me and advised that if I insisted on his imprisonment, my children would find out, which would cause me even greater harm. Essentially, he subjected me to psychological pressure to force me to refuse his imprisonment." (IDI7, female victim of violence)*

Although Georgia's legislation has significantly improved in fighting gender-based violence, the existing resources mostly operate ineffectively or do not work at all. The research participants who took part in the development of policy paper, noted that it was a multifaceted issue. Most important is the lack of shelters, which creates a significant barrier for those who have nowhere to go.

*"Women often hesitate to end relationship because they really have nowhere to go. Although there are organizations offering temporary shelters for both women and*

*their children, awareness of these services and their availability are insufficient." [IDI3, policy paper developer]*

Self-identification as a victim, seeking help, and receiving adequate support from social environment (on the one hand social support and on the other hand effective use of state resources) are essential and inevitable steps for women ending abusive relationship. However, this may not be enough to eradicate violence. In societies where gender roles are clearly defined and where men are dominant, separation does not mean the end of male "ownership" over women. In some cases, separation even intensifies the sense of possession towards the other person. Research shows that when women seek divorce, men perceive it as a threat to their honor and often attempt to protect it, sometimes resulting in murdering their partners (Novin et al., 2015). Men who commit violence do so because they feel that someone challenged their masculine identity (Walker & Gill, 2019). In societies where family honor is based on a woman's obedience, actions aimed at restoring this honor (e.g. violence) pose serious health risks to women.

The situation is further worsened by widespread manipulation and victim-blaming that involve not only close family members and friends, but also members of the community (Bermek et al., n.d.; Gracia, 2014). This process serves to further isolate the victim, destroys their self-esteem, and fosters feelings of helplessness and dependence (Gracia, 2014; Meyer, 2016). Blaming victims, where the responsibility for violence and family breakdown is attributed to the victims, strengthens social norms prioritizing family unity over individual safety and well-being. This legitimizes and perpetuates the cycle of violence, making it harder for victims to seek support or oppose abusers. The participants recalled instances related to the culture of blame:

*"Unfortunately, my friend, we had a ten- or twelve-year relationship, and when this happened and was publicly discussed, a comment was made: 'a good horse doesn't get whipped. Maybe she deserved it and ended up in a shelter." [IDI11, female victim of violence]*

These findings align with quantitative data indicating that over 8% of women and men believe that if a woman is beaten by her husband, she is partly or fully to blame (this percentage is higher among older age groups and rural populations) (Statistical Office of Georgia, UN Women, 2022).

## Summary

The study aimed to analyze the socio-cultural and structural factors that influence the decision to divorce among female violence victims, as well as to create barriers to the divorce process and increase the risk of violence against women victims after the end of relationship.

The analysis of interviews clearly shows that aggressive behavior from former partners after divorce poses a significant threat to women in the post-divorce period. This process consists of several logically connected stages, which are presented in the form of a diagram.

**Diagram 1.** Relationship termination cycle



The presented diagram illustrates the process from the emergence of violence in its initial forms to the end of the relationship, which starts with unobtrusive expressions of violence in society. These are primarily controlling behaviors of a partner, emotional and psychological violence, which are deeply embedded in the societal gender norms and complicate the victim's self-identification process. In most cases, this process begins only after the physical manifestations of violence occur. However, self-identification alone is not sufficient for ending the relationship, as most victims choose silence due to societal blame, shame, and the anticipation of aggression. Even after overcoming these difficulties, institutional barriers still emerge due to their insufficient and ineffective resources. After ending the relationship, the woman remains socially isolated and experiences increased threat from the partner, which cannot be prevented by institutional mechanisms or societal norms.

Gender-based violence and its lethal form, femicide, is a serious issue in Georgia. Despite the progress made over the past decade, the prevention of gender violence and effective law enforcement remain a significant challenge. Statistics indicates that women are often victims of physical violence by their current or former partners.

The present study shows that preventing gender-based violence requires a comprehensive approach that considers social, cultural, legal, and psychological factors.

## Recommendations

It is important to consider the results of the above study in the development of state documents.

The first challenge identified as a result of the research is related to deficiencies in law enforcement. The legal system in Georgia includes both national legislation and international commitments aimed at preventing intimate partner violence (IPV). The Law on Gender Equality (2020), the Law on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Family (2017), and the Criminal Code of Georgia create a solid legal framework for addressing IPV. However, the real challenge of this legal regulation lies in its effective enforcement, especially in terms of inter-agency cooperation, actions of law enforcement bodies, and

public perception. Effective response requires a clear policy roadmap, which involves intervention at the individual, institutional, and societal levels.

Next, the study shows that women who are victims of violence from intimate partners do not often recognize abusive behaviors and are unaware of where to seek help. As a result, despite the availability of services, they are not often utilized in practice. Most victims either do not have sufficient information or do not perceive themselves as deserving help. Interventions at the individual level should focus on two main issues: (1) raising awareness – victims need to know that help does exists and that it is accessible; (2) awareness of what constitutes violence: it is essential that women realize that what they experience is violence and that they have the right to demand help. Solutions may include local information campaigns, digital platforms for anonymous consultations, and therapeutic services for female victims of violence.

Additionally, women's economic dependence, psycho-emotional stress, and limited autonomy often hinder their ability to leave abusive relationships. Although some municipalities provide certain financial assistance to survivors, there is no large-scale system for housing or income support in the country, leaving many women at risk of poverty and homelessness.

It is also important to note that divorce barriers are mainly connected to cultural norms: patriarchal values, traditional gender roles, victim-blaming, and religious teachings often elevate patience and obedience as virtues for women. Despite Georgia's active participation in the international campaigns against gender-based violence and the incorporation of gender equality topics into national educational programs, profound social norm changes have not yet been achieved. Therefore, educational campaigns should be implemented in two directions: on the one hand, empowering women and promoting gender equality and, on the other hand, popularizing positive maleness and non-violent behavior.

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