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Analysis of Anti-Domestic Violence Policy Implementation in Georgia Using Contextual Interaction Theory (CIT)

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Abstract

This study examines the development of anti-domestic-violence policy implementation in an emerging democracy, the country of Georgia. We applied a public policy framework – Contextual Interaction Theory (CIT) – which enabled us to thoroughly examine factors contributing to drawbacks in anti-domestic-violence policy implementation. The CIT framework was enriched by expanding it to the scale of the national anti-domestic-violence policy and placing greater emphasis on the victim. The qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews and media reveals that public policy implementers lack motivation, information and power to be able to really implement the anti-domestic-violence policy. The CIT analysis of domestic violence (DV) policies demonstrates that DV problems are further exacerbated by the contextual factors of societal attitudes in terms of gender inequality and social acceptance of DV, which creates unfavorable context for the realisation of the anti-DV policy. In such circumstances, according to the CIT, only symbolic realisation of a policy takes place. The use of CIT as a tool for the implementation of a policy will provide substantial input into its realisation. Based on this theory, it is crucial to increase information, motivation and power of implementers, as well as change the context for the anti-DV policy to be actually implemented.

Introduction

At the close of the twentieth century, domestic violence (DV) was internationally recognised as one of the most urgent problems to be addressed by relevant national policies. In 2003, only 45 countries had domestic violence laws. By 2006 the figure had increased to 60 (Sabedashvili, 2011) while, by 2014, 119 countries had DV-related legislation (UN, 2015).

We understand domestic violence as described in the Istanbul Convention, where gender based inequality is identified as the main cause:

Domestic violence shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim (Convention Article 3 b).

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Domestic violence as intimate-partner violence includes physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence between current or former spouses as well as current or former partners. It constitutes a form of violence which affects women disproportionately and which is therefore distinctly gendered (explanatory report to the Istanbul Convention, Article 3 42).

This definition served as a conceptual basis at all stages of the present research, including data collection.

Different domestic violence policies are implemented all over the world, whether fully-fledged, half measures or close to nothing. The gender equality based dimension of these policies has been studied by the Quality of Gender Equality Policies in Europe (QUING) and Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality (MAGEEQ) projects and has emerged as an important factor in subsequent research (Krizsan and Popa, 2010; Verloo, 2007; Verloo *et al.*, 2011). Also, in a more recent study, Johnson and colleagues analysed their data through the de facto feminist framework focusing on street-level practices, i.e. what organisations do in reality to support DV victims (Johnson *et al.*, 2016). We maintain a gender equality approach while analysing DV policy implementation in Georgia, and use the Contextual Interaction Theory as a more general theoretical framework borrowed from the domain of public policy.

We expect that the contextual interaction analysis of specific policy realisation will help to clearly identify gaps and drawbacks in the process of policy implementation. Thus the analysis can be extrapolated to other public policies such as those addressing public health, human rights, and public safety.

The aim of this study is to analyse DV policy implementation by examining the contextual interaction of DV policy implementers, and policy adequacy using a comprehensive deductive model. To achieve this goal, we employed the Contextual Interaction Theory (CIT) for policy research (Bressers, 2004). The Contextual Interaction Theory is an actor-centred theory that has been applied to many fields ranging from environmental protection to healthcare (Bressers, 2004; Owens, 2008; Spratt, 2009). The present research further extrapolates the application of CIT to tailor it to the study of domestic violence and examine the contextual interaction of governmental policymakers, non-governmental organisations, societal norms, and targets/victims of domestic violence. Thus we expand the application of CIT to the complex socio-political realm of domestic violence policy.

Due to the importance of the cultural context within which we are examining anti-domestic-violence policy development and implementation, it is important to provide information on domestic violence in Georgia.

Domestic violence in the country of Georgia

Domestic violence is one of the most widespread problems worldwide. According to UN data, 35 per cent of women experience it throughout their lives, while a number of national studies show that up to 70 per cent of women have been

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subject to physical and/or sexual violence (UN Women, 2016). Domestic violence is a grave problem in the Republic of Georgia as well. The first and only nationwide study on DV in Georgia found that: 36 per cent of women experienced controlling behavior from their husbands or partners – for example, they were forbidden to work, have relationships with family members and friends, or go out in public; 14 per cent of women reported being subject to emotional violence – threatened, neglected or humiliated by their partners; six per cent experienced economic violence. Seven per cent of women were victims of physical violence – they had been pushed, hit, kicked, dragged, pulled, burned, threatened or wounded by a weapon. Three per cent reported being victims of sexual assault or abuse as they were forced to have sexual relations against their will (Javakhishvili, 2010a).

Despite the prevalence of DV in the country, much of the Georgian society fails to recognize DV as a problem. According to the 2010 nationwide study, 51 per cent of women think that a good wife should obey her husband even if she disagrees with him (Javakhishvili, 2010a). According to the most recent study, 34 per cent of the respondents believe that domestic violence is unacceptable but should not be punished by law (Sumbadze, 2014).

Results from these studies reveal growing intolerance towards DV, and violence against women in particular. Respondents increasingly perceive it as a criminal offence rather than a family problem. According to the 2010 National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Georgia, 78 per cent of respondents believed DV should not be discussed publicly (Javakhishvili, 2010a), while 2013 research on attitudes toward DV found that for more than half of the respondents DV is 'unacceptable and should always be punished by law'. However, many would still consider it a family matter (Sumbadze, 2014).

The Georgian government has taken some steps to address DV. In 2006, Georgia adopted the anti-domestic-violence law, which was amended in 2009 and 2013, and national action plans for 2007–2009, 2009–2010, 2011–2012 and 2013–2015 were developed. The State Fund for the Protection and Assistance of (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking was assigned an additional task to combat domestic violence in 2009 and the State Interagency Council on the Prevention of Violence (SICPV) was established in 2008. The latter was responsible for coordinating and facilitating cooperation between governmental (GOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The anti-domestic-violence law and other relevant policy documents lack gender sensitivity and fit within the de-gendered (gender blind) policy frame (Chabukiani *et al.*, 2014), thus diverting from the Istanbul Convention definition of DV. The present research brings forward some more evidence that confirms the overall lack of a gender equality approach to the issue of DV in Georgia. The policy frames approach to domestic violence, developed within the QUING and MAGEEQ projects, has provided a model for the assessment of Georgia's anti-domestic-violence legislation. Krizhan and Popa define policy frames as

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the government's vision of the causes and possible solutions of a problem. In the Gender Equality Frame, the cause of the DV problem is structural gender inequality in a society and therefore the targets/victims are primarily women. In a de-gendered framework, DV is considered an individual rather than social problem. Neither the target/victim nor the offender is viewed in the context of gender. Consequently, on the national policy level, the issue is discussed from a gender-neutral perspective and DV is qualified as the violation of one family member's rights by another, regardless of their gender. Thus, the problem is believed to stem from the violation of individual rights rather than the unequal structure of the society (Krizhan and Popa, 2010).

Contextual Interaction Theory of policy implementation

Pressman and Wildavsky emphasised the importance of studying implementation as a separate process of a policy in order to better explore the connection between policy goals and outcomes (Paudel, 2009). Two main perspectives are cited while discussing the implementation theories: top-down or 'command and control'; and bottom-up or 'street level bureaucrats'. After years of debate, scholars arrived at the conclusion that synthesizing different aspects of both perspectives is the best approach, which is shared by CIT (Natesan and Marathe, 2015).

When compared to other inductive theories in the field of policy implementation, CIT is characterised as a 'deductive, parsimonious and realistic' framework. Generally, one of the significant limitations shared by some inductive theories is the large number of variables, which make them impractical and unfeasible to apply to research, while CIT is well structured and more applicable (Owens, 2008). The Contextual Interaction Theory is based on the assumption that the policy processes depend on three characteristics of the actors involved: motivation, information and power (Spratt, 2009).

In the context of CIT the term *motivation* incorporates the actor's personal motivation, disposition and attitude and their contextual interaction with potential sources of external pressure. The quality of the implementation is determined by the importance of the problem to each of the actors (implementers and targets). If actors do not consider the issue important and do not have sufficient motivation, they will disregard the policy.

Successful policy implementation requires that the actors involved have sufficient *information* about the policy to be implemented (Spratt, 2009). In the CIT model *power* implies resources such as finances, personnel and time, capacity, and control. In practice, the lack of resources represents an important factor in the implementation process (Owens, 2008).

The Contextual Interaction Theory (CIT) focuses on policy implementation, an interactive and dynamic process in which the actors could be involved either as implementers or target groups. Implementers are responsible for promoting

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a project, while target groups are assigned to realise it. Other stakeholders could also be involved and can have a crucial role in the success or failure of the implementation process. Thus, the context in which a policy unfolds is also very important (Bressers, 2004).

Bressers and colleagues consider policy as a project that can or cannot be implemented (Bressers, 2004; Owens, 2008). The implementation of the project depends on two main actors: the implementer and the target. For example, an environmental protection organisation plans to *implement* a new policy to limit factories and build treatment works in a specific location in order to combat pollution. However, a major corporation (*target*) that possesses more power than the implementer goes ahead with plans to build a factory in that location, thereby contradicting the *implementer*. In terms of CIT, this means that target organisation does not have the relevant motivation to implement the anti-pollution policy. In this case, the policy cannot be implemented as the target organisation will block the process. The target organisation is not concerned with pollution, and tries to prevent treatment works in order not to delay factory building or increase expenses.

Depending on the characteristics of the actors and their interaction with each other, as well as the context in which this interaction takes place, a policy may or may not be implemented. There are two phases to implementation. *Phase 1* is the likelihood to implement. If a policy is implemented, it is important to learn how well it is implemented. *Phase II* is therefore adequacy of implementation. A policy can be fully realised if actors possess all needed features and cooperate with each other, or, if any of these features is lacking, it is implemented formally, via bureaucratic channels. This latter type of policy implementation is called symbolic interaction (Bressers, 2004; Owens, 2008).

The current study aims to apply CIT to analyse the implementation of Georgia's anti-domestic-violence policy and establish to what extent it helps victims and supports the social change necessary for the adoption of an effective DV policy.

Method

The study data were collected in two stages spanning a decade. Stage One covered the initial policy development period from 2006–2011 as part of the research project *Interagency United Efforts to Combat Domestic Violence in Georgia: Local or International Agenda* (IUECDV in Georgia) (Javakhishvili and Tsuladze, 2011b). Stage Two was conducted in 2014 as part of the UN Women's commissioned study of countries' accomplishments pertaining to the Istanbul Convention requirements. We assessed Georgia's progress in bringing laws and policies developed from 2006 in line with the Istanbul Convention in an effort to ratify the latter.

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Although local and international NGOs had been working on domestic violence issues for quite some time, 2006 is considered to be the launch of the nationwide programme to combat domestic violence, as it was in this year that relevant agencies started to develop and official records began to be kept.

At Stage One of the study, we collected data from a number of sources: face-to-face interviews and relevant publications and media materials, while at Stage Two, only interviews were conducted.

The questions for the semi-structured interview were assembled according to the CIT framework. We aimed to identify: a) certain characteristics of the actors; b) the nature of interaction among the actors; and c) the context in which the anti-domestic-violence policy unfolds. Based on these three sets of data we could then judge to what extent anti-domestic-violence policy was implemented.

a) According to the CIT, actors include policy implementers and targets – those to whom a policy is directed, in other words, the beneficiaries. In our case, implementers are GO and NGO representatives, while victims of domestic violence and the whole community were identified as targets. Motivation, information and the power of the actors were studied, as these characteristics were defined by the CIT authors as crucial for the implementation of any policy.
b) As envisaged by CIT, multiple actors, in our case around 40 governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as targets – community and victims – should be properly interacting to implement a policy, therefore we looked at whether these organisations cooperate at all.
c) The context in which a policy unfolds is equally important for its realisation because, according to CIT, even if actors successfully cooperate, are motivated, informed and in power, environmental factors might anyway prevent policy implementation.

The data were subject to a thematic analysis within the CIT framework. Following CIT logic, first, interview transcripts were processed to identify three main characteristics of the actors: motivation, information and power. A specific set of indicators were developed for each characteristic. Second, interaction types among the implementers were assessed. Finally, the data from media and other resources were analysed to explore the context according to CIT. All these enabled us to judge the policy implementation levels: likelihood to implement and adequacy of implementation.

The study examines a ten-year period of major social and political changes in Georgia, an emerging democracy. The interview data, however, show only minor differences between the first and the second stages, providing closely similar

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attitudes and information. The continuing relevance of the CIT model proposed supports the assumption that the model holds true over time.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with all organisations dealing with the domestic violence problem during Stage One (2006–2011) and Stage Two of the present study (2012–2015): four governmental (GOs) and 29 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at the first stage (the Ministry of Health and Social Care could not be reached for an interview, and one non-governmental organisation refused to take part in the study) and the same four governmental organisations and nineteen NGOs at the second stage (ten NGOs ceased to exist). At both stages the whole population of the organisations was studied; however, we selected representatives of these organisations for face-to face-interviews.

The selection of interviewees was determined at the organisational level. One or two representatives were chosen from each organisation, depending on its size. The representatives were top- and middle-level personnel who were able to answer all our questions about their organisation. In total, 44 in-depth interviews were held, each lasting approximately two hours. At Stage Two (2014–2015), a secondary round of in-depth interviews was conducted with the same representatives, up to 23 in all. The semi-structured interviews covered three key issues: 1) the characteristics of the organisations, namely, their information, motivation and power; 2) collaboration among the organisations, 3) context.

The interviews were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments. Participation was voluntary and all of the participants gave their consent to be interviewed and recorded. No personally identifiable information is associated with the interview subjects, their records, or the results presented in this article.

Media and relevant publications

Media materials included all major nationwide journals and magazines with large circulation for the period from 2006 to 2011, nationwide channel TV programmes and reports from parliamentary sessions on the adoption of the anti-domestic-violence law. All nationwide print and electronic media were studied except those available only on the Internet, as Internet access remains limited in some parts of the country. Media materials were reviewed retrospectively, which does not require consents and permissions.

We also studied all annual and research reports, informational booklets, leaflets and website materials of the organisations published between 2006 and 2011 (the first stage of data collection). These data were used to describe and analyse the context in which anti-domestic-violence policy is being implemented in Georgia.

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Results

This section starts with an overview of the previously mentioned three characteristics of implementers and targets: motivation, information and power, followed by their interactions. It ends with an overview of external factors which have an effect on the implementers and policy implementation. No significant difference has been found between the results of the data obtained at the two stages. The tendencies observed at Stage Two were quite similar to Stage One.

Characteristics of actors: motivation

Local and international NGOs began working on the DV problem in Georgia much earlier than the government (Javakhishvili and Tsuladze, 2011a). Tamar Sabedashvili claims that, without Georgian NGOs' work in support of female victims, there would have been no grounds for a legislative response or a relevant policy. According to Sabedashvili, the draft law of anti-domestic-violence is the result of NGOs' activities. She highlights the actors' internal motivation and underscores that, although the international NGOs had a crucial role in developing the law, the idea was not theirs (Sabedashvili, 2011).

However, the interview data point to a strong external pressure for the adoption and implementation of the anti-domestic-violence law in 2006. The adoption of the law was heavily influenced by international norms and convention requirements, which is confirmed by the following excerpts from the interviews:

The international influence was huge. Lots of money was spent, investments were made in the improvement and adoption of the law. (Regional NGO representative)
There are political responsibilities that the government has to take in the framework of the EU Action Plan. As several EU standards had to be achieved, the role of the EU was great. The government took the responsibility of achieving these standards. (Governmental organization representative)
I believe they [government] would adopt any law because it was recommended so. It was not a bottom-up process. Certainly, the NGOs were active, but the government was responsible for various international negotiations. (Central NGO representative)

The idea of combating domestic violence was not sufficiently mature on the national level. Thus the law was adopted mainly because of international requirements. As early as 1999, the CEDAW Committee (Georgia joined CEDAW in 1994) strongly recommended that Georgia, as a State Party, adopt relevant legislation and elaborate on its respective measures to eliminate violence against women (Sabedashvili, 2011). The analysis of media materials, namely records of the parliamentary debates over the adoption of the anti-DV law, clearly show that MPs voted for the law because of the request from the international community: 'I voted for this law because "the West" requests us to do so' was a typical phrase heard at the debates (video recordings of parliamentary hearings on adopting anti-domestic-violence law in 2006).

The Parliament and the government attached higher priority to compliance with international politics than to the elimination of the DV problem.

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Consequently, their lack of commitment to DV prevention was reflected in the policy implementation process, as will be shown later in this article. The government aimed to adopt the law but it did not have sufficient motivation to implement it. We can judge the actors' motivation by studying their perception of the DV problem and their attitude towards its implementation from the following perspectives: *Is domestic violence a crime? Should the violator be punished? Should others interfere? Is divorce a reasonable solution in such cases? What are the reasons for domestic violence?*

The organisation representatives interviewed for this study held diverse attitudes towards these issues. The respondents' opinions differed significantly even on such a fundamental issue as the recognition of domestic violence as a crime:

[If it does not take severe forms] I think it is not a crime. Violence will always be there and we cannot eliminate it completely. (Central NGO representative)
It definitely is a crime because the first thing associated with a person is free choice. When freedom is limited and one has to do something against his or her wish, under the dictate - this, of course, is a crime. (Governmental organization representative)

The interviews clearly show that domestic violence remains tabooed, the victims – targets – are still afraid to talk about it openly and believe that the problem must be solved within the family. They are ashamed of external involvement and are not motivated to fight for their rights or take a divorce decision as their family, friends and the community do not support them. The societal attitudes reflect the lack of motivation to combat DV and intervene against perpetrators. Representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations often encounter obstacles while dealing with DV cases, because they are opposed by the local community that supports perpetrators or disapproves of the disclosure. Female victims are thus limited to discussing their problems with parents (47.5 per cent), friends (31.2 per cent), siblings (22.4 per cent) and rarely with police or health care institutions. Moreover, they are not likely to seek divorce as the society is against it. The representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations hold similar views, believing that 'divorce is a tragedy' (Chitashvili and Arutiunov, 2010; Tsuladze, 2010; Javakhishvili *et al.*, 2012a).

Respondents who find involvement important admit, at the same time, that intervention is too difficult in Georgia, because the society – targets – opposes it. They believe the problem is rooted in the mentality of the society. Moreover, most of the respondents admitted that they would not call the police if they witnessed violence:

Here is the most difficult issue . . . the mentality of the society. People think everything that happens within a family is a family issue and even if human rights are breached, one should not react, say something or offer help . . . (Central NGO representative)
I might call the police, but it is difficult to say. Despite having worked on these issues since 2000 . . . I am a child of this society, you know. (Governmental organization representative)

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The majority of the respondents believe that everything should be done to avoid divorce which is seen as the last resort. The following two statements are typical examples of this stereotype:

If it is possible to save the family (save the marriage), then it must be protected. It is good for children to grow up with both mother and father. (Regional NGO representative)
For me, divorce is not justified, because a family must not be destroyed... Children should grow up in normal conditions and it must be a Georgian family... (Regional NGO representative)

Most of the respondents consider social and economic factors, such as unemployment and alcoholism, as the main reasons for domestic violence. Only six out of 44 foregrounded the structural causes of the problem. The following statement reveals that the respondents' personal beliefs about the domestic violence issue are fairly traditional:

The cause of domestic violence in Georgia, as well as in other countries, is gender inequality where men are dominant over women and domestic violence is one of the manifestations of this dominance. (Central NGO representative)

The actors – implementers as well as targets – lack the motivation to face the problem of DV which, in turn, prevents their successful collaboration.

Characteristics of actors: information

The organisations we contacted have a vague idea about the national DV policy, its goals and potential benefits for victims, but no visible attempts are made to obtain more information about it. It is clear from the interviews that there is a substantial gap between governmental and non-governmental sectors, as well as within each sector. The organisations lack information about each other's activities and strengths:

We, NGOs have extensive experience in these questions, as we had been working on them even before they [the governmental agencies] started thinking of it. Why should they reinvent the wheel? Huge experience has been accumulated, and they can use it successfully. (Central NGO representative)

Many regional organisations experience difficulties in obtaining relevant information, because the information is primarily available online, in languages other than Georgian, and many of them cannot access the Internet because they cannot afford to do so:

It is too difficult for people in the regions to obtain information from international sources. ...Internet access is a big concern in regions. (Regional NGO representative)
If you want to apply for project funding through a competitive tender, there is a possibility that the information will be hidden away to limit the number of competitors. (Regional NGO representative)

Many victims lack information to resist DV; some of them do not even know that there is a law and specific organisations to protect them. Individuals and society lack information, despite the campaign efforts of NGOs.

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Thus, it is clear that there are serious problems in terms of information transparency. Very often, the organisations do not have access to the necessary information due to a lack of resources.

Characteristics of actors: power

According to CIT, power is associated with capacity, resource and control. The actor's resources crucially determine their power in the process of implementation, which can strengthen or weaken its enactment. Resources include finances, personnel and time.

Our study data show that the DV-relevant NGOs employ an average of five members of staff. The minimum is three and the maximum is 150 (only in one central NGO). The professional backgrounds of the employees are quite diverse, varying from a social worker to a philologist, from a lawyer to a chemist and from a psychiatrist to a theologian. Education, training and professional background are not always decisive factors in hiring employees at these organisations.

In terms of working conditions, most of the organisations have the relevant technical equipment (e.g. computer hardware, a copy machine and a printer). However, a car, a driver, fuel and other 'luxuries' are rare exceptions.

Most of the organisations only have small amounts of funding and three NGOs have no income. The annual income of employees in these organisations varies from 5,000 GEL (~ £1,650) to more than 500,000 GEL (~ £165,000).

The activities of the NGOs primarily depend on donor organisations because they are funded by the latter. Consequently, their scope of activities is determined by the requirements of the funder:

In terms of financial support, we feel highly dependent on donors, and in terms of practical activities, we really need coordination with the state. (Central NGO representative)

Governmental organisations, on the other hand, do not depend on a donor; donor organisations mostly work in coordination with governmental organisations.

Governmental organisations and some large NGOs, described as 'elite' organisations by the respondents, have access to more resources than others. They have sufficient personnel, funding and technical equipment to implement large-scope projects. Most of other organisations do not have sufficient resources, which prevents them from implementing projects.

Targets – victims – obviously possess little power to face the problem. However, in the complex case of DV, victims' behaviours largely influence the implementation of a policy. For example, when reaching out to a victim of a specific DV case, a non-governmental organisation tried to explain to her that she was a victim of domestic violence from her husband. The woman admitted to being a victim but could not be persuaded into calling the police. The latter was not even given a chance to intervene or, in other words, to play its role as a

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policy implementer. The case described above is not an exception. Other studies show that most victims do not apply to the police or NGOs for help. The 2010 nationwide study of Georgian women revealed that only two per cent of victims report DV incidents to police and one per cent reports to NGOs (Chitashvili and Arutinov, 2010).

Motivation, information and power are obviously unequally distributed between the implementers. In particular, the governmental sector has more power and less motivation whereas NGOs hold less power and more motivation. Both sectors lack information: due to ineffective communication: they do not exchange information adequately. Furthermore, the organisations find it difficult to discuss ways of problem solving, which can also be considered as a lack of information.

Interaction/cooperation

The analysis of the interview data revealed that cooperation among implementers occurs within a limited circle of NGOs that are perceived as 'elite' organisations, with more power than others. They cooperate with each other, as well as with the government, which increases their power:

The same organizations cooperate closely with the government. I can name only three of them. (Regional NGO representative)
The government applies to one particular organization for the psychological support of victims, though there are better psychologists in other organizations. (Central NGO representative)

Further developing the CIT, Cheryl de Boer (2012) focused on the receptivity of implementers and target groups. Receptivity denotes openness to new experiences, which begins with getting new information, filtering it through the existing frames of reference, acquiring new knowledge and applying it. This capacity also shows to what extent actors can interact and cooperate. De Boer's observation is supported by the international experience of combating DV, which shows that united interagency efforts have been successful in overcoming this complex problem. It is important to encourage various agencies 'to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence' (Council of Europe, 2011). Also, it is the responsibility of government agencies to 'recognize [...] at all levels, the work of relevant NGOs and of civil society active in combating violence against women and establish effective co-operation with these organizations' (Istanbul Convention, 2011). The need for interagency cooperation has been emphasised since the 1980s, with the noted success of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project and the Duluth model, which have proved to be effective and efficient DV strategies (Domestic Abuse International Programs, 2011). Unfortunately, the organisations combating domestic violence in Georgia – the implementers – have limited resources with which to cooperate.

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The complex DV problem also requires the cooperation of target groups, as shown by the CIT framework. As we have shown above, target groups – victims and the community – lack the motivation, information and power to combat DV. Therefore, they do not cooperate with implementers. Moreover, the implementers face obstacles from target groups – the community –and, in many cases, victims also oppose their activities.

Context

The context in which a policy unfolds is an important factor in the Contextual Interaction Theory. It can be relatively narrow and structural – as in the case of property rights; or broad – as in the case of a political system and economic conditions (de Boer, 2012). We discuss the context in which the anti-domestic-violence policy is realised by actors and consider the church and mass media as external factors that influence policy implementation. These two institutions are quite powerful in Georgia. According to one public opinion survey, the activities of the Orthodox Church are assessed favorably by 91 per cent of the population and that of the Georgian media by 82 per cent (IRI, 2015).

From 2006–2010 only 11 articles (in 3 newspapers and 4 magazines) covered the topic of DV (Javakhishvili, 2010b). Since 2006, related issues have been aired by a handful of TV programmes, mostly at the initiative, and with the support, of international donor organisations. Interviews with the representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations reveal that they are not satisfied with the media coverage of the issue and find that 'mass media do not see domestic violence as a social problem and provide little space to discussing the issue' (Javakhishvili *et al.*, 2012b). A thorough review of media revealed no evidence of the Georgian Orthodox Church's efforts to combat DV. The study of church publications and sermons of church representatives indicate that they turn a blind eye to this problem (Kobalia, 2011). Most representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations reported that the clerics discourage female victims from opposing the violence and call on them to obey their husbands, while a few respondents gave a positive account of priests trying to help the victims. However, these are sporadic cases indicating that 'the representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church lack systemic understanding of domestic violence and have limited resources to effectively intervene in domestic violence cases' (Javakhishvili *et al.*, 2012b).

The analysis of the interviews allows us to conclude that external factors hinder the reenactment of DV policy implementation.

Policy implementation

The results obtained attest to the presence of the anti-DV policy in Georgia. However, its realisation can be qualified as a symbolic application because the actors involved have different goals and different levels of motivation.

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Moreover, they lack information and power. Under such circumstances, a policy is often realised via bureaucratic channels and its implementation is weak (Bressers, 2004; Owens, 2008). According to Bressers, symbolic implementation is characteristic of a '. . . .policy that is not taken seriously by implementers (and perhaps not meant to be) and that is not supported by a serious commitment of resources' (Bressers, 2004). In Georgia, this takes the shape of an insufficient allocation of funds (National Action Plans 2007–2009, 2009–2010, 2011–2012 and 2013–2015), and inadequate support of DV victims, as evidenced by the scarcity of shelters and crisis centres, and by the failure of law enforcement intervention (UN Women, 2014).

Within the CIT framework, policy implementation is successful when the issue is important for each actor – in Georgia's case this condition is not fulfilled. As noted above, the targets – victims and community – and even the implementers, prefer the cases of DV not to be dealt with outside the family. Moreover, the implementers' opinions were self-contradictory. As they started answering our questions, they would express egalitarian views but, as they proceeded, they would switch to traditional views, not even noticing the inconsistency in their speech. Both husband and wife should be equally involved in raising their children, but the wife is expected to be more involved; both husband and wife should be breadwinners in a family, although men better fit the role; a woman can have sexual relations before marriage, however she should not; divorce is a way out of violence in a family, although only in severe cases (only in exceptional cases/ under extreme circumstances) and for the sake of protecting children; a husband should not control his wife, but he may; a wife should not be required to obey her husband, but it is better if she does obey:

One should not restrict a woman as it used to be earlier – do not open the door and do not look out of a window –but it is not right to run back and forth to show others how up-to-date one is. (NGO, central)
We should respect free will, people's desires, but at the same time, traditions tell us other things, and we would rather keep them. (NGO, central)

Such disposition of the actors obviously influences their motivation – if domestic violence is not recognized as a social problem, why should one intervene; if gender inequality is not a reason behind DV, then it is not relevant in decision making, etc. Consequently, traditional attitudes of implementers and targets may hinder effective implementation and, because of these attitudes, they may not carry out relevant activities to combat DV. Additionally, targets and the governmental sector have lower motivation because the latter's activities towards DV are influenced by the external pressure from international institutions. In our view, the lack of genuine motivation is one of the reasons for a symbolic (and ineffective) implementation of a policy.

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In order for a policy to be realised, the actors need to have relevant information and vision to solve the problems. In our case, the organisations, as well as actors, lack information and find it difficult to identify sufficient ways of problem solving and collaboration. Furthermore, organisations working on the DV issue do not have shared attitudes about the problem, which hampers their collaboration in developing a unified strategy to combat DV. From the CIT perspective, it is clear that there is also a problem in terms of transparency. Respondents note that some organisations often conceal information; others do not have access to relevant documents, etc. These problems are also associated with resources – the actors do not have sufficient resources and skills to obtain the information. Furthermore, there is a question about how the actors can come to understand the complexity of the problem and the necessity to collaborate. Generally, they talk about the importance of collaboration, but seem to require the other side to initiate the activity and do not recognise their own reluctance.

Besides, the results show that the respondents do not have sufficient information about the causes of domestic violence. Most of them consider economic and social problems, mostly unemployment, as the main reasons for DV. Only a few respondents cite upbringing and mentality and, consequently, gender inequality as the reasons for domestic violence.

Also, it is necessary that the actor has the capacity to intervene, i.e. has the power. In our case, the power is distributed unequally between the implementers. The party with lower motivation holds more power. Even influential governmental organisations lack relevant qualified personnel and sufficient resources. There is less power on the side of organisations working on gender issues.

Conclusions

This study is the first attempt to apply the CIT framework, an effective tool designed for the assessment of policies and programmes, to research into domestic violence. In this article, policy implementation is analysed through the case study of anti-domestic-violence policy implementation in Georgia at two levels: the likelihood of implementing a policy and the adequacy of implementation. On the first level of policy implementation, the national anti-domestic-violence policy has been implemented; the anti-domestic-violence law and subsequent relevant documents were developed and adopted. The interaction of the key actors, as well as external factors – the course the country is taking towards the European Union and European values – all contributed to the development and adoption of Georgia's DV policy. On the second level, the policy is being implemented with impediments, as in many cases it does not reach and protect DV victims and does not prevent the cases of DV. The motivation, information, power and interaction of the key actors, as well as external factors – the gender equality attitudes and

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attitudes to family values and DV – contributed to the poor enactment of the policy. Our analysis of the degree to which Georgia's policies on DV have been implemented revealed that the situation in 2016 remains similar to that in 2006.

One of the recent studies of street-level practices for combating DV in St. Petersburg, Russia, had similar findings, but reached different conclusions. Johnson and colleagues found that local organisations manage to help some of the victims, partially follow 'feminist principles of violence work' and weakly advocate social change. Contrary to our conclusions, the authors view these as an achievement in combating DV (Johnson *et al.*, 2016). Probably, the interpretation of the findings depends on the political situation in Russia, which is in many ways different from the situation in Georgia. However, these two countries share the Soviet past and patriarchal culture. Both Russian and Georgian cases fail to fully address the Istanbul Convention requirements and we have been able to show why.

We use CIT with some amendments: we consider the anti-DV policy at a national level (Georgia, formerly part of the Soviet Union), thus expanding our study to multiple policies instead of a singular policy; we also foreground the target of the policy – the victim – who is an important player in the process of policy realisation, because it is a human victim who can appear as an actor with her/his own motives, information and power. Even if the implementers cooperate to overcome the problem and even if they are motivated, informed and powerful enough to implement the policy, the targets – victims and the community – may lack all these, and the implementation may not take place at all.

The understanding of the anti-DV policy implementation process has been enriched by applying the contextual interaction framework to a national social policy in an emerging democracy and examining multiple policy layers and key actors, their characteristics and relationships, as well as key external factors that influence policy realisation. The empowerment of the key policy actors in the future, through increasing their awareness about domestic violence and gender equality, i.e. increasing their motivation and information levels, as well as the strengthening of their gender equality approach, and the consolidation of non-governmental and governmental effort is to be viewed as a step towards rendering the anti-domestic-violence policy in Georgia more effective.

The application of CIT may help predict the success of DV policy implementation in other countries. We have shown that, when a policy is implemented on a symbolic level without adequate interaction and commitment among the key actors, it is less effective and has substantial drawbacks. This model and the experience of Georgia may be particularly useful for countries that have not yet implemented a domestic violence policy, to avoid the pitfalls on their way. Specifically, the findings of this study show that, if used as a tool for the implementation of a policy in any sphere of public life, CIT will provide a substantial input into its realisation. In fact, it can argued that policy implementation is more likely to succeed if CIT is applied from the planning

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stage as a framework to identify if actors – implementers as well as targets – have sufficient information, motivation and power and are able to fruitfully interact to realise the policy, and if the environment is favorable enough. Otherwise, a policy is either doomed to fail or be implemented only symbolically, as in our case. A decision based on the aforementioned planning approach may save significant costs, time and effort.

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