

WOMEN'S VOICES: GENDER SURVEY IN TAJIKISTAN*

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Abstract

This paper examines Tajik women's recognition on their own situation. For investigation the authors conducted a small survey on 40 Tajik women. The authors also utilized large-scale surveys on women in the country for generalization of findings and those in Central Asian States for comparison. Although Tajik women are surrounded by sever circumstances and gender equality is hard to be attained in the near future, the effects of education attainment level on women's attitude toward gender issues may suggest positive impacts on Tajik women's situations.

Keywords: Tajikistan, Gender, Survey, Micro-data

I. *Introduction*

Almost 20 years has passed since the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the former Soviet republics are each following their own paths as independent nations. As a result, the gender situation in the countries of the former Soviet Union can be expected to be diverse. This study attempts to explore the characteristics and future outlook for the gender situation in Tajikistan, which was one of the Central Asian republics, based on the results of interviews with small samples in the country as well as data from a large survey conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

1. **Scope and Purpose**

It is widely known that Tajikistan has sent out huge numbers of international migrants. In 2008 the value of remittance from abroad reached almost 50 percent of GDP, the highest ratio in the world (Kumo, 2012). When studying diversification in gender patterns in former Soviet republics since the break-up of the Soviet Union, trends concerning the status of women in Tajikistan can be expected to provide hints for observing the gender situation in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, which have a large scale labor out-migrants. While Tajikistan

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is likely to exhibit many of the norms of the Islamic world, large scale international migration means that many households there have no adult men.

In order to analyse the gender situation in present-day Tajikistan, this study also considers possibilities for achieving work/life balance in Tajikistan, where many adult women have experience of working full time, and with a focus on the relationship between the gender situation and ethnic factors, touches on trends that are likely to shape the future.

2. Previous Literature

Research of gender changes in post-Soviet/communist countries has been reviewed in sociological works from different angles (Funk and Mueller, 1993; Laslett and Brenner, 1989; Ashwin, 2002). Among them, to research the work/life balances in the family and at workplace there was developed a contract model. The contract is described as rules of engagement, rights and responsibilities defining the division of labour in the sphere of production and reproduction based on gender and mutually-responsible relations between men and women including those of persons of different generations (Temkina, 2002).

In these contexts, the official gender contract is the working mother. This contract includes the state-induced women's labor and maternity as civic duties. There were internal controversies and tensions related to the official contract but the gender-based family policy, which the contract was formed on, had been applied to the majority of Soviet citizens. According to the rules and norms of the Soviet society, the woman should combine her work and family duties (Temkina, 2002). But at the same time there existed a shadow gender contract which included the rules, norms and practices beyond the state regulations formed in response to the rigid state institutions.

Previous works on this subject were very limited, and described the situation in the socialist countries, the USSR or the post-Soviet states. There was no research like the authors where they look not only at the gender situation in Tajikistan but at the balance of the gender roles in the workplace and in family life based on surveying of, though a limited number of respondents, this country and numerous surveys of the UNICEF.

3. Survey Design

The authors interviewed women in Tajikistan on matters relating to gender. In addition, the World Bank and UNICEF conduct large-scale surveys of households and women in Tajikistan and other former Soviet republics such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz, Georgia, and Ukraine, and the data from these surveys is usable for everyone¹. Although the data of the latter was used and referred to in this study as well, our aim was to perform a descriptive, sociological survey that could supplement the large-scale micro data and reveal realities that could be hidden within large surveys.

Our survey was conducted in June-August 2010. The authors prepared a tentative questionnaire in May 2010. The authors and a professor at the Institute of Socio-Political

¹ See "Basic Information Document: Tajikistan Living Standards Measurement Survey 2007", World Bank, July 2008, "Tajikistan Living Standards Survey 2009: Notes for Users", World Bank, May 2010, and UNICEF Website, <http://www.childinfo.org/mics3_surveys.html>.

Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), then discussed the questionnaire, made revisions, and put together a final version in June 2010. Through that Professor at RAS, the authors asked a Tajik professor who is a senior researcher at the same institute under RAS and has lived in Moscow for more than 20 years, and another professor of Khujand State University in Tajikistan to help carrying out the survey. The survey was then conducted by the two Tajik professors, some of their female graduate students at Khujand State University, and the authors.

Forty women were surveyed. Twelve of them (30 percent) were interviewed in Dushanbe and 28 (70 percent) in Khujand, both in Tajikistan. Of the subjects in Khujand, four were from the Bobodzhon Gafur area, three were from Spitamen, two were from Dzhabborrasul, five were from Kanibodam, three were from Isfar, five were from Asht, three were from Rudak, one was from Istaravshan, and two from Ganchin, which gives a total of 28. In addition, 28, or 70 percent, of the subjects were from rural areas. This is a similar percentage to that of the rural population of Tajikistan as a whole.

The large numbers of labour migrants going to Russia from Tajikistan may be having an impact on division of labour within households. To explore this possibility, the authors grouped the subjects as follows. The selection of samples was purposive sampling, therefore it needs to be borne in mind that this does not guarantee that they are representative of the population.

- i. Women who have never worked abroad, but whose husbands are currently doing so or have done so for at least one month since June 2009. There were 14 such women (35 percent).
- ii. Women who have never worked abroad and whose husbands have never done so, either. There were 13 such women (32.5 percent).
- iii. Women who are currently working abroad or have done so for at least one month since June 2009 and whose husbands are also currently working abroad or have done so for at least one month since June 2009. There were 6 such women (15 percent).
- iv. Women who are currently working abroad or have done so for at least one month since June 2009 but whose husbands have never worked abroad. There were three such women (7.5 percent).
- v. Women who are divorced or widowed. There were 4 such women (10 percent).

Regarding the ages of the subjects, 19, or 47.5 percent, were under 30 years old, with the remaining 21, or 52.5 percent, 30 years old or over.

In addition, to make the results a more objective reflection of realities, the authors also interviewed a number of experts and professionals. They included staff in charge of gender issues and ideology at the Jamoat office, the head and staff of the Education Academy of Tajikistan, the First Deputy Minister and head of analysis at the Republic of Tajikistan's Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

II. *Changes in the Division of Labour in Society and within Households and Attitudes among Tajik Women*

In the Soviet Union, it was normal for each household to have more than one wage earner. In other words, households in which both the husband and wife worked were common, a fact that is well known. In the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, however, the proportion of working

women was always low compared with other Soviet republics. This may have been because Islamic norms were deeply rooted or because there were few working opportunities outside the home. Since the year 1992, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the proportion of women with jobs has been rising, which is probably due in part to changes in the attitudes of women towards division of labour in the home and changes in the way they view work.

1. Female Employment

Before the Russian Revolution, hardly any women in Central Asia worked. Later, during the Soviet era, however, the proportion of working women increased. However, in Uzbekistan during the 1970s, for example, the proportion of working women was small, and only Slavic women had skilled jobs, with local women mainly performed unskilled work.² The situation was probably similar in Tajikistan.

Table 1 shows women as a proportion of all workers in Soviet countries from 1940 to almost the present day. To put the work situation of women in Tajikistan into context, the table also gives data for Russia as well as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in Central Asia. According to this data, in 1940 women as a percentage of the total labour force was under 30 percent only in Tajikistan, with percentages between 30 and over 40 percent seen in the other countries. The Second World War, however, led to a decline in the male population, which resulted in women playing more active economic roles and a rise in the proportion of working women. During the 1950s, women made up over 50 percent of the labour force in Russia and the other European republics. However, in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz, Central Asian countries with large Slavic populations, the proportion was under 50 percent, and in Tajikistan it hardly ever climbed

TABLE 1. PERCENTAGE SHARE OF WOMEN IN TOTAL LABOUR FORCE (in percent)

Country/Year	1940	1945	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Soviet Union	39	56	47	47	51	51	51	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Russia	41	59	50	50	53	53	52	48	48	49	49	49	48	49
Uzbekistan	31	49	40	39	41	41	43	43	44	48	49	49	49	49
Kazakhstan	30	51	40	38	47	49	49	47	48	48	48	49	49	49
Tajikistan	29	48	39	37	38	39	39	41	46	46	46			

Source: prepared by the authors from Pockney (1991) and Statkomitet, various years.

above 40 percent.

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the ratio of men and women in the labour force in Russia reversed. This happened in 1991, when women as a percentage of all working people, which had hitherto been higher than that of men, dipped below 50 percent. In Tajikistan, on the other hand, the proportion of working women increased.

It is clear from population censuses that Muslim women bore large numbers of children during the Soviet era. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that it was difficult for women to play active roles or make social progress because society remained patriarchal. This could well be why the proportion of women in the labour force was lower than in other Soviet republics³.

² Lubin (1981), pp.183-186.

³ Lubin (1981).

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, however, and particularly from the second half of the 1990s, the proportion of women in the labour force in the Central Asian countries increased to a level comparable with European ones such as Russia.

The interview survey also showed that this led to a major change in the local gender situation. Of the 40 women surveyed, 31 (77.5 percent) were working. Even this figure represents an extremely high proportion of working women given the generally low rates among Muslim women⁴.

The high proportion of working women seen recently is likely to be related to the economic situation in Tajikistan. It is therefore necessary to consider the possibility that the temporary migration of workers from Tajikistan to countries such as Russia is having an impact.⁵

Taking into account both micro and macro data, in 2009 a little under 500,000 people had left Tajikistan to go and work abroad, and 90 percent of them were men (Kumo, 2012; World Bank, 2009). More than 80 percent of them were sending money home. Obviously, some households can probably survive comfortably on these remittances alone, while others likely struggle to make ends meet even with the remaining family members working⁶. In addition, there are cases where the remittances have stopped coming, and the woman is forced to go out to work. It is also possible to foresee cases where women have taken jobs because they were free to do so after their husband had gone abroad to work, having been unable to do so before due to his opposition. It would be interesting to find out what kind of effect this has had on female employment, so during the survey the women were asked about the connection between independence and work. Although a detailed description would be followed by next section, a summary of respondents' characteristics is shown in Table 2.

2. Views of Work Among Tajik Women

As one has seen, the proportion of working women in Tajikistan has remained high since the year 2000, and at the end of the 2000s even women who have been forced into work due to economic pressures hold positive views about women working and the way it makes them economically better off:

Of course, it is best to have jobs for women to become independent, and make some money to spend freely. (Faiziniso, 52 years old, housewife)

It feels good to see women with profession. If a woman is working, she would not need to rely on someone else. To work is the best way for woman to be self-sufficient. If a woman is working, she may solve any kind of problems. Anything can be solved if you have money, nowadays. (Temirova, 22 years old, shop seller)

⁴ Kurosaki (2006).

⁵ On 18 August 2010, Mr. Sanginov, the first deputy minister at the Republic of Tajikistan's Ministry of Labour and Social Security, speaking to the authors at his office, said that while the Russian police treat Tajik men extremely harshly, they are kinder to women, and that this has resulted in women more frequently moving to Russia to work. He also told the author that while work in places like restaurants is available all year round, work typically done by men such as street cleaning and construction can only be performed at certain times of the year in Russia.

⁶ Temkina (2008), p.108.

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS' CHARACTERS

Respondent Number	Have you ever moved (yes=1, no=0)	Age	Educational Attainment (Secondary=1; Special=2; University and Higher=3)	Religion (Muslem=1; Others=0)	Frequency of worship (constantly =1; not often=0)	Household work (per week, Full time is assumed to be 35 hours)	At Work (yes=1, no=0)	Work(ed) abroad (yes=1, no=0)	Working Hour(per week; Fulltime is regarded as 40 hours)
1	0	31	3	1	1	31.5	1	0	40
2	0	52	1	1	1	35	0	0	—
3	0	47	3	1	0	—	1	0	40
4	1	29	1	1	0	35	0	0	—
5	0	32	3	1	0	24.5	1	0	40
6	0	22	1	1	1	28	1	0	77
7	0	29	2	1	1	38.5	0	0	—
8	0	28	3	1	1	27.5	1	0	48
9	0	28	3	1	0	28	1	0	—
10	0	54	1	1	1	—	1	0	48
11	0	34	1	1	0	31.5	1	0	12
12	0	57	1	1	—	20	1	0	65
13	0	48	1	1	0	—	1	0	—
14	0	30	3	1	—	22	1	0	—
15	0	23	1	1	0	—	0	0	—
16	0	25	1	1	0	35	1	1	30
17	0	22	3	1	—	—	1	0	8
18	0	45	1	1	—	—	1	0	—
19	0	52	3	1	0	—	1	1	60
20	0	22	1	1	1	31.5	1	0	30
21	0	42	3	1	1	—	1	0	18
22	0	42	1	1	1	—	1	1	—
23	0	44	1	1	0	—	1	0	77
24	0	47	1	1	1	—	1	0	45
25	0	54	3	0	0	—	1	0	27
26	0	22	3	1	0	31.5	0	0	0
27	1	26	2	1	1	36	0	0	0
28	0	27	2	1	0	—	1	1	—
29	0	24	3	1	0	—	0	0	0
30	0	44	1	1	0	—	1	0	67.5
31	0	37	1	1	0	—	1	0	52.5
32	0	46	3	1	1	—	1	0	—
33	0	51	2	1	1	—	1	0	30
34	1	26	2	1	0	21	1	1	—
35	0	26	1	1	1	35	0	0	0
36	0	28	3	2	0	31.5	1	0	20
37	0	44	2	1	1	—	1	0	40
38	1	30	3	1	0	24.5	1	0	40
39	0	43	1	1	1	24.5	1	0	16
40	0	30	2	1	0	21	0	0	0

Respondent Number	Married (yes=1, not married=0, divorced or widowed=9)	How get acquainted with the husband	Age of the husband	Main breadwinner (husband=1; both husband and wife=2; other than husband and wife=0, wife=9)	Husband works abroad (yes=1, no=0)	Number of Child(ren)	Desired Number of Children	Usage of Contraception	Who decided the number of children (Husband=1; Wife and husband=2; Wife=3)
1	1	On the day of marriage	33	2	1	4	4	0	1
2	1	Classmate	52	1	1	4	4	0	2
3	1	Introduced by parents	50	2	1	3	3	0	2
4	1	—	43	1	1	3	3	0	2
5	1	Will of parents	—	1	1	2	2	0	2
6	9	Introduced by parents	25	2	0	0	4	0	—
7	1	On the day of marriage	30	1	0	2	2	1	1
8	1	Introduced by a friend	31	2	0	1	—	0	2
9	1	Friend at a school	28	2	1	2	2	0	2
10	1	Introduced by a relative	57	1	1	3	3	0	2
11	1	Childhood friend (Relative)	35	1	1	4	5	0	2
12	1	Childhood friend (Relative)	60	2	0	3	—	0	2
13	1	Childhood friend (Relative)	51	1	0	4	4	0	2
14	1	Get acquainted at a disco	—	2	0	2	more	1	2
15	1	Introduced by an acquaintance	27	1	1	2	2	0	2
16	1	Will of parents	28	2	1	1	2	0	2
17	1	A love match	22	2	0	0	4	0	2
18	1	Childhood friend (Relative)	47	2	1	5	5	0	2
19	9	Will of parents	(57)	9	—	2	4.5	0	3
20	9	Childhood friend (Relative)	(23)	0	0	1	2	0	1
21	1	Friend at a school	42	2	0	2	4	0	2
22	1	Friend at a school	45	—	1	2	2.5	0	2
23	1	Childhood friend (Neighbor)	45	2	0	3	4	0	2
24	9	—	—	9	—	1	—	0	2
25	1	Classmate	—	2	—	3	3	0	3
26	1	Will of parents	24	1	1	1	2	0	2
27	1	Friend at a school	29	1	1	3	4	0	2
28	1	Was forced to get married	32	2	1	3	3	0	2
29	1	Friend at a school	24	1	1	1	3	0	2
30	1	Childhood friend (Neighbor)	45	2	0	3	3	0	2
31	9	—	—	9	—	1	—	1	2
32	1	—	47	2	1	4	4	0	2
33	1	—	54	2	0	4	4	—	2
34	1	Childhood friend (Neighbor)	28	1	1	2	4	—	2
35	1	Classmate	26	1	1	2	3	0	2
36	9	Classmate	—	—	—	1	3	1	2
37	1	Classmate	44	2	0	3	4	0	2
38	1	On the day of marriage	30	2	1	2	2	0	—
39	1	On the day of marriage	45	2	0	4	4	0	2
40	1	Childhood friend (Neighbor)	30	1	1	4	4	0	1

I don't have a job. I used to help my husband with his work, but now he is the only one who earns money in this household. But I think it is best if both of us were working. We women need to work, in order to become self sufficient. Having a job enables us to have enough money. (Makhina, 23 years old, housewife)

If a woman would like to become independent, she should have a job. One may gain freedom by earning money. (Chumagul, 22 years old, seamstress)

I agree that women should also work in order to become self sufficient because no one can live without earning money. (Makhbuba, 54 years old, university lecturer)

Women should have a job outside the home, too, in order to become independent. By earning money, women may satisfy their own demands. (Gavkharoi, 22 years old, housewife)

In order to make our living better, both my husband and I must keep working. (Shakhodat, 44 years old, bakery)

Women become more energetic by having an occupation, and they will be able to gain extra money for the household. (Mokhira, 30 years old, housewife)

The above comments show that many women believe that women become independent by working, and that it is a good thing both economically and for their families. Nevertheless, some women disagree:

Do I think 'having a job is the best way for women to become independent'? Not necessarily. I think the most important thing is that the husbands and wives understand each other. (Khaidarova, 29 years old, housewife)

For women to gain independence, I think it is more important that the husbands and wives understand each other, than just having a job. (Zamira, 28 years old, Non-governmental organization interpreter)

I don't think that women's having a job is the best way to become independent. I don't agree with that kind of an idea. Husbands would appreciate their wives if they are good housewives. (Rafoat, 54 years old, cleaning woman)

I don't think that having a job is the best way for women to become independent because such independence only relates to financial sufficiency. I respect women with tough-mindedness. (Mariya, 28 years old, accountant)

As the above comments show, some women do not see work as a means of enabling women to become independent. They feel that if they are good housewives, their husband will respect them. However, the idea that their husband is the person to evaluate them hints at the power relationship within the household, which may be a manifestation of the view, described later, that the husband is the master of the household.

Nevertheless, the number of women holding such views was small. Women on the whole, whether they are currently working or not, do not seem to object to the idea that working can help women to become independent. The same trend was also seen in a survey conducted by one of the authors in Uzbekistan⁷. Thirty-five percent of the women in Uzbekistan did not agree

with work as a means for women to achieve independence. The rest either had no view either way or agreed. Although the proportion of working women is low in Tajikistan compared with other Soviet republics, traces may also be visible of the way that it was somewhat customary for women to work during the Soviet era⁸. Another possible reason is that current economic conditions mean that women have to go to work.

3. The Ideal Woman

The above shows that on the whole few people are opposed to women working to achieve independence. Nevertheless, many women, both those who believe that having a job can give women independence and those who said that working cannot be considered to be providing independence, agreed with traditional roles, i.e. that husbands should support their wives and that women should be full-time housewives⁹.

I'm a housewife. My husband works for our living. It might be better if both of us had a job, but I think it is a woman's role to be a housewife and do all the chores of the household. (Khaidarova, 29 years old, housewife)

I work as a dentist, 8 hours a day. My husband and his father mainly earn money for our living. Part of the money we spend is what I earn, but I think the husband should work to support his family. I wish I were a housewife, since it is the women's responsibility to clean the house and discipline their children. (Malika, 32 years old, dentist)

I work at a sewing plant, about 48 hours a week. My husband and I both work, but, to be honest, I wish if he were the only one working. I hope to become a housewife. (Aziza, 28 years old, seamstress)

I wish if I were a housewife. A housewife controls the source of everything in the family, and should be respected over anything else. (Mukhtabar, 42 years old, labour)

Since I am a housewife, my husband works outside the home, and I do the housework and child rearing. I think women should be housewives because they must take care of the children, and make them study. (Madina, 26 years old, housewife)

Although Malika is a well-educated woman who works full-time as a dentist, she says that her husband and his father earn the bulk of the family's money. It can therefore be inferred that the view that the main breadwinners are men remains deeply rooted.

Just as some women think that being a full-time housewife is ideal, admire working women or professionals in some field or another. These comments suggest that Tajik women are hovering between two sets of values concerning work¹⁰. Let the authors now hear from some women who consider women who also work outside the home to be an ideal:

⁷ Igarashi (2009).

⁸ Igarashi (2009).

⁹ Temkina (2008), p.116.

¹⁰ A lot of the recent gender research in Tajikistan has explained these wavering viewpoints in terms of two background factors: the tendency for the father to be the master of the household and the trend towards modernisation (Temkina, 2008, p.107; Olimova and Kuddusov, 2007, pp.38-39.).

I feel closest to women who work, and live with their own freedom. And, have plans about her marriage, too. That is actually the way I have lived my life so far. (Masuda, 47 years old, vice manager of a notary's office)

I like women who work assiduously. These women may contribute their knowledge and ability to the society. (Zamira, 28 years old, Non-governmental organization interpreter)

I would like to be a woman with an expertise, and support my family financially. (Makhina, 23 years old, housewife)

I admire working women because they are able to afford a better living for their family. (Adiba, 25 years old, engineer)

I admire women with practical ability, because by using their knowledge, they may support their family financially. (Salekha, 24 years old, housewife)

If I am asked what kind of women I admire, I would say that I admire women who can manage their jobs quickly and efficiently. (Muyassar, 44 year old, engineer)

According to the survey the authors conducted previously in Uzbekistan¹¹, which used random samples, 32 percent of women in Uzbekistan see being a full-time housewife as ideal, while 67 percent view being a working women or professional as ideal. In Tajikistan, though, it seems that more women see being a housewife as ideal than in Uzbekistan¹²

4. Family or Work?

Some of the subjects generalised about women in Tajikistan, while others stressed that their comments only reflected their personal opinions. Yet whichever category they fell into, most of them said that as a Tajik woman, or as an individual, family was most important. Explaining their reasons for this view, many said that it was because they had been brought up with a belief that family is important, because it lies at the core of society, or because viewing it as most important was a Tajik tradition or custom¹³. Women who said that they continued to work even though they valued their families claimed that they did not neglect their households just because they had jobs. To begin with, let the authors hear from women who put family before work:

For women in Tajik, family is more important than their career. I suppose it has always been that way in Tajik. (Dilovar, 31 years old, engineer)

Family is more important to me than work, because we are living for the next generation. (Makhina, 23 years old, housewife)

What is important to me is family than work. Doing housework, and raising children to

¹¹ Igarashi (2009), p.29.

¹² The lower their level of education, the more likely Uzbek women were to choose to become full-time housewives as an ideal way of life, and a future task is to analyze in detail responses from Tajik women concerning educational background and work.

¹³ Another view that has been put forward is that the role of Tajik women is to transmit traditional culture to the next generation (Temkina, 2008, p.106.).

become ones who can make the right decisions bring us joy. (Adiba, 25 years old, engineer)

I think home is more important than work. I was taught that way since childhood. (Chumagul, 22 years old, seamstress)

For Tajik women, family means much more to them than work, because happiness of life lies within the well-being of the family. (Gulnora, 42 years old, teacher)

For Tajik women, family is more important than their job. Since I was taught from childhood that family is the most important thing, I would like to have our children share the same value. (Gavkharoi, 22 years old, housewife)

For women in Tajik, family means more than work, because family brings peace and happiness to everyone (Salekha, 24 years old, housewife)

It is impossible to apply only one idea to all Tajik women, but I personally consider that family is more important than work. Business is business. However, creating a comfortable home is different from business, and not everyone may achieve to do so. Women's happiness lies within their family. (Mavzuna, 30 years old, product controller)

I think that family is more important than work for women in Tajik since it is no exaggeration to say that the society is made up of families. All Tajik women are hoping to have a good family, and have their own children. (Molhira, 30 years old, housewife)

Almost all the women said that family was more important than work, with few saying that the two were equally important or that they could not say either way. Here are some of comments from subjects who said that both family and work were important.

I think home and profession are both important for women in Tajik, because home is the basis of our living, and work is what supports us financially. (Madina, 26 years old, housewife)

Family and profession are both important for women in Tajik. (Temurova, 22 years old, shop seller)

It is difficult to answer whether family means more than work or not for Tajik women. It depends on each Tajik woman. If the husband has a good job, family would be the most important thing for the wife. But if not, the wife herself must find work, too. There are also women who are balancing work and home well. (Mariya, 28 years old, accountant)

Compared with Uzbekistan, it seems that far more women in Tajikistan, when asked whether family or work should take priority, choose family. In another survey of Uzbek women conducted by one of the authors, 52 percent of women opted for family, while 44 percent could not say either way or chose work¹⁴. In addition, when asked what they considered to be an ideal woman, Tajik women were more likely to say a full-time housewife than those from Uzbekistan, which suggests that many people in Tajikistan hold so-called traditional values, even compared with people from other countries in Central Asia.

¹⁴ Igarashi (2009), p.28.

III. *Work/Life Balance: the Case of Tajikistan*

As far as both men and women are concerned, striking a balance between work and other aspects of life is coming to be seen, in both developed countries and even in Japan, as important for maintaining the birth rate over the long term and broadening and diversifying ways of living¹⁵. Although work/life balance cannot really be expected to be seen in Tajikistan, the authors asked the women there about how they view it.

As the authors have already seen, the proportion of working women in Tajikistan is high, and 31 of the 40 women interviewed for this survey had jobs. During the interviews, the women were asked who does the housework, and who looks after the children. On the whole, their responses indicated that most women perform the bulk of the housework, though there are few exceptions. For example, one woman lives with her son and his wife, and this wife does the housework. Another has divorced, and her parents do the housework. Supporting the general trend, though, many women said that housework was women's work, and said that housework was a woman's primary job, and that regarding it as women's second job was not discriminatory.

Right now, I'm doing all the housework after I come home from work. My mother helps me with it, too. This is only women's job. I don't think housekeeping is the second women's job; it's the 'first' job. But women also need their own profession to have money they may spend on their own. I myself think that raising children is the wife's responsibility. I don't have children, though. Concerning how to share all the duties at home, I think the wife must do the housework and take care of the children. The husband should work for money to support his family. (Temurova, 22 years old, shop seller)

All of the housework except grocery shopping is done by me. It takes about 4 hours a day. Housework and child care are not men's work. Rather than saying that household tasks are second job for women, women must be able to manage the work in the first place. (Zamira, 28 years old, Non-governmental organization interpreter)

I do most of the housework. My husband comes home about once in 2 months. My daughters help me with the household chores. Housework is the second important job for women, and I don't think such an idea is discriminating against women. Housework and child care are basically women's work, and husbands should work and earn money – that's how it should be, I think. (Rafcoat, 54 years old, cleaning woman)

I manage all the household jobs. My husband does go for grocery shopping, though. I raised my children by myself. I agree with the idea that housework is women's second work. I think it is most natural, rather than discriminating. (Rano, 48 years old, cook)

After work, I cook meals, clean around the house, and do the laundry. My husband does the everyday shopping, and he also helps me with the housework. I don't think that housework is only women's work, but I also don't think it is discriminating to say that

¹⁵ The Cabinet Office of Japan, *The Charter on Work/life Balance*, 2007. <http://www8.cao.go.jp/wlb/government/20barrier_html/20html/charter.html> (in Japanese)

house chores are women's responsibility. Women need to be able to manage everything. (Shukriya, 27 years old, seamstress)

I cook meals, do the laundry, cleaning, and work in the fields with my mother-in-law, and the wife of my husband's brother. It isn't prejudice against women to say that housework is women's job. It is actually the most important job for women. (Salekha, 24 years old, housewife)

When I am at home, I do all the housework. My family helps me, too, but I think housework is basically women's work. Since every married woman is a housewife to begin with, I don't think it is prejudice to say that housework is women's job. It is also unnecessary to decide who must do the chores or child rearing. (Shokirova, 51 years old, kindergartener)

Just one woman said that she spent little time on housework. She also said that men and women should share responsibility for housework and child-rearing.

I don't spend so much time on housework. My children help me out. I think it is a prejudice against women to say that housework is women's responsibility. Husbands and wives must cooperate in housekeeping and child rearing. (Gulnora, 42 years old, teacher)

In addition, one woman said she and her husband actually did share the housework.

My husband and I do the housework. I think it should be that way. In our case, for instance, my husband does the grocery shopping. My daughter helps us, too. Housework is certainly women's second work, and I don't think it is discriminating to say so. (Makhbuba, 54 years old, university lecturer)

Even so, Makhbuba gives the fact that her husband buys groceries as an example of the way they share "housework." This may indicate that she views having her husband do the shopping and herself doing everything else as constituting a sharing of duties. Because many of the women surveyed cited shopping as a household duty actually performed by their husbands or as one of their husband's roles, the "sharing" that Makhbuba talks about probably does not refer to all household tasks. If this is the case, then all the women surveyed are responsible for actual housework.

A certain number of women, however, believe that ideally couples should share the housework and help each other, even though at the moment they are performing household duties and taking care of the children on their own. Many women felt that couples ought to share responsibility for child-rearing. Let us begin by hearing from women who believe that couples should share housework and child-rearing duties:

The time I spend for housework is about 4 to 6 hours a day. I don't think housework is only women's work. My children help me out, too. I think it is a discrimination against women to say that women should do all the housework. Husbands and wives should share the responsibilities of jobs around the house and child care. (Dilovar, 31 years old, engineer)

I do all the housework. It takes about 5-6 hours a day, which means 35-40 hours a week. My mother helps me with the housekeeping, and my husband takes care of the livestock. I

think it is discriminating against women to say 'housework is women's second job.' Men might not understand that. I am mainly responsible for teaching discipline to our children because my husband is busy working at two places. Ultimately, I wish to share the responsibilities of raising our children and housework between my husband and me. (Anora, 29 years old, housewife)

I do all the housework. I spend about 25 – 30 hours on household chores a week. There is no one who helps me with it. I do think housework is women's second job, because my husband does not consider housework as a job. I am the one to take care of the child, also. It would be idealistic to share the tasks of housework and child care with my husband. (Aziza, 28 years old, seamstress)

All the housework is my responsibility except for grocery shopping. I spend 20 – 24 hours per week on housework. I don't ask for someone to help me basically. "Housework is women's second job." I think it is a discriminating idea. Bringing up children is also my responsibility, since my husband is working at two places. It would be good if the husband and wife share the responsibilities of housework and child care. But in reality, it doesn't always work that way. (Zarrina, 30 years old, hotel housekeeper)

What I do at home are housework and child care. My husband does the grocery shopping. He also helps me with the housework. I don't agree to someone saying that 'housework is women's second job.' Household tasks should be done by both husbands and wives. In our case, we could say that we take care of our children together, because my husband helps me with it when he has the time. I think housework and child rearing should be done by both of us. (Makhina, 23 years old, housewife)

Regarding housework, my daughter living next door helps me for about 20 - 25 hours a week. My daughter comes to help me out, but I think the husband should also do the house chores. Housework is women's second responsibility, and I don't think it is discriminating to say so. But still, it would be best if both the husband and wife shared the tasks of the housework. (Shakhodat, 44 years old, bakery)

In addition, others expressed views that seem to emphasize the need for couples to share the burden of child-rearing:

I do all the housework which is usually considered women's job. I spend about 20 hours a week to do the household tasks. Taking care of the livestock is about the only job my husband does around the house. I think housework is the second job for women. I don't think it is discriminating to say such a thing. My husband and I both take care of the children – I am not the only one doing it. (Akbaroi, 57 years old, bakery)

I spend 4-5 hours on housework and my mother-in-law helps me with it. I don't think it is discriminating against women to say that housework is women's second work. I look after my child, but my mother-in-law supports me, too. It would be best if the husband and wife helped each other out. But as long as problems are solved in a peaceful manner, it doesn't really matter. (Gavkharoi, 22 years old, housewife)

I spend about 36 hours a week on housework and child care. I don't think it is discrimination against women to say that duties at home are women's second work. All

women would do it anyway. I look after the children, but it would be better if both the father and mother were involved in child rearing. (Madina, 26 years old, housewife)

I spend 3-4 hours a day on all duties at home. Housework is women's most important job, not second. It is the women's responsibility to do the housework. Concerning child care, it is not only the wife's job. The husband should become involved in child rearing in spite he must work to support his family economically. (Mavzuna, 30 years old, product controller)

In the survey of gender attitudes in former Soviet countries conducted by one of the authors, which was also referred to earlier, the authors found that a general trend in Russia, Georgia, and Uzbekistan was that while housework was seen as women's work, child-rearing was regarded as something that women should share with their husbands¹⁶. Tajikistan seems to display a similar pattern.

Some women regard wives as being responsible for housework and child-rearing, while others believe that ideally men and women should share household and child-rearing duties. Whatever their beliefs, though, the reality seems to be that women do most of the housework and child-rearing. Aside from shopping, women are basically performing all the household duties.

As the authors have seen, in Tajik society women also work, yet they also do almost all the household tasks and child-rearing. Despite this, penetration of electrical appliances, which would make housework easier, is low. In other words, women are shouldering a double burden: both holding down jobs and performing housework. Full-time housewives seem to spend a lot of time on housework. The figures the authors have seen show that it is difficult to imagine work/life balance being achieved soon, and that there is still a long way to go.

IV. *The Husband Is the Master of the Household: Verifying by Large-Scale Micro Data*

As the authors have already seen, there remains little likelihood of work/life balance being achieved in Tajikistan, with moves toward it probably being hindered traditional values.

Before the Russian Revolution of 1917, it was described that men from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan served as slaves to capitalists from the Russian Empire. The women, on the other hand, were described as "the slaves to those slaves," which indicates how harshly they were treated¹⁷.

1. Soviet Experience and its Legacy

The Soviet government promoted modernization in Central Asia, and a drive to liberate women was a major pillar of this policy. The first thing that needed to be done was to replace Sharia law and local legal systems such as Adat law with Soviet law¹⁸.

The Soviet government organized women and put them into massive educational programs.

¹⁶ Igarashi (2009), p.29.

¹⁷ Astanova (1977), p.126.

¹⁸ Tyurin (1962), p.5.

In 1919, a women's section was established within the Communist Party, which began publishing magazines such as "*Women working in industry*" and "*Women working in agriculture*"¹⁹. In the autumn of the same year, the women's section implemented a large-scale political and educational program for women in Central Asia, and established women's clubs, lounges for discussing cultural education, and so on. As a result, Central Asian women seem to have come to accept a new way of living different from the one they had been accustomed to until then²⁰.

Nevertheless, even if women go out to work, and no longer have to wear veils, there may be no change in the status of husbands as masters of households. With regard to this subject, a head of ideology for the Jamoat office and a 40-year-old woman had the following to say during the authors' interview²¹ with her:

Tajik tradition holds that men are at the centre of the family, and the natural state of affairs has been for men to be the breadwinners. For economic reasons, however, women have also started going out to work during the last ten years, so gender relationships are changing. During the Soviet era, Tajik women bore a lot of children, usually no fewer than five or six. As a result, working women were rare. Before, only 25 percent of women in this area had jobs.

In this area, half the managers in every workplace are women. Yet the husband remains the centre of the family even if his wife has gone to work and achieved a high-status job. For example, I hold a fairly important post at my workplace, but when I go back home, my husband is the boss. My husband's opinions are like the law in our household. It's the same in every family. Both women and men work, and in society they are treated equally. At home, however, the husband is the king.

Even though women are working alongside men in society, she says that it is normal for men to be the master of the household. However, even if the husband is the boss, there are still signs of democracy. Many women, for example, said that the husband does not decide how many children they will have, that instead the couple decide together. Of the 40 women the authors surveyed, only four said that their husband decided how many children they would have (See Table 2)²².

Power relationships within the home and relationships between men and women are obviously subtle, and therefore need to be approached carefully. With this survey, the authors were unable to find out much about relationships between men and women²³. Therefore, to supplement the findings the authors were able to obtain, let the authors now examine the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), which are large-scale sampling surveys conducted by UNICEF²⁴.

¹⁹ Tishkin (1995), p.162.

²⁰ Tyurin (1962), p.6.

²¹ The interview was conducted on August 17, 2010 in a suburb of Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

²² "My husband decided on how many children we would like to have." (Dilovar, 31 years old, engineer); "My husband mainly decided on how many children we would want." (Anora, 29 years old, housewife); "My ex-husband decided on how many children we would like to have." (Chumagul, 22 year old, seamstress); "My husband decided on the number of our children." (Molhira, 30 years old, housewife)

²³ Although the authors did ask the subjects about this, they were evasive, and the authors were unable to use their responses.

The MICS were carried out mainly in 1999 and 2005²⁵. They are repeated cross-sectional surveys of individual women and children. The surveys are aimed at finding out about the health of children, the reproductive health of women, and so on, and are conducted in five Central Asian countries of the former Soviet Union, and in Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia. For Tajikistan, the most recent usable data is from the survey performed in 2005, so the authors will use the micro data from that. The sample includes 6,245 women of reproductive age. The sample is representative of the country's population as a whole, and also of the regions concerned.

2. Power Relationships within Households: Domestic Violence

Let the authors use MICS data to look at attitudes to domestic violence, which indicates the relationship between a husband and a wife in the household. The responses indicate that the human rights of women in Tajikistan may be being seriously infringed.

Table 3 shows responses to the question of when a husband was justified in beating his wife, with possible answers being when she goes out without telling him, when she neglects the children, when she refuses sex with him, and when she burns food. Data from other former Soviet countries is also provided to help comparison (Table 4).

TABLE 3. ATTITUDES TOWARD DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:
PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 15-49 YEARS WHO BELIEVE A HUSBAND IS JUSTIFIED IN
BEATING HIS WIFE/PARTNER IN VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, TAJIKISTAN, 2005

	When she goes out without telling him	When she neglects the children	When she argues with him	When she refuses sex with him	When she burns the food	For any of these reasons*	Number of women aged 15-49 years currently married or in union
Region							
Dushanbe	39.7	29.4	40.6	28.5	28.6	47.7	512
Khatlon	66.1	65.2	76.8	57.6	47.7	82.8	2048
Sogd	66.4	62.5	69.6	43.2	44.0	76.2	2166
DRD	60.2	62.2	64.0	49.1	42.7	69.8	1365
GBAO	52.4	56.9	56.0	38.4	45.8	69.4	154
Area							
Urban	53.0	50.8	60.1	38.9	36.7	67.3	1727
Rural	66.0	64.2	71.1	51.3	46.4	77.2	4518
Women's Education Level							
None	71.8	70.5	78.4	49.0	43.4	84.1	64
Primary	74.9	70.9	82.9	62.6	58.0	86.4	103
Incomplete Secondary	66.3	64.3	72.0	53.8	46.3	77.3	1313
Complete Secondary	65.0	63.5	70.1	49.4	46.0	76.6	3886
Secondary Special	54.3	47.7	59.8	37.7	34.6	68.4	490
Higher Education	28.9	28.6	38.0	21.1	19.8	46.0	387

Source: prepared by the authors from MICS3.

²⁴ Detailed description on MICS survey design is available at the UNICEF website, < http://www.childinfo.org/mics3_surveys.html>. The authors are grateful to UNICEF for permitting usage of micro data set.

²⁵ In some countries the surveys were conducted in 2000 or in 2006.

TABLE 4. ATTITUDES TOWARD DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:
PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 15-49 YEARS WHO BELIEVE A HUSBAND IS JUSTIFIED IN
BEATING HIS WIFE/PARTNER IN VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, OTHER FSU STATES

		When she goes out without telling him	When she neglects the children	When she argues with him	When she refuses sex with him	When she burns the food
Kyrgyz	Urban	13.1	17.1	14.5	6.5	6.1
	Rural	26.3	26.4	34	11.7	15.4
Kazakhstan	Urban	2.5	7	4.2	1.5	1.9
	Rural	2.4	7.3	4.4	1.7	1.7
Georga	Urban	1.3	4.5	1.5	1	0.7
	Rural	2.4	7.5	3.5	1.7	1.5

Source: prepared by the authors from MICS3.

All this data is from MICS Round 3, which was conducted in 2005 or 2006. It shows that in Tajikistan domestic violence is not recognised as such, and provides powerful clues about the domestic situations of wives. In Kazakhstan, which is also in Central Asia, and in Georgia, which is a Christian country, the proportion of women who feel that it is acceptable to be beaten by their husbands in the various situations is extremely low. Although the proportion of such women is not as high in Kyrgyz as it is in Tajikistan, there is more acceptance of domestic violence there than in Kazakhstan. Looking back on the responses concerning contraception that the authors discussed earlier, it seems that IUD use is not safeguarding women's reproductive rights, but is merely serving to protect them from demands for sex from their husbands. It is therefore difficult to believe that couples are deciding to use the IUD following mutual discussions on the matter. Compared with other former Soviet countries, it seems possible to assume that husbands in Tajikistan hold absolute power within the household.

What is interesting, however, is how levels of education affect the responses in the cross-tabulation shown in Table 3. In Tajikistan, there is a clear negative correlation between a woman's education level and the likelihood of her tolerating domestic violence from her husband. The higher a woman's level of education, the less likely she is to accept it. If this trend can be generalised and represents a direct cause-effect relationship, then it ought to be pointed out that a rise in education levels in Tajikistan could dramatically change the status of women in the home.

V. *In Place of a Conclusion: Gender Education in Tajikistan*

The Education Academy of Tajikistan has introduced gender education²⁶. Gender initiatives are beginning to be taken in Tajikistan, with gender education getting underway, a common program of craft and home economics education set to be introduced for boys and girls, and so on. However, the common craft and home economics program is aimed at

²⁶ The rest of this section is based on an interview with Irina Karimova, head of the Education Academy of Tajikistan at her office on August 19, 2010.

eliminating the separation of roles for men and women, and is therefore at odds with Tajikistan tradition, which means that opposition can be expected from society. Even the head of the Academy of Education, who is working on tackling gender issues, holds the view that Tajik tradition should be maintained and not destroyed²⁷, which means that the gender situation is probably not going to change easily. The superior status of men in the household, in particular, will not be easy to change, and it seems unlikely that any drive to make major changes will emerge in the near future.

Regarding the separation of male and female roles within the household, it is clear that in Tajikistan housework and child-rearing is women's work. This is considered natural, so Tajik women will probably continue to bear the burden of housework and taking care of children. This also relates to the power of husbands within the household. In other words, work/life balance will not be easy to achieve. Nevertheless, Tajikistan and other Islamic countries of the former Soviet Union display characteristics not found in other Islamic societies. The literacy rate among women is high, as is the proportion of working women, and a certain degree of gender equality has been achieved (though this varies among the Islamic countries of the former Soviet Union). If a name were to be chosen for such nations, it might be "former-Soviet-type Islamic countries." In the future, it will be necessary to keep a close watch on how these former Soviet-type Islamic countries change in response to economic trends.

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²⁷ "Even if we eradicate male and female stereotypes, we must not forget the Tajik mentality. It has developed over several centuries, and we must not go so far as to destroy the good aspects of it. Some things can be accepted in Europe, but not in Central Asia. In other words, there are things that should not be destroyed, things that should not be changed. Females should be feminine. Each woman should decide on her own role in her home." - by the words of Irina Karimova, head of the Education Academy of Tajikistan at her office on August 19, 2010.

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