

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

Department of Journalism

Master's Thesis

2024

Pari Abbasli

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

Department of Journalism

**Behind the Byline: Gender Dynamics in Azerbaijani
Media from the Perspective of Female Journalists**

Master's Thesis

Author of the Thesis: Pari Abbasli

Study programme: Journalism

Supervisor: Mgr. Anna Hrbáčková

Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.
4. During the preparation of this thesis, the author did not use any external software or tool/service.

In Prague on April 25th, 2024

Pari Abbasli


References

Abbasli, P. (2024). *Behind the Byline: Gender Dynamics in Azerbaijani Media from the Perspective of Female Journalists*, 59 p. Master thesis. Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism, Supervisor Mgr. Anna Hrbáčková.

Length of the Thesis: 59 pages, 151 666 characters

**Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism FSV UK
Research proposal for Erasmus Mundus Journalism Diploma Thesis**

THIS PART TO BE FILLED BY STUDENT:

Student's surname and given name: Pari Abbasli	Registry stamp: / Razítko podatelny: 
Start of studies for EMJ (in Aarhus): 1st of September, 2022	
Your faculty e-mail: 59146630@fsv.cuni.cz	
Study program/form of study: Erasmus Mundus Journalism	
Thesis title in English: Behind the Byline: Gender Dynamics in Azerbaijan's Journalism Sector	
Expected date of submission (semester, academic year) (Thesis must be submitted according to the Academic Calendar.) Summer Semester 2023/24	
Main research question (max. 250 characters): 1. What are the prevailing gender dynamics within Azerbaijan's journalism sector? 2. How do gender dynamics influence the experiences of women journalists?	
Current state of research on the topic (max. 1800 characters): <i>(References are in the Basic Literature section)</i> In recent years, there has been a growing focus on gender dynamics, leading to extensive global research on women journalists' rights, their activities, and the barriers they encounter. For instance, Zviyita and Mare (2023) conducted a comprehensive report on gender-based violence in Namibian newsrooms, while Mitchelstein et al. (2020) examined women's reporters in Argentine news sites. It's worth noting that Melki (2016, 2021) is a prominent researcher who has made significant contributions to the field of gender dynamics within the Lebanese journalism sector. Her work delves into the interactions between female and male journalists within newsrooms, as well as their	

relationships with sources and audiences. Her findings reveal that the Lebanese journalism sphere is predominantly male-dominated, with women journalists encountering numerous challenges and being undervalued based on their gender.

Frank's (2013) work stands out, where she explores the journey of women journalists from their education to entering newsrooms. Her findings indicate that despite being the majority among journalism students, women still remain noticeably underrepresented in top journalistic roles.

In contrast, research on women journalists in Azerbaijan is relatively limited. While **Mammadov (2021, 2021)** briefly touches on general statistics about Azerbaijani journalists, women journalists were also included, a comprehensive examination is yet to be conducted.

Mehrabov's (2015, 2016) studies shed light on the broader situation of activists and journalists in Azerbaijan, including the treatment of women journalists online and the threats they face from the government.

Given the current gap in specific research on the gender dynamics and challenges faced by Azerbaijani women journalists within the journalism sector, "**Behind the Byline: Gender Dynamics in Azerbaijan's Journalism Sector**" seeks to address this by delving into the problems faced by women journalists and understanding how stereotypes impact their careers.

Expected theoretical framework (max. 1800 characters):

In Azerbaijan, women journalists often face discrimination when it comes to covering specific topics like the economy, writing opinion pieces, conducting in-depth political analyses, or engaging in journalistic research. This makes it challenging for them to actively participate in the journalism sector.

Due to Azerbaijan's somewhat conservative societal norms, families, particularly parents, exert substantial influence on young individuals' choices regarding their profession or university major. Parents often believe that young women may have a more stable and comfortable life pursuing careers in teaching or medicine, rather than considering journalism as a priority profession for their daughters.

While it's true that more than half of the students in journalism faculties are female, and newsrooms may also have a substantial presence of women journalists, leadership roles for women and their recognition in the journalism sector remain undervalued in Azerbaijan.

In light of these circumstances, the thesis will incorporate **Critical Feminist Theory** into its theoretical framework. This theory offers valuable insights into how power dynamics, particularly in authoritarian contexts, shape the experiences of women journalists. It emphasizes the importance of critically examining and challenging established power structures and societal norms.

Given that the research questions aim to comprehend the gender dynamics and challenges faced by women journalists, the critical feminist theory proves valuable in unpacking power dynamics and identifying the specific factors that create a challenging environment for women individuals.

Expected methodology, and methods for data gathering and analysis (max. 1800 characters):

Qualitative research is the primary method employed in this thesis. It involves conducting **online, semi-structured interviews** with women journalists in Azerbaijan to gather their personal experiences, perspectives, and challenges. This approach is expected to yield detailed and nuanced data.

Fifteen women journalists will be invited to participate, representing a diverse range of backgrounds. This will include individuals from both **pro-governmental** and **non-governmental** media outlets, as well as those associated with **neutral** sources. The selection will encompass both **traditional media** like television, radio, and newspapers, as well as **online platforms**.

Various factors will be considered to ensure a comprehensive exploration of women journalists' experiences. Interviewees will be chosen with a **purposive sampling method**. Variables for purposive sampling method will include a broad age range, encompassing both younger and older generations. The participants will also have a varied range of professional experience, including those with **less than 5 years, less than 10 years, and more than 10 years** in the field. Additionally, the study will consider different areas of professional specialization, such as entertainment, politics, sports, social as well as whether or not participants graduated from a journalism faculty. These diverse perspectives will contribute to a well-rounded understanding of the experiences of women journalists in Azerbaijan.

Expected research design (data to be analyzed, for example, the titles of analyzed newspapers and selected time period):

Interviews will serve as the primary source of data.

The interviews are scheduled to take place via **Zoom** between **January and February 2024**. Each interview is expected to last between **20 to 40 minutes**. It's crucial to cover all the **semi-structured questions**, but there's also room for additional questions if needed. Furthermore, the interviews will be **transcribed**.

The interviews will be **recorded**, and I will take **notes** during the session to highlight key answers or recurring themes raised by the interviewees.

During the call, I will ensure to obtain informed **consent** from each participant, which will be documented for record-keeping. To safeguard their privacy and identity, pseudonyms can be used instead of real names if needed. The data will be securely stored in a **restricted-access Google Drive folder**. In the thesis, participants with privacy concerns will be identified by general descriptions (e.g., "Participant A, Journalist with 5 years of experience").

Additionally, I will examine supplementary information from online platforms like [Radio Liberty](#), [Reporters without Borders](#), and [Transparency International](#) to gain a broader contextual understanding. The data will span a lifetime period.

Expected thesis structure (chapters and subchapters with brief description of their content):

Abstract, keywords

Introduction

Literature review / Theoretical framework

Critical Feminist Theory

Women journalists / Gender in journalism

Journalism in Azerbaijan

Methodology and Sample

Qualitative Research Method

Semi-structured interviews

Choice of respondents

Method of analysis

Analytical part

Conclusion

Discussion, Limits

References

Basic literature list (at least 5 most important works related to the topic and the method(s) of analysis; all works should be briefly characterized on 2-5 lines):

Franks, S., (2013). Women and Journalism. Bloomsbury Publishing.

This study stands out, where Franks explores the journey of women journalists from their education to entering newsrooms. Her findings indicate that despite being the majority among journalism students, women still remain noticeably underrepresented in top journalistic roles.

Melki, J. P., & Mallat, S., E., (2016). Block Her Entry, Keep Her Down and Push Her Out, Journalism Studies, 17(1), 57-79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.962919>

This research aimed to understand the persistent marginalization of women journalists in Arab countries. The evidence shows that gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and a lack of supportive environments all contribute to discouraging and preventing women from joining the news industry.

Melki, J., & Hitti, E., (2021). The Domestic Tethering of Lebanese and Arab Women Journalists and News Managers, Journalism Practice, 15(3), 288-307, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1715822>

Study shows that despite women journalists collectively attaining higher levels of education compared to their male counterparts, they are less likely to hold supervisory roles. Additionally, in terms of career progression and views on leadership, there are significant disparities between men and women.

Mammadov, R., (2021). Political Activist, Citizen's Helper, and Entertainer: A Study of Professional Role Perception of Journalists in Azerbaijan, Journalism Practice, 15(7), 911-936, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1758189>

The research centers on the role perceptions of journalists in Azerbaijan. Given that journalists are often tasked with a substantial workload and many newsrooms struggle with task management, it's important to interpret the study's conclusions in light of both the survey results and the author's extensive experience as a media practitioner in Azerbaijani media environments for over a decade.

Mammadov, R., (2021). *Portrait of an Azerbaijani journalist: unpaid, dissatisfied, but nevertheless passionate and committed. Caucasus Survey*, 9(1), 60-83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23761199.2020.1867437>

The research delves into the key attributes of journalists in Azerbaijan, including their earnings, employment status (full-time or part-time), religious affiliation, and educational qualifications. Mammadov's research sheds light on the multifaceted attributes of journalists in Azerbaijan. The study not only delves into their demographic and professional characteristics but also offers valuable insights into their job satisfaction, work conditions, and overall dedication to their profession.

Mehrabov, I., (2016). *Azerbaijani Women, Online Mediatized Activism and Offline Mass Mobilization*, *Soc. Sci.* 2016, 5(4), 60, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci5040060>

Mehrabov's work delves into the intersection of online mediatized activism and offline mass mobilization among Azerbaijani women. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of how digital platforms serve as catalysts for social and political engagement, particularly for women in Azerbaijan.

Mehrabov, I., (2015). *Gendered Surveillance and Media Usage in Post-Soviet Space: The Case of Azerbaijan*, *Baltic Worlds*, ISSN 2000-2955, E-ISSN 2001-7308, 8(1-2), 44-48, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8225-3447>

This study investigates how gender roles and surveillance impact how people in Azerbaijan use media after the Soviet era. It explores how these factors shape the way individuals engage with information and media in Azerbaijani society.

Mitchelstein, E., Boczkowski, P. J., Andelman, V., Etenberg, P., Weinstein, M., & Bombau, T. (2020). *Whose voices are heard? The byline gender gap on Argentine news sites*. *Journalism*, 21(3), 307-326, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919848183>

Study focuses on gender representation in bylines on news websites in Argentina. The research sheds light on the disparity in the voices heard in the media, particularly in terms of authorship, highlighting the need for increased gender equality in journalistic representation.

Zviyita, I., & Mare, A. (2023). *Same threats, different platforms? Female journalists' experiences of online gender-based violence in selected newsrooms in Namibia*. *Journalism*, 0(0), <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849231183815>

Study explores the experiences of female journalists in Namibia regarding online gender-based violence. The research investigates whether similar threats are encountered across different online platforms, providing valuable insights into the challenges faced by women journalists in the digital landscape.

Related theses and dissertations (list of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses defended at Charles University or other academic institutions in the last five years):

Di Mauro, T., (2022). Does gender play a role in peace journalism practices? An analysis of the Armenian and Azerbaijani coverage of the 44 days Karabakh war. Digitální repozitář UK. <https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/177082>

The objective of this study was to examine the implementation of peace journalism during the 44-day Karabakh war, with a specific focus on how the gender of the reporter influenced the application of this approach. The findings revealed that there is no consensus regarding the impact of the reporter's gender on the practice of peace journalism. Interestingly, both male and female reporters from both sides displayed a willingness to adopt peace journalism practices.

Stricker, A. M., (2022). How gendered discrimination limits women's professional practice in conflict reporting in Latin America. Digitální repozitář UK. <https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/176423>

The research indicates that female journalists in Latin America face objectification, where their appearance is prioritized over their professional abilities. They frequently encounter limitations in covering specific subjects.

Date / Signature of the student:

09. 11. 2023

...
[Redacted Signature]

THIS PART TO BE FILLED BY THE ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR:	
I confirm that I have consulted this research proposal with the author and that the proposal is related to my field of expertise at the Faculty of Social Sciences.	
I agree to be the Thesis supervisor.	
HRBÁČKOVÁ ANNA	9.11.2023
Surname and name of the supervisor	Date / Signature of the supervisor
Further recommendations related to the topic, structure and methods for analysis:	
Further recommendations of literature related to the topic:	

The research proposal has to be printed, signed and submitted to the FSV UK registry office (podatelna) in two copies, by **November 15**, addressed to the Program Coordinator. Accepted research proposals have to be picked up at the Program Coordinator's Office, Sandra Lábová. The accepted research proposal needs to be included in the hard copy version of the submitted thesis.

RESEARCH PROPOSALS NEED TO BE APPROVED BY THE HEAD OF ERASMUS MUNDUS JOURNALISM PROGRAM.

Abstract

In the dynamic realm of Azerbaijani journalism, the experiences of female journalists remain a significant yet understudied aspect. Guided by critical feminist theory, this thesis seeks to explore the prevailing gender dynamics and their impact on the personal and professional lives of female journalists. Through qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with fifteen female journalists, the study uncovers nuanced insights into the challenges faced by women in Azerbaijani journalism. From familial resistance to societal skepticism, female journalists navigate a complex web of expectations and limitations, often balancing their professional aspirations with traditional gender roles. The findings highlight disparities in compensation, in workplace treatment, and the need for female journalists to adapt their behavior to fit into a predominantly male-centric industry.

The thesis also sheds light on the broader societal context, exploring how cultural norms and realities shape the experiences of female journalists in Azerbaijan. Despite facing obstacles and constraints, these journalists demonstrate resilience and determination in their pursuit of truth and storytelling. The research concludes with recommendations for future studies and initiatives aimed at addressing the gender-related challenges encountered by female journalists, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable media landscape in Azerbaijan.

Abstrakt

V dynamické oblasti ázerbájdžánské žurnalistiky zůstávají zkušenosti novinářek významným, avšak nedostatečně prozkoumaným aspektem. Tato práce, vedená kritickou feministickou teorií, se snaží prozkoumat převládající genderové dynamika a jejich dopad na osobní a profesní život novinářek. Prostřednictvím kvalitativní analýzy polostrukturovaných rozhovorů vedených s patnácti novinářkami studie odhaluje nuance v pohledu na výzvy, kterým ženy v ázerbájdžánské žurnalistice čelí. Novinářky se pohybují ve složité síti očekávání a omezení, od rodinného odporu po společenský skepticismus, a často vyvažují své profesní aspirace s tradičními genderovými rolemi. Zjištění poukazují na rozdíly v odměňování, v zacházení na pracovišti a na potřebu novinářek přizpůsobit své chování tak, aby zapadly do převážně mužsky orientovaného odvětví.

Práce také osvětluje širší společenský kontext a zkoumá, jak kulturní normy a reality formují

zkušenosti novinářek v Ázerbájdžánu. Přestože čelí překážkám a omezením, tyto novinářky prokazují odolnost a odhodlání ve své snaze o pravdu a sdělování příběhů. V závěru výzkumu jsou uvedena doporučení pro budoucí studie a iniciativy zaměřené na řešení genderových problémů, s nimiž se novinářky setkávají, a prosazování inkluzivnějšího a spravedlivějšího mediálního prostředí v Ázerbájdžánu.

Keywords

Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani journalism, gender in Azerbaijani journalism, Azerbaijani female journalists, women and journalism, South Caucasus, post-Soviet media, gender in journalism.

Klíčová slova

Ázerbájdžán, ázerbájdžánská žurnalistika, gender v ázerbájdžánské žurnalistice, ázerbájdžánské novinářky, ženy a žurnalistika, jižní Kavkaz, postsovětská média, gender v žurnalistice.

Title

Behind the Byline: Gender Dynamics in Azerbaijani Media from the Perspective of Female Journalists

Název práce

Schováno za jménem: Genderová dynamika v oblasti ázerbájdžánské žurnalistiky z pohledu novinářek

Acknowledgement

I am grateful especially to my supervisor Mgr. Anna Hrbáčková for her invaluable mentorship, support, and guidance throughout the entirety of this research journey. I always feel like she believes the importance of the topic of my thesis as much as I do.

Our professors at Danmarks Medie- og Journalisthøjskole (DMJX) and Aarhus University deserve recognition for their invaluable contributions throughout the first year of my master's program. Their mentorship was instrumental in advancing my comprehension of journalism and academia, thereby heightening the difficulty level of my second year of master's studies.

The interviewees, female journalists from Azerbaijan, whose candid insights and experiences formed the foundation of this study, deserve special acknowledgment for their willingness to share their stories, which was instrumental in shedding light on the complexities of gender dynamics in Azerbaijani journalism.

Additionally, heartfelt appreciation goes out to the journalists in Azerbaijan, who tirelessly advocate for the fundamental principles of freedom of speech and expression, despite facing numerous challenges and risks in their pursuit of truth and justice.

Hər şey üçün çox sağ olun!

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	8
1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	11
1.1 Critical Perspectives – Critical Feminist Theory	11
1.2 Gender Dynamics in Journalism and Challenges for Female Journalists	13
1.3 Azerbaijan's Journalism Landscape	17
1.3.1 Trends in Azerbaijani Journalism through Critical Lens	18
1.3.2 Prominent Media Outlets	21
1.4 Gender Dynamics in Azerbaijani Journalism	23
1.4.1 Gender Balance in the Newsrooms.....	23
1.4.2 Being a Target as a Female Journalist in Azerbaijan	25
1.4.3 Arrested Female Journalists	26
2. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE.....	28
2.1 Choice of Respondents.....	29
2.2 Semi-structured Interviews.....	32
2.3 Interview Guide	33
2.4 Ethical Procedure.....	36
3. ANALYSIS.....	36
3.1 Prevailing Gender Dynamics within Azerbaijan's Journalism Field.....	37
3.1.1 Gender Representation in Newsrooms.....	38
3.1.2 Impact of Societal Norms and Expectations	42
3.1.3 Professional Challenges and Barriers	47
3.2 Influence of Gender Dynamics on the Experiences of Female Journalists	51
3.2.1 Dynamics and Motivational Effects.....	52
3.2.2 Impact on Personal Identity.....	54
3.2.3 Safety Concerns and Security Challenges.....	55
4. DISCUSSION.....	58
CONCLUSION.....	62
SUMMARY.....	65
LIST OF REFERENCES	66
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	72

Introduction

Imagine the busy newsrooms of Azerbaijan, where journalists work tirelessly to bring stories to light. Amidst this hustle and bustle, another story quietly unfolds – the story of gender dynamics in journalism. Here, female journalists navigate a landscape shaped by tradition and progress, their voices echoing resilience and restraint as they weave stories that reflect the nation's stance on women and journalism. According to the Freedom in the World Index (Freedom House, 2024) Azerbaijan is categorized as not a free country. Last year, the country ranked among so-called the worst of the worst list of the report, shares this classification (in the 9th place) with countries like North Korea (3rd place), Belarus (8th place), and China (9th place) (Freedom House, 2023). In 2024, Azerbaijan was ranked seventh. However, in the same year, the country was no longer included in the list of the worsts, suggesting a shift in the ranking regarding freedom within the territories.

Because of the chaotic history of the country as occupations by the Russian Empire (early 19th century-1917), then Soviet Socialist Republic (1922-1991), societal, emotional and economic damages of Karabakh Wars (1988-1991, 2020) and current political regime, there are a lot of problems that arise on the side of freedom of speech and rights of journalists. Despite its tense political situation, it is compelling to explore Azerbaijani society and its perspectives on gender issues. As a post-Soviet country neighboring Iran, Russia, Georgia and Armenia, Azerbaijan has a complex history and it is known for its rich cultural blend influenced by religion, science, Soviet nostalgia, Turkic heritage and culture. During the Soviet period (1922-1991), Azerbaijan experienced significant advancements, including a high literacy rate of about 99% of the entire population (Abdinov, 1996). Researchers have also observed that the country has been trending towards a more traditional and typical Muslim society, although most of the younger generation show openness to change and support the preservation of conservative values (Bushina & Ryabichenko, 2018).

What adds a unique dimension is the examination of the attitude of this nation, which holds a special respect for women. However, this special treatment for women can also impose limitations and restrictions on them, as females are often responsible for unpaid housework and childcare. Therefore, it is important to understand how society views females in various roles and professions, including journalism. Heyat (2002) found that many Azerbaijani women believe that a real woman's place is in the home, attending to household duties. Even though women began to play an active role in community-building, the

workplace, and other spheres during the Soviet period, their domestic responsibilities at home remained unchanged. Cultivating strong family ties and maintaining networks among women are crucial aspects of life for many women worldwide, particularly in Muslim societies and also in Azerbaijan (Heyat, 2002). Those works can be outdated, but the ideas remain similar in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's intricate historical and cultural landscape, marked by concepts like high respect such as seeing women as 'symbol of ethnic and national identity' (Heyat, 2002, p. 187), 'imposition of strict codes of morality on women' (Heyat, 2008, p. 362) and masculinity (Heyat, 2002, p. 141) concerning gender dynamics, presents significant obstacles for women in the workforce. Journalism, often facing challenges when journalists criticize the government, is notably respected, particularly in media outlets aligned with the government. However, researches on the gender dynamics within such contexts remain scarce, given the myriad of challenges the profession already faces, including safety, economic concerns, and overall danger surrounding it. Despite these pressing priorities, the author's experience in various internships and professional work in journalism has underscored the importance of addressing the gender-related challenges encountered by female journalists. This conviction has steered her focus towards investigating the gender dynamics within Azerbaijan's journalism field. Given Franks' (2013) extensive documentation of the insults, harassment, disrespect, and unique challenges faced by female journalists in different parts of the world, the author of the thesis believes that Azerbaijani female journalists deserve to have their voices and experiences acknowledged, heard and valued. The aim of the thesis is to bridge existing gaps in the understanding of gender dynamics within the field of journalism in Azerbaijan. The research questions seek to explore the primary gender dynamics prevalent in Azerbaijani journalism and its impact on the work, professional life, choices, and careers of female journalists in Azerbaijan. To address these inquiries, a purposive sampling method was employed to select fifteen female journalists who were then interviewed online via video calls using semi-structured interviews during January - March, 2024.

Several modifications were made to the final proposal details, including adjustments to the main thesis title and research questions. The initial title, "Behind the Byline: Gender Dynamics in Azerbaijan's Journalism Sector," was revised to "Behind the Byline: Gender Dynamics in Azerbaijani Media from the Perspective of Female Journalists." The addition of "Perspective of Female Journalists" was prompted by the requirement to encompass all genders' viewpoints in the thesis, especially if not explicitly mentioned. Since the thesis

exclusively explores the ideas and perspectives of female journalists, it seemed appropriate to specify this in the title, particularly as male, or queer (only one non-binary interviewee is included) journalists' perspectives are not covered. Additionally, "Journalism sector/field" was replaced with "media" to streamline the title, even though the primary focus remains on journalism including researching gender dynamics both in newsrooms and working fields. The alterations in the arrangement or substitution of words in the research questions stem from the same rationale behind the changes in the title.

This research, guided by critical feminist theory, seeks to address the research questions by presenting the prevailing gender dynamics within Azerbaijan's journalism field and its influence on the experiences of female journalists. The research aims to explore the challenges encountered by female journalists in selecting this profession, their educational backgrounds, the obstacles they face during their journalistic activities, the issues observed in the online presence of female journalists, and additional relevant aspects.

The study reveals a multifaceted portrait of gender dynamics within Azerbaijani journalism, highlighting the pervasive influence of societal norms and patriarchal structures on the experiences of female journalists. Familial resistance emerges as a significant barrier for women pursuing careers in journalism. Once in the workforce, female journalists encounter disparities in compensation and treatment, often feeling sidelined or undervalued in male-dominated newsrooms. Despite these challenges, the research uncovers a sense of resilience and determination among female journalists, who navigate the complexities of their profession with a blend of pragmatism and perseverance.

Moreover, the thesis underscores the need for greater recognition and support for female journalists in Azerbaijan, advocating for initiatives that promote gender equality and inclusion within the media landscape. By amplifying the voices and experiences of female journalists, the study seeks to catalyze meaningful change in an industry long dominated by traditional gender norms and power structures.

1. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The literature review section of this study embarks on a thorough exploration of diverse critical perspectives and theoretical frameworks, with a primary emphasis on critical feminist theory. Within this framework, the thesis delves into the intricate gender dynamics within journalism, scrutinizing the myriad experiences and challenges encountered by female journalists. Additionally, it examines the overarching patterns and trends observed in

the workplace or during the journalistic process. Furthermore, the literature review examines the specific context of Azerbaijan's journalism landscape, offering insights into the unique historical, societal, and cultural factors shaping the country's media environment. This section also discusses the gender dynamics specific to Azerbaijani journalism, shedding light on the distinctive challenges and opportunities faced by female journalists within this context. Through this comprehensive exploration, the literature review endeavors to provide a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between gender, journalism, and media landscapes, both globally and within Azerbaijan.

1.1 Critical Perspectives – Critical Feminist Theory

Emerging from feminist movements in the mid-20th century, critical feminist theory has roots in critical theory, which questions societal norms and power dynamics. Influential scholars such as Simone de Beauvoir (2015), bell hooks (1984), Judith Butler (2006), and Kimberlé Crenshaw (2013) have significantly contributed to its development. This theoretical framework builds upon the common features of contemporary critical theory, including post-fundamentalism and constructionism in metatheory, a focus on power dynamics and transformation, and an emphasis on understanding social and cultural reproduction through the lens of agency and structure (Kushner & Morrow, 2003). Additionally, critical feminist theory aligns with the universal scope of critique while recognizing the importance of local contexts and advocating for specific ethics of care. Critical feminist theory, which analyzes recurring gender norms in society critically, aids in both studying prevailing stereotypes and comprehending the power dynamics and patriarchal factors contributing to the formation of these stereotypes, persisting and evolving in the societal backdrop. Critical feminist theorists assert that power is predominantly wielded by men, and this is the primary cause of the suppression of women, and resulting in the devaluation of their knowledge, perspectives, and experiences (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2021). A critical feminist perspective is characterized by its attention to gender alongside other sources of social and cultural inequality, highlighting its transformative potential (Kushner & Morrow, 2003).

While hooks (1984) critiqued the notion that equality is experienced uniformly by all women, her insights help the author to shed light on the nuanced understanding of the term 'gender dynamics,' a concept that resonates with the interviewed Azerbaijani female journalists. Her critical discourse provides a framework for analyzing the perspectives of

female journalists regarding gender dynamics within the Azerbaijani journalism landscape. By examining whether these journalists perceive gender dynamics as equitable in Azerbaijan's journalism field and exploring their experiences of discrimination, the study searches for the narratives and experiences that shape female journalists' perceptions. hooks' recognition of intersectionality where she criticizes middle or high class white feminists for not being aware of class and race privileges, is also important, as it acknowledges that females come from diverse social, racial, and economic backgrounds (hooks, 1984, p. 18). This intersectional lens is crucial for embracing the experiences of all women under feminism, as it reveals how privilege or lack thereof can influence one's perception and experience of sexism, misogyny, and harassment. Understanding these nuances assist the author in contextualizing the responses of female journalists and gaining insight into the underlying factors that inform their views. This is also discussed in Rhode's (1990) work, which highlights that most women do not experience the world or its practices in the same manner as described by most critical feminists (Rhode, 1989; Belkin, 1989). Therefore, there is no singular right way to articulate these experiences (Rhode, 1990).

As Wigginton and Lafrance (2019) highlight, a crucial question to pose in the realm of critical feminist studies is how the research can contribute to the transformation of culture and discourses, deconstructing and analyzing existing narratives. This research has the opportunity to thoroughly investigate the experiences of Azerbaijani female journalists, exploring the challenges they face and examining the sources of unequal judgments and behavioral patterns. The theory challenges traditional gender norms and stereotypes that reinforce narratives repressing and discriminating against women in society. This aspect enables the study to explore the narratives and experiences of the challenges encountered by Azerbaijani women journalists in the journalism field.

In framing the theoretical approach, insights from feminist critical analysis, which aligns with Bartlett's (1989) emphasis on practical reasoning and engagement with real-world problems were collected. Bartlett's perspective resonates with the exploration of gender dynamics in Azerbaijani journalism, where it seeks to understand the lived experiences of female journalists amidst institutionalized injustice. By grounding the analysis in the practical realities faced by women in the field, it aims to move beyond abstract principles and theoretical frameworks, much like Bartlett (1989) advocates. This approach allows the thesis to research nuanced narratives of gender discrimination, harassment, and inequality that penetrate the journalistic landscape, echoing the narrative styles. Through this

lens, approach focuses to illuminate the personal consequences of gendered dynamics in journalism and contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women journalists in Azerbaijan.

1.2 Gender Dynamics in Journalism and Challenges for Female Journalists

Gender dynamics within the realm of journalism stand as a critical area of inquiry, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural contexts. This section embarks on an exploration of the intricate interplay between gender and journalism, drawing insights from diverse regions including the UK (Franks, 2013; Thompson, 2013), USA (Steiner, 2017), Europe (Franks, 2013; Ruoho & Torkkola, 2018), Middle East (Melki & Mallat, 2016; Melki & Hitti, 2021), and Latin American countries (Mitchelstein et al., 2020; Stricker, 2022). Aim of that section is to clarify the multifaceted landscape of gender representation, power dynamics, and professional experiences within the field of journalism, with a particular focus on the experiences of female journalists. By examining the gendered dynamics inherent in newsroom cultures, editorial practices, and career pathways, this section aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the complexities that underlie the experiences of female journalists worldwide and how it can be differentiated with the general practice of gender dynamics in Azerbaijani journalism.

Gender concepts play a crucial role in journalism as they influence not only the stories covered but also how they are framed, presented to the public, and shared to shape the public opinion. The active participation of women in journalism is vital for ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and experiences are reflected in media narratives. Moreover, accurate and fair representations of women in the media contribute to broader societal perceptions and attitudes towards gender roles and equality. As such, addressing gender dynamics within journalism is not only essential for fostering a more inclusive and representative media landscape but also for advancing gender equality in society, politics, justice, and legislation as a whole.

As one of the most prominent authors in the field of gender and journalism, Steiner (2017) highlighted that women journalists have been considered controversial and unwelcomed in U.S. media since the 1880s, as many men believed that journalism de-feminized women. In recent discussions, attention has shifted towards examining

intersectionality, delving into concepts like class, race, age, and sexuality, among others (Steiner, 2017). Surprisingly, gender theorists have yet to investigate whether journalism contributes to the establishment of a gendered system. Ruoho and Torkkola (2018) argue for viewing journalism as a socio-culturally constructed gender institution, replete with its unique array of ideologies, practices, and norms. It is within this context that the gender system takes shape within the journalistic domain.

Franks (2013) addressed the pervasive and extensive gender-related challenges in journalism, particularly centering on women, in her book titled 'Women and Journalism'. She discussed how education often acts as a 'pink-collar ghetto' (p. 8) for female journalists, who may dominate journalism classrooms but face obstacles on the path from classrooms at universities to newsrooms in media outlets, a recurring pattern in the field. In 2012, there was a trend in notable UK journalism programs where female enrollment exceeded that of male students by a significant margin, often at a ratio of 2:1 (Franks, 2013).

It appeared that women showed a stronger inclination towards pursuing formal education in journalism as a means to enter the field, while men were more inclined to enter directly, relying on practical experience and networking. Franks (2013) highlights the persistence of the gender pay gap in developed European countries compared to Asian countries, despite the generally higher wage levels. The salary gap between male and female journalists stood at 25% in Belgium, while in Indonesia, it was slightly lower at 22%. Another concerning trend is the issue of age discrimination faced by female journalists, particularly evident in the UK, where many media outlets or television channels opt to part ways with them once female presenters reach a certain age, often citing the impact on their physical appearance. Overall, in the UK and other Western countries, the female journalist workforce tends to be younger, more junior, and receive lower wages compared to their male colleagues (Franks, 2013). Even though it is a globally recognized pattern that female journalists are often not motivated to pursue higher positions such as leadership roles and senior positions, Ruoho and Torkkola (2018) discovered that this phenomenon is deeply ingrained in culture. In Nordic countries, for instance, young male journalists actively balance their family and work lives, which in turn enables females to achieve a better work-life balance as well (Ruoho & Torkkola, 2018). These concerns also prompt new inquiries about the doability of achieving gender equality in the workplace without concurrent gender equality in domestic settings (Melki & Hitti, 2021).

On the contrary, while many Lebanese managers in the journalism field assume that female journalists who have families and children may lose interest or drive to pursue senior positions, journalists themselves feel that balancing family and career poses a significant challenge, reflecting the average marriage age of 30 in Lebanon (Melki & Mallat, 2016). According to Melki and Mallat's study, which involved 341 participants, the majority have shorter careers in journalism, often less than ten years. Moreover, women journalists tend to occupy roles as reporters (56%) or editors (30%) rather than senior positions or leadership roles. This literature contains information on gender dynamics in Arab countries, especially in Lebanon, which may seem distant from Azerbaijan. However, considering the similarities between Azerbaijan and Arab countries in terms of Middle Eastern traditions and cultural connections—such as Azerbaijan's proximity to Iran and its shared cultural elements with Turkish and Persian cultures—it is reasonable to expect similar patterns to emerge in Azerbaijani journalism as well.

Another point is the divergence in subject matter preferences between men and women journalists. Steiner (2017) noted that while male journalists tend to gravitate towards covering topics such as politics, criminal justice, sports, science and technology, their female counterparts predominantly report on health, lifestyle, education, and religious news in the U.S. Despite sports news being categorized as soft and health coverage as hard topics, traditional gendered perspectives and biases persist within journalism. Consequently, women are often associated with soft news, while men are more commonly associated with hard news, reflecting long standing gender stereotypes within the profession (Steiner, 2017). Mitchelstein et al. (2020) discovered that bylines predominantly reflect male authorship in journalistic pieces, including political, sports, crime news, and opinion pieces, compared to female bylines (33%) in the largest media outlets and newsrooms in Argentina.

Within the intersectionality approach, Zviyita and Mare (2023) discovered that the rise of digital journalism in Namibia has led to an increase in online attacks and threats targeting female journalists. These attacks are often rooted in patriarchal and sexist ideologies, exacerbated by the country's Christian, colonial, and patriarchal cultural context. Moreover, researchers found that trolls predominantly use patriarchal and sexist ideas to harass female journalists, creating a challenging environment for them to respond effectively, since female journalists are afraid to reply because they think it will be used against them in the future (Zviyita & Mare, 2023). Thompson (2013) also identified gender disparities in online threats directed at journalists. Deputy editor Helen Lewis noted that

online comments targeting male journalists differ significantly from those targeting female journalists in terms of intensity, level of abuse. Similarly, columnist Laurie Penny observed that while male journalists are often criticized for their intelligence, female journalists are more likely to face online harassment regarding their appearance (Thompson, 2013).

Another perspective is presented by Bartimus et al. (2002), who found that many women journalists who approach war reporting from an emotional perspective reported that their editors assigned them to cover war primarily from a women's angle. Despite the potentially gendered nature of these assignments, female journalists often accepted them as it provided them with the opportunity to report from war zones and cover conflicts (Bartimus et al., 2002). Stricker (2022) conducted interview-based research and revealed that gender-based discrimination significantly constrains women's professional practice in conflict reporting in Latin America. This discrimination affects journalists' safety, health, and mental well-being, often leading them to consider leaving the country, changing newsrooms, or abandoning the profession altogether. Additionally, female journalists may censor or silence themselves to avoid covering certain topics or may alter their reporting style due to these discriminatory practices (Stricker, 2022). Feminist media research addresses topics such as the comparatively reduced representation of women in news reporting, the gendered distribution of roles within news organizations, and the overarching patriarchal structure of the media sector (Mitchelstein et al., 2020).

Typically, researchers seeking to explore the agendas, challenges, and discriminations encountered by women journalists in their professional roles often adopt feminist media theory (Melki & Hitti, 2021; Mitchelstein et al., 2020), feminist theory (Steiner, 2017), and theories of patriarchy (Ruoho & Torkkola, 2018), among others. The prevalence of studies highlighting the actual obstacles faced by female journalists on a regular basis has contributed to the increased usage of terms such as 'women and journalism' and 'female journalists' in academic research. Given Azerbaijan's rich cultural, historical, and economic tapestry, examining patterns in Azerbaijani journalism through the lens of female journalists necessitated a broader exploration of journalism from a gendered perspective on a global scale. This approach facilitated a clearer understanding of the main objectives, and angles of the research questions posed in this thesis. In the subsequent discussion chapter, tracing similar or contrasting patterns in global media and Azerbaijani media are more coherent and insightful.

1.3 Azerbaijan's Journalism Landscape

As one of the countries constituting the South Caucasus region, Azerbaijan is notable for its brief democratic period (1918-1920) in which 'Turkification, Islamization, and Modernization' were dominant ideologies (Tokluoglu, 2005) before the occupation of Soviet Socialist Republic (1920-1991). A key characteristic of the country, persisting in Azerbaijani the post-colonial thinking, stems from the synthesis of Soviet culture and the Islamic, Turkic world (Tohidi, 1996). Despite the Soviet promotion of atheism, Azerbaijani people, adept at preserving Islamic traditions without reaching radicalism and maintaining a commitment to secularism, managed to make significant strides in education during the Soviet era, despite facing repressions and the substantial loss of enlightened individuals. After gaining independence in 1991, the country's journalism field underwent significant transformations, becoming independent and pluralistic (Mammadov, 2020).

During the transition period from the Soviet era to independence, Azerbaijani youngsters faced considerable political, economic, and social challenges. Many were actively involved in politics or were well-informed about the country's agenda. Vahid Naxish (Mustafazade), one of the founders of the revolutionary Azerbaijani media channel, Azerbaijan News Service (ANS) TV, described how his entry into journalism was more of a natural progression for any active young person rather than a deliberate career choice:

"This (venturing into journalism) was primarily the demand of the time. When the events of January 20 (1990) occurred, we (active youngsters) were already directly immersed in these political processes—as journalists." (BBC News Azərbaycanca, 2023, original translation).

Lecturer in the Journalism Faculty of Baku State University, Professor Jahangir Mammadli, described Vahid Mustafazade and his colleagues as risk-takers: *"Chingiz, Vahid, and Seyfulla Mustafayev, along with the university graduate Mirshahin Aghayev, embarked on the ambitious idea of creating a television channel in the economically challenging circumstances of 1990. This quartet first picked up a video camera to bring the realities of Karabakh to the world"* (Mammadli, 2001, p. 71). ANS TV was mentioned as one and only media company that implements the world priority with the canons accepted in international journalism (Mammadli, 2001, p. 32). And so, Chingiz Mustafayev was posthumously

honored as a National Hero of Azerbaijan following his death during the First Karabakh War, where he was reporting as a journalist. Vahid Mustafayev and Seyfulla Mustafayev founded ANS TV, and until its closure in 2016, the television company played a significant role in shaping Azerbaijani journalism with its adoption of Western and modern ideologies, often intertwined with nationalist and patriotic sentiments, exemplified by its motto on ANS Radio: "*Döyüş alnımıza yazılıb*" (original translation, "Battle is in our fate").

Journalist and professor Gulu Maharramli describes the days when ANS was active as a distinct period, noting that many people tuned in to ANS due to its unique coverage of subjects, events, and news that were not addressed by other channels. Following the closure of ANS, other television channels have been unable to recreate that atmosphere or elevate it to a higher standard (Gardashova, 2021).

1.3.1 Trends in Azerbaijani Journalism through Critical Lens

Even as Azerbaijani journalism began to gain independence and resurgence in the late 1990s and early 2000s, terms like "*reket jurnalistikası*" (can be translated into "blackmail journalism") found their way into the lexicon. "Reket jurnalistikası" refers to the practice of demanding money from public figures, institutions, directors by threatening to publish information about their crimes. Mammadli (2001) observed that the corruption, and lack of accountability among state officials during that period contributed to the proliferation of "Reket jurnalistikası".

In a series of interviews conducted by the Modern.az on the 20th anniversary of Azerbaijan's independence in 2011, various media chiefs expressed skepticism about the state of journalism in Azerbaijan during the 2010s and lack of faith (Aghakhanov, 2011). Elchin Shikhli, editor-in-chief of "Ayna-Zerkalo" newspaper and chairman of the Azerbaijan Journalists' Union, highlighted the society's lack of trust in the press and stated that Azerbaijani journalism lags behind in terms of quality. Arif Aliyev, chairman of the "Yeni Nesil" Union of Journalists, noted a shift in perceptions, indicating that while journalism was once esteemed and attracted individuals without professional training, there is now a trend of highly qualified professionals, including those educated abroad, pursuing careers in other fields upon returning to the country (Aghakhanov, 2011).

In 2013-2014, journalists, social and political figures and activists were faced with lengthy prison terms, which was one of the major blows in the field of journalism and media in Azerbaijan (BBC News Azərbaycanca, 2013; BBC News Azərbaycanca, 2014b;

Geybulla, 2020). Independent media organizations have encountered notable hurdles, such as raids, confiscation of equipment, and the shuttering of affiliated NGOs. Authorities justify these actions by alleging legal infractions, financial irregularities, and involvement in money laundering. The Baku office of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty was shut down in 2014 during a period of significant repression targeting journalists, political and human rights activists (BBC News Azərbaycanca, 2014a). Currently, independent journalists from Baku work either as freelancers or full-time journalists remotely, with no physical office in Baku. The websites, including websites of other branches, cannot be accessed in Azerbaijan.

Admission to journalism faculties at private universities in Azerbaijan has been suspended since the 2012-2013 academic year. As a result, some private courses are being offered by institutions like the Baku School of Journalism and the Institution of Democratic Initiatives (Kazimov, n.d.). Trainings, seminars and workshops on podcasting and vlogging offered by various independent or international media organizations were well-received by Azerbaijani journalists (Ellada, 2011). In 2018, a training course titled "Journalism and Sustainable Development Goals" was organized by the United Nations - Azerbaijan, attracting approximately 70 media representatives, bloggers, vloggers, and independent writers affiliated with the UN Development Program (Elekberov, 2018).

There is another topic that remains problematic in Azerbaijani journalism and is viewed by few journalists as a form of 'bribery,' while most of the local journalists consider it a gesture of appreciation: the gifting of apartments to journalists. President Ilham Aliyev presented the first set of houses to journalists in 2013, followed by a second building in 2017, and a third building in 2023 (Official website of President of Azerbaijan, 2017; Globalinfo.az, 2023).

Currently, another type of development is underway in the realm of journalism in Azerbaijan. While most international media outlets do not receive assistance to establish offices in Baku, the government has initiated new measures to keep journalism updated and improved. This includes the establishment of the Media Development Agency in 2021, followed by the highly criticized 'New Media' law in 2022. It is also crucial to examine the new media landscape of Azerbaijan, including the key players of the 2020s - while there may not be much visible activity on the surface, behind the scenes, journalists are either grappling with challenges or enjoying a luxurious, bourgeois existence, depending on the political stance and relationship with the government of the media outlet they work for.

In generalizing this broad information, the media landscape in Azerbaijan is typically characterized by newsrooms that lack specialization. This means that most media outlets do not have dedicated departments for specific topics such as politics, social issues, or economics and such. This trend is particularly noticeable for outlets facing financial constraints or limitations. While there are some journalists who specialize in certain topics, it is not a common practice in Azerbaijani journalism. Additionally, the newspaper industry in Azerbaijan is largely inactive. Television and radio channels, on the other hand, are predominantly privately owned yet maintain pro-governmental stances.

The limited academic research on Azerbaijan journalism contributes to the scarcity of available information. Consequently, it is noteworthy to emphasize the recurrence of authors writing about Azerbaijani journalism in academic studies. Another factor to consider is that discussions regarding journalism in Azerbaijan often link it to political activism and online engagement. Therefore, even if we come across an article on journalism, the conclusions drawn may not be entirely accurate, as many instances pertain to journalists facing issues due to their political activities. Given the limited and narrow scope of civil society in the country, it can be asserted that Azerbaijani independent journalists are compelled by the current situation to assume dual roles as both journalists and active citizens, activists. This may lead to significant challenges of the distinction between journalists and activists in published studies. Mammadov's (2020) survey-based research reveals that Azerbaijani journalists encompass the roles of political activist, citizen helper, and entertainer. The research also indicates that although many journalists lack formal education or training related to journalism, especially journalists in the field demonstrate awareness of the principles and rules prevalent in Western journalism, striving to apply them as much as possible (Mammadov, 2020).

It is worth noting that many activists and journalists involved in political activities, investigating corruption in the country, and expressing anti-war sentiments have faced harassment irrespective of their gender in recent years as well. They have been summoned to security agencies such as police for statements, and their social media posts have been targeted with requests for deletion by authorities (Front Line Defenders, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2023).

1.3.2 Prominent Media Outlets

In the World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders, Azerbaijan ranks 151st in media freedom out of 180 countries (Reporters Without Borders, 2023). This is indicative of the media landscape in Azerbaijan, where independent or critical media outlets are notably absent from mainstream communication platforms such as television channels, radio frequencies, or newspapers. The majority of active television and radio channels are known for their pro-governmental stances.

This section elucidates the journalism landscape in Azerbaijan by providing examples of pro-governmental, neutral, and anti-governmental media outlets. Building on the comprehensive explanation provided in the methodology section regarding the criteria used to classify outlets as pro-governmental, neutral, or anti-governmental, the examples cited for these outlets primarily reflect the workplaces of the interviewees involved in the thesis.

Azerbaijan Television (AzTV) is a state-controlled national television channel, operating for 56 years. Real Television (RealTV) is regarded as one of the pro-government news media outlets, although it does not explicitly declare its affiliation. Nevertheless, a significant portion of its news coverage and featured content concerning the President of Azerbaijan or the government demonstrates a clear partisan bias. Mirshahin Agayev, the director of RealTV, has been the subject of intense speculation regarding a potential change in his political stance as ex-ANS director after the establishment of RealTV. Ictimai Television (ITV), the public television of Azerbaijan, is partially funded through advertisements and the government's state budget, as indicated on their official website (Official website of ITV, n.d.). The other pro-governmental coded broadcasting channel is ARB TV. Despite being a private and independent channel, it operates nationally and takes all measures to ensure that its content does not run afoul of government preferences. ARB TV is part of the ARB Media Group, which also includes ARB 24 as a news channel, regional channels such as "ARB Kapaz," "ARB Shaki," "ARB Aran," "ARB North," and "ARB South," along with "ARB Gunash" for children and the radio channel "Kapaz FM." One of Azerbaijan's largest news agencies, the Azerbaijani Press Agency (APA or APA Holding), led by female director Vusala Mahirgizi, one of the few female directors in the media industry, is also considered as pro-governmental. Despite self-identification as private, independent, and internationally recognized on their websites (Apa.az, n.d.) they are known for their pro-governmental stance. It is noteworthy that in 2018, Apa.az and other

affiliated websites such as Lent.az, Vesti.az, Apasport.az, and APA.TV were completely shut down after a correspondent distorted the president's speech, only restoring the operations a year later (Modern.az, 2018). Private "525 NewspaperV, Report News Agency (as a part of Global Media Group), newspaper of leading New Azerbaijan Party with the same name, Russian-speaking Caspian Broadcasting Company and Azad Azerbaijan Television is also known for their pro-governmental political stance.

Speaking of media organizations, platforms with a neutral political stance should be mentioned. One of them is Tbilisi-based Chai Khana, which focuses on storytelling from the South Caucasus, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Chai Khana does not have a branch or office in Baku, but they have an Azerbaijani service and frequently collaborate with Azerbaijani journalists, journalist-students, videographers, photographers, illustrators, and artists. Olay.az is another neutral website. The main genre of the news site is entertainment, and its political stance cannot be discerned through its materials. It refers to itself as an 'internet newspaper' and operates independently, as a personal initiative of celebrity journalist Parviz Huseyn. And finally, Azerbaijani News (ANews), founded in 2015, is considered neutral. The website was founded by Naila Balayeva, a correspondent for Reuters in Azerbaijan. ANews mainly operates to train junior or newly graduated journalists and journalism students.

Berlin-based Meydan TV is one of the media outlets categorized as anti-governmental, its websites being censored in Azerbaijan. Their photo manipulations on social media often receive criticism from citizens and parliament deputies, and most of their social media post comment sections are filled with trolls attempting to discredit the facts presented in their reports, news, or analyses. Baku-based Toplum TV is also classified as anti-governmental due to their uncensored research materials. They regularly produce investigative reports on incompetence or corruption within government ministries, security agencies like the police or Ministry of Defense, and business figures. Editor-in-chief Khadija Ismayil is internationally renowned for her investigative journalism and her confrontations with the government. The site also serves as a platform to enhance the professionalism of young individuals participating in journalism training through the 'Democracy School' program of the Institute for Democratic Initiatives (IDI). Abzas Media, operates as an investigative and news media channel. The director, assistant director and three journalists were arrested between December 2023 and January 2024 period (Lukáš, 2024). The website

is deemed anti-governmental due to its exposure of governmental corruption, the properties of the ruling family, and government officials or ministers abroad.

1.4 Gender Dynamics in Azerbaijani Journalism

Gender as a social construct significantly influences Azerbaijani society, shaping perceptions of women's roles, importance, and place in various spheres, including journalism. Unlike in some contexts where the distinction between "female" as a biological sex and "woman" as a gender identity is acknowledged, in Azerbaijan, these distinctions are not as pronounced. Here, sex and gender are often conflated or viewed as synonymous, with "female" and "woman" generally used interchangeably. This interconnectedness reflects a broader societal perspective where the characteristic between biological sex and gender identity is less emphasized or recognized.

1.4.1 Gender Balance in the Newsrooms

Report from International Federation of Journalists (2012) includes an analysis of the status of women journalists in Azerbaijani media. According to the findings, female journalists comprise approximately 40-45% of staff at national broadcasting TV stations, 25-30% at regional TV stations, 30-35% at nationally distributed newspapers, and 20-25% at regional newspapers. Only one of the leaders among the top 15 well known journalist organizations is a woman (International Federation of Journalists, 2012).

Study by Mammadov (2021, p. 7), conducted through surveys and interviews, reveals that the typical Azerbaijani journalist is a married man in his 30s belonging to the country's ethnic (Azerbaijani) and religious majority (Muslim) groups. Mammadov's study uncovered that 64% of surveyed media workers in Azerbaijan were male, with only 36% being female. Intriguingly, among individuals with more extensive professional backgrounds, particularly among editorial staff, the representation of women was notably lower. For instance, while 55% of respondents with less than 10 years of experience were female (Mammadov, 2021, p. 8), this figure plummeted to 29% among those with 11–20 years of experience. One contributing factor to the limited presence of women in Azerbaijani journalism, compared to global norms, is the tendency for many women to exit the field prematurely due to the predominant prioritization of family and household responsibilities in Azerbaijani women's lives. This underscores the importance of achieving gender equality in both domestic and professional spheres, as highlighted in preceding sections. Notably, the study also found that

83% of chief editors and 69% of editors were male (Mammadov, 2021, p. 9). The average Azerbaijani journalist has not pursued formal journalism studies but holds a higher education degree, frequently focusing on topics related to education (Mammadov, 2021). This, in turn, highlights an intriguing fact: the journalism faculties of three universities (Baku State University, Baku Slavic University, Azerbaijan Languages University) that offer journalism education in the capital city, Baku, are predominantly composed of women, both as students and teaching staff. Despite having the highest number of journalism students, Baku State University's journalism faculty has, throughout its history, appointed only male deans (Jurnalistika Elmi Tədqiqatlar Laboratoriyası, 2014). However, women have consistently held positions as deputy deans and department heads. Female students have consistently comprised the majority.

Di Mauro's (2022) research into the gender dynamics in war reporting during the Second Karabakh War shed light on significant differences in reporting approaches between male and female journalists in Azerbaijan. Among those interviewed, Azerbaijani journalist Gunel Safarova pointed out the relative ease with which she could access sources and conduct interviews compared to her male colleagues. However, a male journalist, Seymur Kazimov, highlighted a distinct trend: while men predominantly cover war, women are more inclined towards peace reporting, despite lacking direct war experience. This observation suggests a gendered division of labor within Azerbaijani journalism, where women may navigate societal expectations differently. Female journalists in Azerbaijan shared their experiences, noting that expressing anti-war sentiments is more socially acceptable for women than for men, who risk being perceived as weak. These insights underscore the complex interplay between gender, societal norms, and journalistic practice in conflict reporting contexts (Di Mauro, 2022).

1.4.2 Being a Target as a Female Journalist in Azerbaijan

While this thesis aims to delve deeper into the challenges faced by Azerbaijani female journalists in relation to their gender, it is crucial to highlight the significant case of Azerbaijani investigative journalist and radio host Khadija Ismayil, who stands out as one of the first female journalists in Azerbaijan to be arrested for her investigative activities. Considering Khadija Ismayil's case significant, the fact that the interviewees in the thesis repeatedly mention her case and use it as an example confirms that this journalist left a memorable mark on the activities or memories of independent female journalists as well as

the media sphere in Azerbaijan. In 2012, she was subjected to blackmail and threats of public humiliation, involving snapshots from a hidden camera in her bedroom. Mehrabov (2015) conducted a detailed study of this case. Undeterred by the blackmail and threats, Ismayil persisted in her investigative works. While Mehrabov's research addresses the emergence of both offline and online challenges against women journalists and activists, it also underscores that these challenges foster solidarity among polarized groups. In the case of Khadija Ismayil, it is noteworthy that even religious women expressed support for Ismayil (Mehrabov, 2015).

During the Second Karabakh War, immigrant journalist Arzu Geybullayeva, known for her anti-war stance, is one of the Azerbaijani journalists who faced online threats and harassment. While she initially received death threats due to her collaboration with the Armenian newspaper *Agos* in Turkey, these threats escalated notably on the eve of the 2020 war and continued after the conflict (Gerçek Gündem, 2014; Safety of Journalists Platform, 2020; Geybulla, 2023). Fatima Movlamli, another female journalist, found her personal photos and videos circulating on Telegram channels aimed at the organizers of the International Women's Day parade in 2021. Sevinj Osmangizi, an Azerbaijani journalist based in the United States, faced hate campaigns against her activity in social media channels. Pro-government media outlets criticized her for deviating from traditional gender roles and portrayed her as a neglectful mother and wife for relocating with her two children and leaving her husband behind (Amnesty International, 2021).

The Coalition For Women In Journalism has released several reports concerning female journalists in Azerbaijan. These reports highlight cases such as Aytan Mammadova, who was targeted by an anonymous assailant (The Coalition For Women In Journalism, 2022), and numerous female journalists who covered events like the Second Karabakh War in 2020 (The Coalition For Women In Journalism, 2020), as well as the presidential elections in 2024 (The Coalition For Women In Journalism, 2024).

As observed, female journalists in Azerbaijan are increasingly targeted and harassed for their professional activities, often extending to attacks on their personal lives. Those behind such threats seek to subject female journalists to public humiliation and shame in an attempt to silence their voices and deter their work. Unfortunately, even before governmental institutions, public opinion often contributes to the challenges faced by women in journalism, exacerbating their difficulties. Nonetheless, Mehrabov (2016) notes that it is believed that there is no necessity to monitor Azerbaijani women journalists and activists.

The prevailing patriarchal mindset in the country asserts that it is the responsibility of male family members to oversee and punish female members of the family, as well as the society itself (Mehrabov, 2016).

1.4.3 Arrested Female Journalists

Until 2023, there were relatively few incidents involving the arrest of female journalists, but notable exceptions stand out. For instance, in 2022, reporters Fatima Movlamli and Sevinj Sadigova were detained while covering a protest outside the President's Administration building. Accounts from journalists indicate that they were subjected to physical assault, verbal abuse, and brutality by the police during their detention (Bayramova, 2022). Instances of assault, physical violence, and harassment against independent female journalists serve as further examples in the case of Gunel Guliyeva, Vusala Hajiyeva, Aytaj Akhmedova, Turkan Bashirova and so on (Justice for Journalists, 2023). However, it is crucial to note that these actions reflect a broader trend of power structures targeting independent journalists, regardless of gender. While many female journalists who have been targeted by online and offline harassment and attacks are known for their critical and anti-governmental stances, one female journalist, Aygun Aliyeva from AZERTAG, one of the largest and official media agencies, attempted suicide after being dismissed from her position because of her critical Facebook post (BBC News Azərbaycanca, 2023).

In 2023, the arrest of journalists Sevinj Vagifgizi, Nargiz Absalamova, and Elnara Gasimova, along with the management and editorial members of Abzas Media Ulvi Hasanli and Muhammad Kekalov, who were covered political corruptions (Al Jazeera, 2023) underscored the government's willingness to target individuals regardless of gender, particularly in the realm of investigative journalism. Despite the crackdown on government-critical journalists, the arrests of female journalists have a profound impact on the media and journalism sphere. Such arrests are not commonly associated with female journalists, making each instance a significant event. This trend is particularly influential for families of young females and themselves considering journalism as a future profession.

While the persistent issues surrounding gender dynamics in Azerbaijan's media landscape continue to pose challenges for female journalists, there have been notable initiatives from the government aimed at addressing these concerns. For instance, the Media Development Agency has introduced training programs focused on 'Gender equality and professionalism in the media' (Official website of Media Development Agency, 2022).

Additionally, new courses on gender have been incorporated into the curriculum of journalism faculties at institutions such as Baku State University. However, the outcomes of these initiatives, particularly the impact of the training programs and courses at the university level, remain uncertain, making this area interesting for further research.

It is also worth noting that, preceding presidential elections, there is typically a spike in journalist arrests, coinciding with a noticeable shift in media narratives against the U.S. and Europe. This change has significantly heightened the challenges within the journalism landscape for independent journalists or those collaborating with international media outlets. Additionally, female journalists are particularly vulnerable during this period, who are often becoming the primary targets of hate campaigns aimed at shaming them within society.

Given the existing gap in academic research on the gender dynamics and challenges encountered by Azerbaijani female journalists in the journalism field, "Behind the Byline: Gender Dynamics in Azerbaijani Media from the Perspective of Female Journalists" aims to fill this void by examining the specific issues faced by women journalists and explaining how stereotypes influence their professional trajectories. This thesis aims to get the broader impact of these challenges, focusing on various aspects such as the educational experiences of female journalists, their professional journey, including encounters in newsrooms, and workplaces.

2. Methodology and Sample

The aim of this thesis is to uncover recurrent patterns regarding gender dynamics in the media, with a specific focus on journalism in Azerbaijan, as reported by female journalists. This master's thesis employs a qualitative research method, chosen deliberately to elicit more precise and comprehensive responses. The articulations of qualitative analysis aim to offer insights that render experiences comprehensible, recognizing that truth or reality encompasses both emotional and cognitive dimensions of equal significance (Patton, 2002). The utilization of qualitative research is considered particularly robust for conducting an in-depth exploration and analysis of the primary gender dynamics encountered by female journalists in the Azerbaijani journalism landscape, addressing the research questions effectively.

RQ1: What is the prevailing gender dynamics within Azerbaijan's journalism field?

RQ2: How does gender dynamics in journalism in Azerbaijan influence the experiences of female journalists?

Qualitative research methods, often employed in interview-based studies, are chosen for their distinctive focus on essence, content, patterns, and narratives. This approach aligns with the observation that many gender studies tend to concentrate on the reflection of individual stories, problems, and experiences (Palmer & Melki, 2016; Di Mauro, 2022; Zviyita & Mare, 2023). The qualitative method constitutes a pivotal aspect of the thesis's research design, and the choice of data used holds significant importance as a necessary nuance in its application. For the primary data collection method, semi-structured interviews were selected, aligning seamlessly with the theme and research methodology of the thesis. This method was deemed most appropriate, offering the flexibility needed to delve into the nuances of the topic and answering the research questions.

2.1 Choice of Respondents

To initiate the interviews, a deliberate selection process was undertaken, beginning with the compilation of a mapping list. This list encompassed female journalists representing various media outlets and possessing diverse backgrounds, ensuring a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences. Initially, the list comprised forty-five female journalists, a number chosen to facilitate further stages of the study. This strategic approach aimed to capture a comprehensive range of insights and narratives within the realm of Azerbaijani journalism, considering factors such as professional specialization, coverage areas, and organizational affiliations. Through purposive sampling (O'Muircheartaigh, 2008), the study sought to gather nuanced perspectives that reflect the multifaceted nature of gender dynamics in media, thereby enriching the qualitative and thematic analysis process.

While examining the primary draft list of forty-five female journalists, eight specific columns (*categories*, see Table 1) were created in order to select the best possible and various fifteen candidates for the interviews. Since two female journalists were arrested during the drafting process, they were labeled as "Arrested," and their data was not included in the categories. Additionally, one journalist who was selected as part of the main fifteen interviewees was arrested on the day of the interview. Consequently, her data from the categories were also deleted following the news of her arrest. The document was structured into eight columns to encompass a diverse array of data and employ the purposive sampling method, as outlined by Campbell et al. (2020). Given the study's focus on specific issues

within the journalism field in Azerbaijan, it is essential to include individuals who may hold varied and pertinent perspectives on the subject matter (Campbell et al., 2020). The first column comprises the names and surnames of the interviewees. Given that their responses may at times involve discussions about taboos or unwanted experiences in their newsrooms, such as assault by colleagues or editors, among other examples, all interviewees are kept anonymous for their protection. The second column in the document serves as data for age. Age groups were categorized as 18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, and 65 or over, following the recommendations of the Institute of Statistics of UNESCO (Institute of Statistics of UNESCO, n.d). One proportion was modified for the study's requirements; while the Institute suggests 'under 25 years,' the category was adjusted to 18 to 24 as the interviews were conducted solely with adult participants. The third column stores the years that journalists have been practicing journalism. To distinguish between junior, mid-level, and senior journalists, three categories were established: those with less than five years of experience, those with five to ten years, and those with more than ten years. This information was gathered primarily from the journalists' social media profiles on platforms like Facebook or Instagram, or from their Wikipedia pages if available and the previous interviews that were conducted with them. However, to ensure accuracy, fifteen selected participants were asked to verify this data. It is worth noting that many second, third, or fourth-year journalism students begin working as interns, which is counted as professional experience by themselves. Therefore, the category of 'less than five years' includes both internship and paid professional experience for junior journalists. The fourth column was dedicated to identifying the type of media platform each journalist works on - traditional or online media. The traditional media category included television, radio, and newspapers, while online media encompassed websites, online televisions, news agencies that exclusively publish online, and international news organizations that operate virtually in Azerbaijan. The fifth column was designated for roles such as correspondent, editor, director, editor-in-chief, reporter, photojournalist, presenter, manager of news service, among others. After adjusting the main data from the second and third columns based on diversity and representation criteria, the fifth column helped in confidently deciding the primary interviewees. The political orientation or economic dependencies of the employing companies were recorded in the sixth column, categorized as pro-governmental, anti-governmental, and neutral (BBC News, 2023, April 10). Pro-governmental media outlets are those with economic dependencies on the government, such as state-controlled Azerbaijan Television (AzTV)

and the main source of official government news, AZERTAG News Agency, 525 Newspaper, Report News Agency and so forth. Media outlets with a neutral political stance were predominantly identified as local branches of international news agencies or media organizations. They receive financial backing from international entities like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and Chai Khana. Anti-governmental media outlets were categorized as local or exiled independent media organizations that maintain a critical stance toward the government. Examples include Berlin-based Meydan TV, Baku-based Toplum TV, and Abzas Media. The seventh column was dedicated to specialization. As mentioned earlier, specialization is not extensively explored or emphasized in Azerbaijani media, and most newsrooms lack specific departments for each specialized genre. However, some journalists may align themselves or most of their works with a particular genre. Therefore, this column serves to document the specialization of female journalists in the main lists. The primary specializations covered by journalists include politics and social issues. Additionally, culture, economics, and entertainment were also mentioned as areas of focus. Since educational background was an important aspect of the interviews and can provide insight into the journalists' knowledge and individual perspectives on the journalism field in Azerbaijan today, the eighth column was used to collect data on whether the interviewees graduated from journalism faculties in, or if they graduated from different faculties altogether.

Since the main importance of this study is to show the main gender dynamics of the newsrooms which observed by female journalists, it is believed that fifteen is an adequate number to gather the main and objective, not time-consuming and not confusingly broad thought, at the same time, this number helps to gather female journalists with different educational, practical, and professional backgrounds. From the initial pool of forty-five female journalists, a final group of fifteen interviewees, (fourteen women, and one gender-neutral female, pronounced as she/they), was selected through the purposive sampling method.

	Age	Journalism practice	Type of Media	Role	Media affiliation	Specialization	Education in Journalism	Interview date
Participant 1	45 to 54	more than 10 years	Traditional	Editor	Pro-governmental	Politics / Social	Yes	January 12, 2024
Participant 2	45 to 54	more than 10 years	Online	Editor	Anti-governmental	Politics / Social	Yes	February 24, 2024
Participant 3	35 to 44	more than 10 years	Online	Manager	Neutral	Politics / Social	Yes	February 6, 2024
Participant 4	35 to 44	more than 10 years	Traditional	Presenter	Neutral	Politics / Social	Yes	February 14, 2024
Participant 5	25 to 34	from 5 to 10 years	Online	Reporter	Neutral	Politics / Social	Yes	February 29, 2024
Participant 6	25 to 34	from 5 to 10 years	Traditional	Deputy editor-in-chief	Pro-governmental	Politics / Social	Yes	February 4, 2024
Participant 7	18 to 24	less than 5 years	Online	Multimedia Journalist	Neutral	Politics / Social	Yes	January 11, 2024
Participant 8	18 to 24	less than 5 years	Online	Photojournalist	Pro-governmental	Social	No	January 10, 2024
Participant 9	45 to 54	more than 10 years	Online	Editorial Director	Neutral	Economics	Yes	February 17, 2024
Participant 10	25 to 34	less than 5 years	Online	Reporter	Pro-governmental	Politics / Social	Yes	January 12, 2024
Participant 11	18 to 24	less than 5 years	Online	Reporter	Neutral	Entertainment	No	January 25, 2024
Participant 12	25 to 34	more than 10 years	Traditional	Reporter	Pro-governmental	Culture / Literature	No	January 23, 2024
Participant 13	25 to 34	from 5 to 10 years	Online	Editor	Neutral	Investigative / Politics	Yes	February 2, 2024
Participant 14	25 to 34	from 5 to 10 years	Online	Multimedia Journalist	Anti-governmental	Politics / Social	No	February 9, 2024
Participant 15	25 to 34	from 5 to 10 years	Online	Multimedia Journalist	Neutral	Politics / Social	No	March 14, 2024

Table 1. List of participants.

Interviewees ages span from 22 to 52. Among them, four journalists have less than five years of experience, five of them have five to ten years, and six have more than ten years of experience. Of the participants, four work in traditional media outlets, while eleven are employed by online websites, online television channels, or international traditional media organizations without offices in Baku. Their job positions range from reporter to editorial director, with roles including one photojournalist, and one Baku service manager. The media outlets represented by the interviewees include five pro-governmental, two anti-governmental, and eight neutral organizations. It is worth noting that although only two journalists from anti-governmental media outlets were interviewed, they themselves were associated with various anti-governmental outlets in Azerbaijan. One important point to mention is that independent female journalists are often primarily working with various local media outlets as freelancers. For instance, two of the interviewed journalists primarily work with neutral media organizations but also collaborate as freelancers with anti-governmental outlets. While politics and social issues are the primary topics covered by most interviewees, one focuses on culture, particularly literature, another on entertainment, and one on economics, oil and gas topics. Additionally, one interviewee specializes in investigative journalism. Furthermore, ten of the interviewees are alumni of journalism faculties at either Baku State University (8) or Azerbaijan University of Languages (2). The utilization of purposive sampling played a pivotal role in getting maximum diversity within the selected group. This deliberate approach was instrumental in ensuring a comprehensive exploration of various perspectives, contributing to the richness and depth of insights gathered for this thesis.

2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Although other data collection techniques have their merits in qualitative research, the primary benefit of the semi-structured interview lies in its ability to enable interviewers to concentrate on the interviews while granting author the freedom to focus on pertinent ideas that may arise during the interview process (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Fifteen semi-structured interviews were held online in Azerbaijani language during January and March 2024. Conducting interviews in their native language not only aligns with the cultural context but also enhances the likelihood of participants articulating their thoughts and experiences more effectively. The interviews ranged from approximately 31 minutes to 1 hour and 8 minutes in length.

Additionally, a deliberate effort was made to streamline the interview process through the thoughtful direction of pre-prepared questions. This approach aimed to provide structure to the discussions while allowing for the organic flow of participants' narratives, ensuring a rich and comprehensive exploration of the nuanced topics under consideration. Given the probability of interviewees frequently embarking on business trips across different regions of Azerbaijan and generally operating within the country, logistical constraints preventing the author's physical presence, all interviews were conducted online via the Zoom platform. Initially, the recordings were transcribed manually in Azerbaijani language, as there is no fully accurate Azerbaijani transcription software available. The intelligent verbatim method was employed for transcription, wherein interviews were transcribed into more polished versions with redundant words or sounds removed. Important parts were translated into English. After the transcriptions were finalized, the author translated the main key responses or themes for presentation to the supervisor. The collected data underwent thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Alhojailan, 2012) to unveil recurring themes and patterns as well as interpretations within the interviews.

2.3 Interview Guide

The total set of questions comprises eighteen questions, with thirteen focusing on gender-specific inquiries. The remaining questions were of a general nature, aimed at gaining insights into the interviewee's work background, preparing them for the interview better, creating a more relaxed environment. The questions were organized into six sections: 'Introduction & Background,' 'Educational Background,' 'Gender Dynamics in Newsrooms,'

'Effect of Gender Dynamics during Work Processes,' 'Role of Leadership and Recognition,' and 'Improvement of Gender Dynamics within the Profession.' Each section serves a distinct purpose, addressing specific questions and aiming to gather particular patterns, as explained further in the following paragraphs. Interview guide can be found in Appendix 1. Despite the clarity of the constructed semi-structured interview guide, personalized questions were also made during the interviews to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives.

In the 'Introduction & Background' section of the interview, as previously stated, all demographic data collected from various internet sources was requested to be confirmed by the interviewees to prevent any misinterpretation or misrepresentation. These questions mainly consisted of closed-ended inquiries aimed at verifying information accurately (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Other questions sought to understand the interviewees' motivation for entering the media industry, particularly journalism. Additionally, they were asked how their personal and professional backgrounds had influenced their journey as journalists in Azerbaijan. This question encouraged interviewees to delve deeper into their own characteristics, habits, and the relationships between their education, lifestyle, personal traits, and career paths as journalists. Furthermore, interviewees were asked about in the framework of Azerbaijan's conservative society, if societal pressures or cultural norms impacted their professional careers as female journalists. Some additional questions were asked according to their answers about personal and professional backgrounds.

The second section 'Educational Background' pertained to their educational background and their perceptions of its efficacy in the field, particularly in terms of mentorship access during the work process. The first question was split into two groups: for journalism faculty alumni, how has their education prepared them (or not) for the unique challenges faced by women journalists in Azerbaijan? For those who did not graduate from journalism faculty, the question was framed differently: do they believe the lack of journalism education affects their role as female journalists? Given the frequent criticism of current journalism education in the three public universities and the prevalence of journalists without formal journalistic education, it was crucial to evaluate the interviewees' perspectives on their educational background and its impact on their experiences as female journalists. The subsequent questions centered on their access to mentorship or any professional guidance throughout their journalism career, beyond their education or training.

They were also asked if they perceived any differences between the access to such support for male journalists compared to female journalists.

The 'Gender Dynamics in Newsrooms' section played a pivotal role in the interview process, following the preceding sections designed to establish comfort with the interviewees. This segment was crafted to delve into the intricate layers of gender dynamics within newsrooms and their repercussions on female journalists in Azerbaijan. The questions were meticulously structured to elicit thoughtful and profound responses, aiming to unearth a deeper comprehension of how gender dynamics shapes both professional experiences and societal perceptions within the realms of traditional and online journalism. Given the diverse backgrounds of the interviewees, many of whom had experience across various newsrooms, they were prompted to discern and articulate differences in gender dynamics between these environments. Through this exploration, the interview sought to reveal the nuanced ways in which gender dynamics influences the careers and professional lives of female journalists. The questions were crafted to provide a platform for interviewees to candidly express their observations, concerns, and positive experiences, fostering an environment conducive to open dialogue and honest reflection.

'Effect of Gender Dynamics during Work Processes' was a more individual experience based section. The general questions about the interviewee's experience during the work process were asked. The interviewer was also very attentive about the asking process since it can trigger any emotional or angry memory of the interviewees. Representation of women in Azerbaijani media, global discussion on experiences of female journalists, economical factors behind the work process of female journalists and feminism concept in Azerbaijan were the main topics that were discussed.

The final sections, 'Role of Leadership and Recognition' and 'Improvement of Gender Dynamics within the Profession,' hold importance in the research. Given the notable absence of female leadership in journalism, gaining insights from journalists on this matter was important. Additionally, the interviewees were asked to share their perspectives on potential changes in gender dynamics within Azerbaijani media. These inquiries aimed to capture the interviewees' perceptions of leadership opportunities for women in the field and their recommendations for enhancing gender dynamics within journalism.

It is noteworthy to mention that during the interviews, additional questions were asked based on the interviewee's responses and their background information known to the author.

Prior to delving into specific inquiries about the challenges or positive aspects of their work, journalists were first engaged with general questions. These encompassed inquiries about personal information, the motivations that lead them into journalism, and the influence of their personal and professional backgrounds on their current professional journey. Subsequently, the interview progressed to touch upon topics such as educational experiences, observations of gender dynamics within editorial offices and newsrooms, the impact of existing gender dynamics on work processes, the representation of women in leadership and management positions, and its role in recognizing women's contributions. Additionally, discussions extended to exploring avenues for professional development in their careers.

The transcribed answers were coded within the framework of a hybrid approach, combining both inductive and deductive coding methods (Gupta, 2024). Predetermined codes were established based on the interview questions and the flow of the interviews. These included categories such as motivation, mental values, education, mentorship, newsrooms, leadership, portrayal of women in media, improvement and success, digitalization, economic factors, personal life, work process, and future expectations. While the coding process did not prioritize these predetermined codes, they were occasionally used to label responses. Additionally, numerical codes were applied during the coding process.

2.4 Ethical Procedure

In conducting the interviews, ethical considerations played an important role, particularly in ensuring that the interviewees felt comfortable and empowered to share their experiences candidly. The questions posed, such as those regarding prevailing gender dynamics within Azerbaijan's journalism field and the influence of these dynamics on women journalists, underscored the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment. This approach aimed to provide female journalists with a platform to express themselves openly, address societal challenges, and discuss personal matters without fear of judgment or repercussion. For this purpose, prior consent was obtained from all participants, allowing for the recording of interviews in both video and audio formats. Additionally, participants were asked again at the beginning of the interview if they consented to being recorded. All of the interviewees agreed to being recorded.

It was emphasized from the initial written interview request to the actual online (Zoom) interview process, that the recordings would solely be used in audio format and for

transcription purposes only to ensure accuracy. Interviewees were assured that their anonymity would be preserved throughout the data collection and analysis process for the thesis.

To ensure the safety and confidentiality of the interview participants, transcripts were not appended to the thesis. Although the interviews offer valuable insights into the unique experiences of the participants, including discussions about their workplaces and editors, the decision was made to exclude direct transcripts from the thesis to prevent potential identification of the interviewees. However, transcripts can be provided by the author upon request individually.

3. Analysis

The thesis analysis extensively utilizes the perspectives of fifteen female journalists specifically selected for their insights into the dynamics of Azerbaijani journalism from a female standpoint. Interview participants have varied individual experiences, spanning from ages 22 to 52, with the majority employed by online media outlets. Some have undertaken study visits in the U.S., while others have had opportunities to work as journalists or journalism fellows for European media outlets. While many primarily cover Azerbaijan's political and social agenda, some shared experiences in cultural and entertainment journalism.

Emphasizing the importance of showcasing the voices and experiences of these journalists, the analysis section aims to delve into their narratives and understandings. To achieve this objective, a thematic analysis approach was adopted (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Alhojailan, 2012), employing a hybrid method on coding (Gupta, 2024). Initially, predefined codes were established, but as the coding process unfolded, new codes emerged based on the unique insights shared by the interviewees, thus enriching the analytical framework. Following this process, thematic analysis was conducted to identify and explore the themes aligned with the research questions, providing a deeper understanding of the gender dynamics within Azerbaijani journalism.

The analysis is structured into two main categories, each directly addressing the research questions. These categories are further divided into subheadings, providing specific angles for exploration. The first section delves into the experiences of the interviewees regarding the prevailing gender dynamics in Azerbaijani journalism, while the second section explores the influence and effect of these dynamics on female journalists in

Azerbaijan. With the help of these sections, readers will gain insights into various themes, including challenges in newsrooms, topic selection, and the impact of societal norms on gender dynamics within journalism. Additionally, the analysis sheds light on the specific barriers and challenges faced by female journalists, with direct quotes illustrating the prevailing gender dynamics that contribute to these obstacles. The second part of the analysis focuses on more sensitive and personal aspects, such as the acceptance of mental values, the effects of the job on family dynamics, and the effect of gender dynamics on motivations of the journalists. Furthermore, it examines their journey in shaping personal identity within the journalism environment. Safety concerns and security challenges are also addressed within the analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of female journalists in Azerbaijan.

3.1 Prevailing Gender Dynamics within Azerbaijan's Journalism Field

Gender dynamics in journalism in Azerbaijan is mostly starting from the family, since some of the parents of female journalists can be concerned about their profession as well as their safety. Journalism is still considered as a male-dominated and manly profession. And it is also obvious that main gender dynamics are formed not only in the profession itself, but also by society, families, the online-virtual world, etc. This section serves to understand and answer the first research question: *What is the prevailing gender dynamics within Azerbaijan's journalism field?*

3.1.1 Gender Representation in Newsrooms

Newsrooms are one of the primary arenas to explore gender dynamics in journalism. The interactions between editors and female reporters offer valuable insights into the predominant dynamics shaping the newsroom agenda. This includes understanding the experiences, observations, and concerns of female journalists within this environment. It is intriguing to note that gender dynamics are evident even before the commencement of the work process, particularly in the hiring phase.

3.1.1.1 Gender Challenges in the Newsrooms

Participant 7 shed light on this issue, highlighting how societal stereotypes influence the hiring team, stating: *"When a job announcement is posted and specifies roles like video*

editors or camerapersons, it often implies a preference for males. However, women are equally capable of capturing high-quality footage. This suggests a bias within the editorial team toward female editors. Or they might specifically request a 'female presenter,' indicating a desire to attract viewers not just with news delivery but also with appearance. Once this bias is established within the editorial office, it perpetuates internally" (Participant 7, Personal communication, January 11, 2024).

After navigating the hiring process, newsrooms can become uncomfortable environments for female journalists. Participant 14 recounted her experience of encountering 'mansplaining' (explaining something to a woman in a condescending way assuming she does not know about it) when she began her new job. She described how male colleagues attempted to explain the work process to her, assuming she lacked understanding: *"When I started a new job, I encountered 'mansplaining' a couple of times. The issue is that if the editorial team has hired you, it means you have not started from zero, and they do not need someone who starts from scratch. I just felt that men often try to explain things excessively to a person. I do not know if they do it because I am a woman or just out of habit, I don't know. I call it mansplaining because when you are working on a material, they repeatedly remind you how to do your work"* (Participant 14, Personal communication, February 9, 2024).

Participant 8, a female interviewee who preferred to identify as gender-neutral, shared their experience of male editors repeatedly advising them on how to improve their skills as a photojournalist. They perceived this as an attempt by male editors to undermine their confidence, portraying them as inexperienced and naive. Notably, as a photojournalist, they navigated a predominantly male-dominated field, with only two other female photojournalists in Azerbaijan. While they received respect from male colleagues, it felt distant and tokenistic, leading them to feel discriminated against as they sensed that this respect was based on a perception of 'men and others': *"I had a colleague (male) who was a bit toxic towards me, and when I smoked in the office's smoking area, he would come into my room, close the door, and say to me, 'I'm telling you as a brother, don't smoke here, don't shake hands when you meet with other male workers.' He taught me how to behave in this environment so that I wouldn't be looked at strangely. There were such stereotypes"* (Participant 8, Personal communication, January 10, 2024).

While the dynamics within newsrooms are generally influenced by various factors, including the outlet's work process, it is important to acknowledge that television,

newspapers, and websites may prioritize differently. Participant 3 provided insights into the internal workings of a newspaper newsroom, recounting her experiences at her first workplace in Baku. She described an environment where female journalists were consistently belittled, scolded, and humiliated. Participant 3 also noted instances where women cried due to the humiliations they faced during their work. She highlighted the normalization of disrespectful behavior towards women within the editorial staff, with such conduct being perceived as commonplace rather than recognized as abuse. In that newspaper newsroom, women journalists often perceived the scolding and criticism as necessary for their professional development, believing that their editors were providing valuable training by yelling and shouting at them. They viewed this harsh treatment as a means of toughening them up and preparing them for the challenges of the industry (Participant 3, Personal communication, February 6, 2024).

On the other hand, Participant 4 shed light on the reality of being a television star in Azerbaijan during the 2010s. She noted that female journalists who transitioned to television hosting were often selected based on their behavior, intellect, diction, and of course, beauty. This suggests that while being in television is advantageous, some male colleagues even in the leadership positions in the newsrooms attempted to establish different forms of communication to become closer to female hosts. She encountered those experiences as uncomfortable situations that female hosts faced (Participant 4, Personal communication, February 14, 2024). Participant 3 observed that television channels, particularly AzTV where she interned for a month, tended to feminize their on-screen appearance, with men primarily holding decision-making positions behind the scenes while visible figures executed their directives (Participant 3, Personal communication, February 6, 2024).

When discussing leadership, it is intriguing to examine how the positions of leaders within newsrooms form gender dynamics. Participant 10 noted that male reporters typically gravitate towards male editors during discussions or problem-solving sessions, while female reporters may prefer to approach female editors. She suggested that there might be a psychological aspect to this behavior, where individuals feel they are better understood or their points are more effectively conveyed when interacting with someone of the same gender (Participant 10, Personal communication, January 12, 2024). When it comes to how female journalists are perceived in newsrooms by leaders, Participant 7 recounted her experiences in previous newsrooms where her editor would often choose female journalists to cover events that might be deemed tedious or requiring patience. She explained, "*there*

would be a serious event, and the journalist had to write a good story from there, or it required patience, the journalist had to sit there for 4 hours, in that case female journalists were sent there. Male journalists were never sent to such events because it was said that men were impatient" (Participant 7, Personal communication, January 11, 2024).

3.1.1.2 Perceptions of Female Colleagues

Examining the dynamics within newsrooms provides valuable insights into workplace patterns, but it is equally important to consider how female journalists perceive their female colleagues. Interestingly, although questions were not specifically directed at participants' opinions of their female coworkers, many had positive remarks to share about their female counterparts. These remarks contribute significantly to understanding the prevailing gender dynamics in newsrooms from female perspectives.

Female colleagues were described by the interviewees as fearless, active, patient, empathetic, courageous, and progressive. Participant 2 referred to her female colleagues as change-makers because they are actively involved in critical or opposition media, demonstrating fearlessness and a desire for change (Participant 2, Personal communication, February 24, 2024). Participant 1 also believed that women journalists are more active lately: "When we see a female journalist, we say, 'What a courageous journalist,' 'Regardless of being a woman, look at what she's doing'" (Participant 1, Personal communication, January 12, 2024).

Participant 13 made a comparison between female investigative journalists and male: "In the field of investigative journalism, women were already present. Because men lacked patience like women... For instance, in investigative journalism, my current issue is finding a male teammate. I can easily find women workers, both from Georgia and Azerbaijan. But finding a male colleague is a problem for me. Because when you bring a guy, you have to chase after him for everything 'Now do this.' They don't accommodate many things themselves. For example, when you say to male reporter that you should call someone and ask about something, they don't want to do it, they say, 'Is it possible if you do it on behalf of me?'" (Participant 13, Personal communication, February 2, 2024).

Perspective of Participant 4 thought a bit different from others, since she was in a very heated television environment. She thought the television industry is a space for more progressive women - it is a place for women who have broken free from societal constraints (Participant 4, Personal communication, February 14, 2024). This perspective reflected the

alternative side of being a television presenter as a female journalist during the 2010s, when female presenters were not only fighting with the professional challenges, but also with the societal views on gender.

3.1.1.3 Coverage Areas

Coverage areas of female journalists are not commonly perceived as a problem by the interviewees. While ten of them actively cover social and political issues in the country, they believe there is not much discrimination or stereotyping of female journalists' work in newsrooms.

However, Participant 12 shared her experience on this matter, highlighting gender-based challenges. She noted that societal conditions often encourage men to be more assertive and courageous, but the same encouragement is not extended to women: *"If you're a female journalist and you want to write about a certain topic, you might hear remarks like, 'You're a lady, why are you getting involved in this topic? Don't get involved, you'll only create trouble for yourself.' I see that being a woman can sometimes deter us from engaging in certain topics"* (Participant 12, Personal communication, January 23, 2024).

Participant 10 shared her observations, noting that political topics and sports journalism are predominantly of interest to boys. While there has been an increase in the number of women entering sports journalism recently, men still dominate the field. In contrast, both genders are equally represented in social news coverage. However, boys tend to be slightly ahead in economics journalism. Participant 10 also mentioned that there are many women in foreign news, particularly those who have graduated in translation and journalism (Participant 10, Personal communication, January 12, 2024).

3.1.2 Impact of Societal Norms and Expectations

To grasp the gender dynamics within journalism, it is crucial to examine how families react to their daughters pursuing careers in this field. Stereotypes originating from familial attitudes can serve as the foundation for the gender dynamics observed in newsrooms. Moreover, understanding Azerbaijani society's stance on female journalists, as shared by the journalists themselves, offers insight into the cultural backdrop underpinning responses to both research questions. Exploring societal mental values reveals their manifestation in the online presence of female journalists, a factor evident in their responses as well.

3.1.2.1 Family Reactions

Families hold significant importance for Azerbaijani females, influencing even their career choices. Given that many women live with their parents until marriage, their profession, work schedule, and overall work-life balance are crucial considerations.

A significant number of interviewees mentioned that their families either did not support them at all or did not take a stance on this matter when they first started with journalism or their journalism education. It is intriguing to observe how family members or relatives of female journalists in Azerbaijan often perceive journalists as individuals who simply walk around and hand the microphone to people. Participant 9 even noted that she felt more supported by society than her own family: *"My aunt would say to my mother, 'She's a girl, what is she doing? She wants to become a journalist? Is she going to run around with a dictaphone?'"* (Participant 9, Personal communication, February 17, 2024). A similar sentiment was echoed by Participant 13: *"They (her family) don't care about the radio side, the online side, or the TV side of journalism. They just say, 'Are you not ashamed to grab a microphone and wander around?' They always try to put this psychological pressure. Sometimes my uncle would say, 'You'll end up staying single, and there won't be anyone to marry you'"* (Participant 13, Personal communication, February 2, 2024).

Since professions like being a doctor or a teacher are traditionally seen as more suitable for women, who are expected to manage both their professional careers and household responsibilities, journalism often is not perceived as an ideal career choice for their families. Families may believe that their daughters will not get married because they will not be perceived as good housewives, or they may view journalism as a waste of their daughters' lives. Participant 3 mentioned how problems arose in her household when she started working: *"Problems in my family started when I began working... On my first day of work, I came home late. It was 7 P.M., which wasn't an ideal time for a student to come home - I usually came home around 2-3 P.M. My mother was very worried and scolded me a lot, asking, 'Why did you come home at this time?' My father was not in Azerbaijan, and when my mother told him that I had started working, he became very angry - 'What do you mean? Why are you working? What do you need it for?' My father's anger stemmed from the fact that 'We are now severing our dependency relationship with our daughter. She is already making her own decisions, and it's a field where there's no room for interference.' The feeling that 'We won't be able to control her anymore' became evident for the first time*

when I started working... But still, I didn't see any specific problems after that" (Participant 3, Personal communication, February 6, 2024).

While Participant 7 recounted her experience of being unable to enroll in university and the subsequent arguments with her family about her passion for journalism (Participant 7, Personal communication, January 11, 2024), Participant 11 described how she chose the faculty of pedagogy due to the difficulty of entering the journalism faculty. Although her family was pleased with this decision, she was not (Participant 11, Personal communication, January 25, 2024).

3.1.2.2 Societal Responses

As the conversations with interviewees delved deeper, another societal impact on gender dynamics in journalism for female journalists began to reveal. While it is already challenging for female journalists to perform their jobs without obstacles, as will be explained in Section 3.1.3, societal responses vary when they mention their profession as journalism. As mentioned in the previous section, families, members of society, or the acquaintances of female journalists also express concerns about their future roles as wives and mothers. Participant 11 recalled a case when she was an intern in a kindergarten, being on the pedagogy path. The kindergarten manager attempted to dissuade her from pursuing journalism, stating: *"Forget about journalism, you will start a family in the future, you should work in the kindergarten, and if you have children, you can also bring them to the kindergarten. If you work as a journalist, who will take care of your child while you're out?"* (Participant 11, Personal communication, January 25, 2024).

Common phrases such as 'you are just a girl,' 'you are a lady,' 'you are a woman' are frequently used to deter women from journalism, as it is often perceived as unsuitable for them. Participant 2 found this societal attitude towards female journalists quite vexing. She observed that some individuals become irritated when female journalists engage in interactions with others, and this societal bias also has reflections within the field of journalism (Participant 2, Personal communication, January 12, 2024). Reflecting on her experience covering the presidential elections in Azerbaijan, Participant 14 recalled overhearing a conversation: *"I heard that the chairman of the commission was chatting with another person there, and he said, 'Look, they are beautiful, pretty girls, unfortunately, they are journalists.' I often hear things like this"* (Participant 14, Personal communication, February 9, 2024). She also highlighted how her profession affects her personal life, noting

that men who are attracted to her are hesitant to pursue a relationship due to her career: *"For example, they say, 'I have liked you for a long time, but I'm afraid of you.' They see you as a risky choice. Also, journalism is considered a dangerous profession, so they don't want to take that risk as your partner"* (Participant 14, Personal communication, February 9, 2024).

Stereotypes surrounding female journalists significantly influence the gender dynamics within journalism. Participant 15 provided insights into these stereotypes, highlighting their impact on the personal lives of female journalists: *"There are also stereotypes about women journalists, such as 'You need to be insolent' or 'You need to be shameless.' If a woman works on television, she is often assumed to have low moral standards. One of the biggest problems is that there is no consistent attitude towards women journalists. How many people (men) would agree for their partner (women) to be a journalist, especially working in independent media, coming home late, always covering events"* (Participant 15, Personal communication, March 14, 2024).

On the positive side, one journalist from national television mentioned that society's views towards female journalists have changed for the better: *"As the good work of women becomes more apparent, as they are praised in society, and as the institutions they work for present them well and value their work, society's perceptions change too"* (Participant 6, Personal communication, February 4, 2024).

3.1.2.3 Online Presence

As digitalization becomes increasingly prevalent in news and media platforms, particularly with many independent media organizations operating without offices or printed publications, and relying heavily on social media for promotion, some interviewees have noted a concerning trend: female journalists are often targeted more frequently than their male counterparts, facing heightened criticism and cancel campaigns. Participants 11 and 13 have observed instances where male journalists face less scrutiny for similar mistakes or jokes made online, while female journalists are disproportionately targeted for cancel campaigns (Participant 11, Personal communication, January 25, 2024; Participant 13, Personal communication, February 2, 2024). Participant 9 linked this observation to the predominantly Muslim society of Azerbaijan, stating: *"On social media, women may face more criticism because there are certain cultural factors at play. We have to admit that we live in a Muslim country, and there are certain characteristics of Muslim culture that hold*

us back. No matter how much we adhere to a secular interpretation of Islam, Islam still restricts women" (Personal communication, February 17, 2024).

Some participants expressed their views on how the digitalization and social media presence of female journalists have positively influenced their careers, enabling them to find online employment opportunities and feel more empowered and liberated. Participant 15 remarked, *"I would say that digitalization has had a more positive impact because now we can see women being engaged in citizen journalism, blogging activities, preparing topics on different contents, and presenting them to society. I would say that this is very good - it can gather more trust and more perspectives with our colleagues"* (Participant 15, Personal communication, March 14, 2024).

3.1.2.4 Economic Factors and Wage Disparities

Some of the interviewees found the economic aspect of this profession to be challenging, especially for female journalists. They noted that some editors or individuals in management positions believe that women do not require or need as much salary since men are typically viewed as the primary breadwinners of the family. Thus, if women are paid around ₼300-400 (approximately €163 - 218 per month), it is deemed sufficient. It is evident that interviewees also agreed that this is not a unique trend restricted to journalism but rather a prevalent issue in the workplace for female workers in Azerbaijan.

Participant 5 highlighted the evident wage gap and noted that men are often more assertive in addressing their needs with the directors. She expressed, *"If a representative of the opposite sex was hired along with me (as interns), he would receive payment after 2 months, but I wouldn't. They (employers) would think to themselves that she's a girl and doesn't need money. Or that guy could comfortably express that he has rent to pay so he needs to get paid. It seems to me that guys can discuss money matters more comfortably and establish closer relationships with managers"* (Participant 5, Personal communication, February 29, 2024). However, Participant 1 suggested that this attitude towards female journalists may lead them to consider changing their profession (Participant 1, Personal communication, January 12, 2024).

Interestingly, some working individuals in Azerbaijan dismissed the existence of a wage gap, attributing it to what they perceive as feminist social justice activism. Participant 8 shared her perspective on this issue, highlighting a dissonance between official records and reality: *"In our workplace, the system was such that we received a fixed salary plus*

bonuses. The more work you did, the more you earned, and male photographers earned more because they were sent on business trips to places like Shusha, Moscow, foreign countries, and war zones. They were sent to shootings in regions, and all of these were additional income opportunities. I would also ask to be sent, but they would say, 'You're a girl, you'll be uncomfortable there, there's nothing for you there, don't go.' And I felt that they were sending me to gentler things - things related to 'sweet girl things', art, and culture" (Participant 8, Personal communication, January 10, 2024).

Some interviewees also argued that there is no wage gap between female and male journalists, as salaries are determined based on the position held. They emphasized that if a company had a fixed salary for a particular position, gender does not influence the compensation. Additionally, Participant 4 noted that both men and women in the field are generally paid very little (Participant 4, Personal communication, February 14, 2024), while Participant 9 mentioned she used to earn more than male journalists due to her role as a chief reporter (Participant 9, Personal communication, February 17, 2024).

3.1.3 Professional Challenges and Barriers

Given the broader societal perceptions and norms surrounding female journalists that discussed in previous subchapters, it becomes imperative to delve deeper into how these factors shape the challenges, barriers, and misunderstandings encountered by women in their professional roles. The prevailing societal attitudes towards female journalists often intersect with entrenched norms and mental frameworks, influencing the dynamics within work environments and the experiences of female professionals. These factors not only affect how female journalists are perceived within their roles but also influence the opportunities available to them and the obstacles they encounter in their career trajectories. Understanding the intricate interplay between societal expectations, cultural norms, and individual experiences is essential for comprehensively addressing the unique challenges faced by women in journalism. By unpacking these complexities, we can gain insights into the underlying mechanisms that contribute to gender disparities and pave the way for more inclusive and equitable work environments for female journalists.

3.1.3.1 Work Processes

Focusing on the nuances of work processes within journalism provides intriguing insights, as reflected in the varied perspectives shared by female journalists. These

viewpoints of interview participants can be categorized into three distinct groups, each shedding light on the experiences of women in the field. The first group consists of female journalists who viewed their gender as advantageous, citing instances where being women affords them easier access to information. They recounted situations where interviewees underestimate them or fail to take them seriously, inadvertently revealing valuable insights. For instance, Participant 10 illustrated this advantage, noting that experts often respond more promptly to female journalists' inquiries compared to their male counterparts: *"Often, there are situations where you need to call an expert - when men call him, the expert doesn't take their call, but when a woman calls, he immediately answers, 'Hello, what do you need, go ahead.' Being a woman has such a subtle advantage"* (Participant 10, Personal communication, January 12, 2024). She further exemplified this advantage by highlighting instances where interviewees were more responsive and accommodating when approached by female journalists (Participant 10, Personal communication, January 12, 2024). Participant 3 echoed this sentiment, noting that people often perceive female journalists as less threatening, thus making them more approachable and conducive to garnering necessary information (Participant 3, Personal communication, February 6, 2024).

Conversely, the second perspective on this matter presents contrasting views, asserting that their gender presents significant obstacles in accessing information. These journalists recounted instances where they had faced challenges and resistance from interviewees, impeding their ability to effectively gather essential information. Participant 12 shed light on this issue, stating that the challenges in the work process often begin when female journalists leave the editorial office to gather information. She observed that this is where female journalists encounter varying attitudes from interviewees or information sources, making it difficult for them to obtain the necessary information (Participant 12, Personal communication, January 23, 2024). Participant 5, who works as a multimedia journalist, stated that it is particularly hard for her to persuade people because she is her own operator and correspondent: *"Being a multimedia journalist means you handle various tasks such as shooting, editing, researching, and writing the text. However, if you are the one doing the shooting, there are instances where you may not be taken seriously. This is because our society is accustomed to the idea that a man is the cameraperson while a woman is the reporter accompanying him"* (Participant 5, Personal communication, February 29, 2024). Furthermore, Participant 13 highlighted a similar experience from her university days, noting that when she and her classmates conducted street interviews with voice recorders, the male

students consistently received more responses. Reflecting on her own encounters, she emphasized the challenges faced by female journalists when approaching men for interviews, often resulting in inappropriate or disrespectful remarks (Participant 13, Personal communication, February 2, 2024).

Issues encountered during work processes extend beyond changes in attitude; they can also manifest in inappropriate and disrespectful behavior, such as attempts at flirting or crossing professional boundaries. An interviewee shared her firsthand experience in dealing with such challenges, recounting incidents where she had to change her phone number due to receiving additional calls and messages from individuals whose issues she had covered by her. Furthermore, she mentioned being invited for coffee multiple times after interviews, with the invitations carrying undertones that suggested they were more than just casual, gentle coffee offers (Participant 14, Personal communication, February 9, 2024). In recounting her experiences, Participant 14 also shared the instances where government-affiliated male journalists exhibit condescending behavior towards independent female journalists. She described how, during certain events, government journalists, equipped with large cameras, would demeaningly refer to them as 'phone journalists.' Interview participant emphasized the disparity in treatment, highlighting how government journalists would assert their dominance by physically pushing aside independent journalists, particularly women, with a feeling of superiority. This behavior, she noted, stems from the perception of women as being weaker and less capable in such situations, leading to instances where they are forcibly moved aside without hesitation (Participant 14, Personal communication, February 9, 2024).

Finally, the third recurring pattern highlights instances of outright rudeness and discrimination faced by female journalists, particularly in their interactions with law enforcement officers, such as the police. This pattern is notably prevalent among independent journalists, whose experiences shed light on the persistent gender biases and discriminatory attitudes still prevalent in certain sectors of society. Participant 15 recounted dialogues she had experienced while covering protests and engaging with the police: *"Sometimes, police officers react with statements like 'You better be thankful that you are a woman, I won't touch you,' or 'You're a woman, act like one.' It's common practice in Azerbaijan for them to target even the simplest acts of journalism and pressure journalists. There have been instances where they confiscated my colleague's camera, pressured me directly, saying things like, 'If you weren't a lady, I would have dealt with you differently,'*

or 'You're a lady, have some shame.' I have encountered this attitude mostly from police officers in Azerbaijan" (Participant 15, Personal communication, March 14, 2024).

During a protest covered by another interviewee of the thesis, tensions escalated when the police intervened. The incident occurred during a protest organized by feminists, highlighting the societal challenges faced by female journalists in Azerbaijan. Participant 14 recalled the harrowing experience: *"There was a protest by feminists. In addition to feminists, there were also three female journalists covering the event. Afterwards, they forcefully pushed us into the police department. They were insulting all of us as women: using phrases like 'You are whores,' 'You don't have anyone.' This was how male police officers treated female journalists. I strongly felt that they were treating us as indecent women, without anyone and anywhere to go. As if we were people who did not conform to the concepts of honor and dignity"* (Participant 14, Personal communication, February 9, 2024). This incident underscores the broader challenges encountered by female journalists in Azerbaijan, where the stance of the police can be particularly hostile, reflecting the lack of support for journalists within Azerbaijani society.

3.1.3.2 Challenges, Barriers

Challenges and barriers are other components that define the gender dynamics in journalism in Azerbaijan. The challenges that Azerbaijani female journalists observe or recall is also a big part of the current state of gender balance in journalism in the country. Even though women start to get pressures or barriers to enter the journalism field, successful ones who made it to the sphere, still face additional barriers in the professional career because of their gender as well.

Participant 12 shared how she wanted to be a war journalist before, but since female war reporters are almost nonexistent in the society and Azerbaijani journalism, she could not make it to the war reporting sphere. When it comes to the challenges that female journalists face in the field, she mentioned envy and resentment towards them: *"If a man wins an award, they are applauded, rightfully so. But if a woman wins, someone will inevitably come forward to question why she won, how she won, and what she won with. None of those who ask such questions pause to consider that like men, she studied for 4-6 years, worked hard, and followed a certain path. She deservedly won. No one acknowledges that. Instead, the question always arises, why was it given to her? With what?"* (Participant 12, Personal communication, January 23, 2024). She also remarked that at times, she found solace in not

receiving awards anymore. This sentiment stems from her firsthand experience of facing criticisms solely because of her gender.

Another participant highlighted the attitude of male colleagues towards female journalists, which poses a hurdle for female journalists to gain recognition for their work: *"Generally, male journalists in our media believe that they possess unparalleled expertise in politics. They assert that they are superior, while female journalists are deemed to have limited understanding of political affairs. However, when I was working at the "Sharg" newspaper, we had female journalists who excelled in political reporting, matching the standards set by their male counterparts. It's undeniable, but there exists this notion among male journalists that 'I am more knowledgeable; I have educated you in politics'"* (Participant 11, Personal communication, January 25, 2024).

Participant 8 underscored the strikingly low representation of female photojournalists nationwide, asserting that this disparity is neither surprising nor incidental. She posited that not every woman is inclined to embrace the responsibilities and challenges inherent in the profession (Participant 8, Personal communication, January 10, 2024).

Acknowledging the demanding nature of the job, particularly the pressures encountered while reporting amidst a competitive environment of photographers and videographers, she emphasized the necessity for a resilient and assertive demeanor, "fighter" personality. She mentioned that such demanding circumstances may dissuade women from pursuing careers in photojournalism (Participant 8, Personal communication, January 10, 2024).

Participant 5 pointed out a distinctive challenge encountered solely by female journalists: the tendency to be disregarded in certain male-dominated spheres within journalism: *"The main issue I noticed was that there were certain expectations, for example, that a male colleague should be the photographer or videographer. However, if I could shoot the video better, he would still take the lead"* (Participant 5, Personal communication, February 29, 2024).

3.2 Influence of Gender Dynamics on the Experiences of Female Journalists

Throughout the interviews, it becomes evident that the impact of current gender dynamics on the experiences of female journalists in Azerbaijan is multifaceted. While

seasoned female journalists have undoubtedly encountered discrimination and faced challenges due to poor gender balance standards, many of them have chosen to persevere in their profession despite these obstacles. This section focuses on various aspects of this influence, including the psychological, familial, and mental ramifications, as well as the ongoing quest for personal identity within the journalism industry. Furthermore, it addresses the significant influence of safety concerns and security challenges that some female journalists grapple with in their line of work. This section seeks to address the research question: *How does gender dynamics in journalism in Azerbaijan influence the experiences of female journalists?*

3.2.1 Dynamics and Motivational Effects

This chapter explores the impact of familial dynamics, household responsibilities, and the journalism environment on the motivations and aspirations of female journalists. Additionally, sections examine the impact of economic pressures they face within the field. Through these subchapters, readers will gain insight into the complex interplay of personal, societal, and professional factors influencing female journalists' trajectories in Azerbaijan.

3.2.1.1 Influence of Family Dynamics and Household Responsibilities

Examining the impact of gender dynamics in journalism through the lens of family dynamics and household responsibilities extends beyond the realm of journalism and applies to other professions in Azerbaijan as well. Typically, women are expected to handle household chores, childcare responsibilities, and often the decision to have children rests primarily with them. Within this context, interviewees shed light on how gender dynamics shape the experiences of female journalists concerning family dynamics.

Participant 6, serving as a deputy editor in a news section, offered insights from the newsroom that resonate with many female journalists. She observed a common trend where women become less active in their work after getting engaged, often due to their partner's expectations and an increase in household responsibilities. Moreover, women with children face additional challenges, as family dynamics restrict their freedom to fully engage in their professional roles. Participant 6 illustrated this with examples from her own workplace: *"In our newsroom, there are 2-3 married women who go on business trips to places like Guba and Shusha, stay there for 2-3 days... However, when their child falls ill, they take a step back because their families are unhappy... We have a male colleague who just had a*

newborn daughter, but he couldn't go to see his child and wife because he was on a business trip for 3 days. But a woman can't do that because she must stop her work and run home. That's why family and child issues affect the gender problem. When hiring, they always ask if you're married, engaged, or have children" (Participant 6, Personal communication, February 4, 2024).

Participant 5 emphasized the challenges faced by female journalists who primarily work from home due to the absence of physical offices in independent media organizations. She noted that despite their diligence and commitment, female journalists are often burdened with household responsibilities, which restrict their opportunities for research and skill enhancement: *"No matter how much and how intense they work, household responsibilities are the women's job in most of the family"* (Participant 5, Personal communication, February 29, 2024). This sentiment aligns with Participant 12's observation regarding the unequal distribution of opportunities between male and female journalists. According to her, societal expectations tend to prioritize men's professional advancement while relegating women to caretaking roles within the family, thereby limiting their visibility and active participation in the field: *"Women are often not as active in the field, and they are not as visible because they are told, 'taking care of her family' - men are given more opportunities and conditions, not women"* (Participant 5, Personal communication, January 23, 2024).

These insights primarily illuminate the intricate nature of gender dynamics within Azerbaijani journalism, highlighting its predominantly male-oriented structure. Moreover, they underscore how the mental and familial responsibilities, particularly those related to household chores, place an additional burden on women journalists. This combination significantly impacts female journalists, leading to their withdrawal from professional engagements upon engagement, marriage, or childbirth. Consequently, this phenomenon perpetuates the male-dominated nature of journalism, creating a cyclical pattern that reinforces existing gender disparities in the field.

3.2.1.2 Journalism Environment

While some journalists mentioned that they are not negatively impacted by the current gender dynamics in journalism within their workplace, some of them have very specific issues that were mentioned. *"Imagine that you work every time, bring journalistic materials, and some management issues hold you back completely, because you are a woman. This will negatively affect you of course,"* this is what Participant 1 felt about the

influence of the gender dynamics in the journalism environment on female journalists' motivation. Although she was one of the interviewees that support the idea of the neutral level of gender balance in journalism in Azerbaijan, at some point she also mentioned those influences (Participant 1, Personal communication, January 12, 2024).

Another interviewee recounted some conflicts they experienced with their colleagues, particularly highlighting one incident before they left their job and how their HR reacted to it. It involved a male journalist colleague making unwelcome comments about their appearance, such as suggesting they grow their hair out, dye it blonde, change their clothes, and apply makeup. Frustrated, Participant 8 brought the issue to their manager, leading to a meeting with HR. During this meeting, the colleague justified his behavior by suggesting that Participant 8 should appreciate his compliments as a man. About a month later, after Participant 8's contract ended, they were terminated from their position. This left Participant 8 questioning whether the conflict played a role in their dismissal. This case not only highlights colleague relationships but also sheds light on HR's response. Participant 8 mentioned that during the meeting, HR showed empathy, but their subsequent dismissal left them feeling unjustly targeted as a troublemaker worker (Participant 8, Personal communication, January 10, 2024).

3.2.1.3 Economic Pressures

Even though the economic side of gender dynamics was discussed in section 3.1.2.4, another aspect of this pattern emerged during the interviews. It was noted that the salaries of female journalists can sometimes be influenced by the prevailing notion that men are the primary providers in households, leading to demotivation among female journalists. According to one interviewee working in online TV, there is often a trend where men tend to earn slightly more, while women's salaries are viewed as supplementary to the family income. This perception contributes to the decision for some female journalists to consider changing professions (Participant 10, Personal communication, January 12, 2024).

3.2.2 Impact on Personal Identity

Despite the presence of female journalists in the journalism sphere, it is still largely perceived as male-dominated. In patriarchal societies such as post-communist and post-totalitarian countries, as Azerbaijan is one of them, women face challenges in asserting their own identities and characteristics in predominantly male-oriented workplaces. Journalism is

no exception to this trend. While interviewees discussed how the nature of the profession can push them to adopt more masculine traits, it also sheds light on why journalism continues to be primarily associated with men.

Participant 14 shared her experience, highlighting the influence of gender dynamics in adopting a more masculine demeanor when dealing with authorities or potentially dangerous situations: *"If you respond calmly, you will not be taken seriously. But when you raise your voice, speak in a serious, harsh tone, when you speak in a form that demands masculinity, that's when you get into a dialogue with the police, if you can call it a dialogue"* (Participant 14, Personal communication, February 9, 2024). Similar situations occurred for Participant 8 as well. They mentioned that to be accepted by their male coworkers, they had to work in a way that no longer emphasized their gender, allowing their male coworkers to perceive them as 'one of the boys' (Participant 8, Personal communication, January 10, 2024).

Another aspect influenced by the reflection of gender dynamics is the need to prove oneself and validate one's work. Participant 8 found themselves in a position where they had to assert their worth to demonstrate that they deserved to be there, refusing to allow anyone to diminish their accomplishments (Participant 8, Personal communication, January 10, 2024). Additional influence of gender dynamics on women journalists highlighted by Participant 2, she noted that some people label her as stubborn, which she acknowledged can be advantageous in certain situations. However, she expressed concern about whether society would accept her, stating, *"I tried to reassure myself that I wasn't being nasty or filthy"* (Participant 2, Personal communication, February 24, 2024).

Participants 4 and 5 recounted similar experiences where they felt the need to be more cautious and mindful, not only about their clothes but also their behavior. Participant 4 expressed a sense that women feel like they have to present themselves more seriously in their professional roles (Participant 4, Personal communication, February 14, 2024), while Participant 5 highlighted how perceptions of beauty could influence how female journalists are perceived (Participant 5, Personal communication, February 29, 2024). Furthermore, Participant 5 emphasized, *"Whether it's for an internship program or for work, it's essential that my clothes look normal - because I don't know when I'll be leaving home and how I'll be coming back - my clothing determines that"* (Participant 5, Personal communication, February 29, 2024).

3.2.3 Safety Concerns and Security Challenges

With the advent of digitalization in journalism, there has been an increase in the presence of female journalists in the virtual world, offering promising opportunities and facilitating remote work from home. However, this shift also brings forth distinct challenges for female journalists, including safety concerns and security issues. Moreover, it is crucial to recognize that beyond the digital landscape, female journalists encounter pressures and anxieties in the real world simply due to their gender, making them vulnerable to public scrutiny, shaming, and guilt-tripping.

In this section, female journalists share their experiences and observations regarding their presence in the online sphere and how it intersects with their work processes. They delve into the dynamics within their profession and reflect on how these dynamics influence their experiences as female journalists.

3.2.3.1 Danger

While arrests and general threats in journalism still tend to target male journalists, Participant 14 noted that in civil communities where females are predominant, editors often select female journalists to cover protests. This choice stems from the belief that female journalists are less likely to be arrested. However, Participant 14 also highlighted that recent events have contradicted this perception. In the past months, three female journalists have been arrested, challenging the notion that female journalists are immune to arrest (Participant 14, Personal communication, February 9, 2024).

As a female journalist, Participant 7 took proactive measures instead of yielding to pressure. When tasked with covering a story at a man's residence, she ensured to share her location with a friend. She mentioned that this precaution is common among women in Azerbaijan, serving as a safety measure. Additionally, she exercises caution when assigned evening tasks. For instance, if an assignment requires her to travel to near cities, resulting in a late return home, she opts to decline. Participant 7 explained that returning late, especially through certain neighborhoods, makes her uneasy, prompting her to postpone the assignment to daylight hours (Participant 7, Personal communication, January 11, 2024).

3.2.3.2 Experience of Harassment

The regional manager of an international media outlet, Participant 3, shared her experience of being targeted by a political YouTube streamer due to her work. She

highlighted that while digitalization has increased the visibility of female journalists, it has also made them more vulnerable to various forms of threats such as blackmail, coercion, and public humiliation. This heightened vulnerability can adversely affect their professional experiences, leading them to hesitate before taking innovative or radical steps out of fear for their personal safety and potential embarrassment. Consequently, many may opt for a more cautious approach to ensure their well-being (Participant 3, Personal communication, February 6, 2024).

Participant 4, a television anchor, offered insights into the challenges faced by female journalists and the dynamics that influence their experiences in Azerbaijani society. She highlighted how female anchors can become targets of public scrutiny and even harassment for behaviors such as laughing loudly, speaking assertively, or dressing in a manner deemed revealing (Participant 4, Personal communication, February 14, 2024). Moreover, another journalist, who has experience in both conservative and modern newsrooms, shed light on the reluctance of female journalists to speak out about harassment experiences. She explained that even when harassment occurs, female journalists often refrain from reporting it, fearing that others will blame them for the incident. This fear of repercussions and the pressure to continue working despite experiencing mental health issues or mistreatment creates a suffocating environment where such problems are pushed aside rather than addressed openly (Participant 11, Personal communication, January 25, 2024).

Participant 13 shared her experience of encountering incidents privately that she did not post about. However, when similar experiences are shared by other journalists on social media channels, she refrains from commenting publicly but reaches out to these female journalists privately. She offers solidarity by letting them know they are not alone in their experiences, sending messages such as, *"you are not alone, it has happened to me too,"* in the private message section, extending support and empathy (Participant 13, Personal communication, February 2, 2024). She also noted that certain words from online platforms linger in her mind like a trauma, phrases like *"You're a woman, you should keep quiet,"* or *"Have you no shame?"*. She mentioned that digital attacks can be just as damaging as physical ones (Participant 13, Personal communication, February 2, 2024).

While it is evident that female journalists still encounter challenges as harassment, sexual assault, or mansplaining related to their gender, it is encouraging to note the emergence of more supportive online communities for them. Participant 2 pointed out that social media has provided female journalists with a platform to share their experiences of

harassment or inappropriate behavior. She explained, *"In the past, if your director made an inappropriate proposal to you in his office, you couldn't speak out about it. But now, if a journalist faces any form of harassment, even verbal, they can easily bring attention to it"* (Participant 2, Personal communication, January 12, 2024).

4. Discussion

This thesis seeks to research the prevailing gender dynamics in Azerbaijani journalism from the viewpoint of female journalists and explore how these dynamics impact their professional lives and careers. To focus into this subject, the research adopts a critical feminist theory and employs qualitative analysis, specifically thematic analysis, drawing insights from interviews conducted with fifteen female journalists. Since academic research on the gendered perspective in journalism in Azerbaijan has not been extensively explored previously, or at least the author has not encountered such studies, the discussion section of the thesis will analyze the thematic findings of the research, along with a comparison of these findings with patterns observed in foreign media.

The analysis provides insights into the challenges faced by female journalists in Azerbaijan, starting from their educational pursuits and continuing throughout their professional endeavors. From encountering resistance from their families to facing skepticism from society, female journalists in Azerbaijan confront hurdles at various stages of their careers. While some perceive progress towards achieving gender balance in the workplace, others argue that women still struggle to garner recognition and respect within journalistic settings. Viewed through a critical feminist lens, this reality underscores the male-dominated nature of the field, where power predominantly resides in the hands of men. Consequently, women often find themselves marginalized or confronted with challenges that remain overlooked in current discussions. Regarding the effect of gender dynamics, the analysis underscores the pressure on female journalists to conform to more masculine and assertive traits. Family warnings about potential risks further highlight the complexities of navigating a career in journalism as a woman. Additionally, the scrutiny extends to their appearance, with many feeling compelled to adjust their clothing and makeup choices. Despite these efforts, concerns about harassment persist, illustrating the ongoing challenges faced by female journalists in the field.

First research question of this thesis aimed to answer 'What is the prevailing gender dynamics within Azerbaijan's journalism field'. The analysis reveals that while newsrooms

are still predominantly male-dominated, they also comprise a significant number of female journalists. However, female journalists may encounter challenges when applying for certain positions, such as video editor or multimedia journalist, where shooting and editing skills are required. Interestingly, women are often chosen as presenters to attract audiences, highlighting the gendered roles within the industry. This also echoes with the cases in the UK, where many media outlets or television channels opt to part ways with female presenters once they reach a certain age, because of the changes in physical appearance (Franks, 2013). Additionally, some respondents in this research shared experiences of mansplaining and receiving warnings or reprimands from male colleagues or editors. While some interviewees expressed a belief that women were underrepresented in editorial roles, others reported positive experiences working with female editors. This sheds light on the complex dynamics and perceptions within newsroom environments.

Interviewees highlighted that male journalists often dominate the coverage of sports and political topics, creating a barrier for female journalists who wish to work within more controversial subjects. Steiner (2017) noted that male journalists tend to cover topics such as politics, criminal justice and sports, within the statistics of fifteen female interviewees almost 70% of them are covering both politics and social topics.

Regarding the career of Azerbaijani women, many families prefer their daughters to pursue careers in fields such as medicine or education, perpetuating the notion that journalism is primarily a male domain. Related to Mammadov's (2021) research where he mentioned that average Azerbaijani journalists have not pursued formal journalism studies, ten out of fifteen interviewees were the alumni of the journalism faculties in Azerbaijan. Consequently, women face reluctance or societal pressure when considering careers in journalism, contributing to its persistent male-dominated status.

Due to societal norms regarding women in the workplace, female journalists often face disparities in compensation compared to their male counterparts. As Franks (2013) mentioned in her book, in Asian countries as well as European countries the salary gap is still persistent. Business travels, which may offer additional bonus money for male journalists, contribute to lower salaries for female journalists. While some interviewees reported equal wages between genders, others noted that certain editors and managers subscribe to the belief that men are the primary breadwinners, leading to the justification of lower pay for female journalists under the assumption that their fathers or partners will provide for them.

Interviewed female journalists discussed the challenges they encountered in their work, including obstacles in obtaining necessary information due to their gender. At times, they had to convince interviewees of their competence as journalists to cover certain issues. Additionally, female journalists reported experiencing disrespectful behavior, such as flirtation and inappropriate advances from interviewees who sought their contact information under the guise of work-related matters, only to later disturb them. Moreover, instances of rudeness were noted, whether from law enforcement officials or other male journalists.

Second research question of this thesis endeavored to explore 'How does gender dynamics in journalism in Azerbaijan influence the experiences of female journalists?'. When examining the impacts of prevailing gender dynamics in Azerbaijani journalism, it becomes evident that some female journalists become less active after marriage or engagement, while those with children often have to prioritize their family responsibilities over their careers. Melki and Mallat (2016) revealed that balancing family life and career is a challenge for female journalists in Lebanon, where the average marriage age is 30. Considering that the average marriage age for Azerbaijani women was 24 in 2022 (Fakt Yoxla, n.d.), similar challenges may be faced by female journalists in Azerbaijan. As Mammadov (2021) found out, this thesis also supports the fact that one of the contributing factors to the limited presence of women in journalism in Azerbaijan is the tendency for many women to exit the field prematurely because of the household responsibilities.

Freelancers or remote workers, in particular, find themselves burdened with household chores, leaving little time for self-improvement or professional development. These insights shed light on the complex gender dynamics present in Azerbaijani journalism, emphasizing its predominantly male-centric nature. This discussion is reminiscent of Ruoho and Torkkola's (2018) findings on how gender roles and equal participation in household activities in Nordic countries raise the standards of experiences of women journalists. While the author draws parallels between Azerbaijan and Middle Eastern countries in the literature review section, Melki and Hitti's (2021) research raises questions about the possibility of achieving gender equality in the workplace when it is not prevalent in domestic settings.

Moreover, general patterns within the journalism environment further disadvantage female journalists. Some interviewees feel held back by management issues, while others observe that male dominance in the workplace leads to female journalists being unfairly blamed for incidents of disrespect or misconduct by their male colleagues. Disparities in

salary also contribute to female journalists feeling demotivated compared to their male counterparts.

Another notable observation is that gender dynamics in journalism often prompt female journalists to modify their behavior in the workplace. Many feel pressured to adopt more masculine traits to gain acceptance from their male colleagues or to be perceived as 'one of the boys'. This internal conflict can lead to feelings of self-doubt and frustration, as some female journalists resort to this self-defense mechanism in a predominantly male industry. Conversely, some female journalists perceive an advantage in being female, as they find it easier to access information.

Although male journalists are more frequently exposed to arrest, threats, and physical violence, female journalists are not guaranteed from such dangers either. To mitigate these risks, female journalists employ various strategies to navigate threats from both male interviewees and government authorities such as sharing the location of the male interviewee with friends, not going to cover any piece at night time, being assertive while covering protests etc. While digitalization has increased the visibility of female journalists, it has also heightened their vulnerability to threats such as blackmail, cancel culture, and public humiliation.

Azerbaijani society tends to scrutinize the behavior of women, a phenomenon that extends to female journalists as well. Female journalists often face more intense criticism compared to their male counterparts, and they are frequent targets of cancel campaigns. Despite many female journalists refraining from publicly sharing their experiences of harassment or incidents, they often offer support and solidarity to each other privately.

Viewed through the lens of critical feminist theory, the research questions were comprehensively explored through the perspectives of the interviewed female journalists. As discussed in the literature review section, critical feminist theory served as a guiding framework for analyzing the themes emerging from the interviews, particularly in dissecting the recurring gender norms entrenched within society which were reflected on the analysis section No. 3.1.2 with the insights of interviewees on 'Impact of Societal Norms'. Drawing from the insights of hooks (1984), equality as a notion is experienced differently by all women, which explains while some female journalists are satisfied with their journalistic environment, while some of them can experience very traumatic accidents for them. The thematic analysis of the thesis underscores the pervasive dominance of male influence in journalism (Analysis section No. 3.1.1, No. 3.1.3.1, No. 3.2.1.2, etc.), prompting female

journalists to grapple with the need to adapt or engage in internal struggles regarding their identity or personality. Building on the insights of Wigginton and Lafrance (2019), the critical feminist stance adopted in this research holds the potential to challenge existing narratives and foster transformative discourses. It is the author's belief that through this research and critical perspective, Azerbaijani female journalists can feel heard and valued at least to some extent.

This study contributes to the field by offering an alternative perspective that can serve as a foundation for future research endeavors. Given the challenging landscape of Azerbaijani journalism especially right now with the arrests of journalists and challenges with freedom of speech, the insights gleaned from the fifteen interviews provide valuable data that enrich the discourse on gender dynamics in journalism within the country. The author acknowledges the limitations inherent in a study of this nature, conducted with a specific focus and within a confined scope. However, it is imperative to recognize the importance of these findings in shedding light on the experiences of female journalists in Azerbaijan. Moving forward, researchers, journalism students, media experts, media lawyers and project managers are encouraged to leverage this study as a catalyst for generating new projects and initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of female journalists. By supporting them across various domains, from professional development to workplace equality, they can foster a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in Azerbaijani journalism.

Conclusion

Azerbaijani journalism has entered a new era marked by increasingly challenging events faced by journalists and media experts (Lukáš, 2024). Traditionally male-dominated, the field of journalism in Azerbaijan has become increasingly dangerous for both men and women, particularly in light of recent arrests of female journalists. Despite Azerbaijan's colorful and traditional society, rigid expectations for women persist, making female journalists working in male-dominated fields particularly vulnerable to criticism and scrutiny.

The topic of this study, focusing on the experiences of female journalists in Azerbaijan, remains largely understudied. This thesis aims to fill existing gaps in understanding the gender dynamics within Azerbaijani journalism through the perspectives of female journalists. Drawing from fifteen semi-structured interviews, recurring patterns have emerged to explain the primary gender dynamics shaping the field. The research

questions guiding this study seek to explore these dynamics and their impact on the experiences of female journalists.

In this concluding chapter, the main findings of the thesis will be summarized. While this study may serve as a foundational framework for future research, detailed recommendations and limitations of the study will be discussed further in the conclusion section.

The findings of the study highlight significant challenges faced by female journalists in Azerbaijan. Firstly, familial resistance to women pursuing journalism education and careers persists, reflecting broader societal norms and expectations. Moreover, once in the field, female journalists often encounter societal biases and restrictions that hinder their ability to cover certain topics. Particularly in television journalism, women may face unfair judgments about their morals. Wage disparities between female and male journalists are also prevalent, indicating systemic gender inequalities within the profession. Furthermore, female journalists may struggle to be taken seriously by editors and interviewees, facing challenges in their workplace dynamics. Additionally, the study uncovered a concerning trend where some female journalists are hesitant to accept awards or recognition, fearing that their success will be questioned or undermined. These findings underscore the need for greater awareness and action to address gender disparities and biases within Azerbaijani journalism.

Gender dynamics in journalism in Azerbaijan exert significant influence on the experiences of female journalists, particularly in the realm of balancing family responsibilities and career aspirations. Societal norms often pressure women to prioritize familial duties after marriage or engagement, leading to decreased professional activity. Furthermore, female journalists with children often find themselves compelled to prioritize caregiving over career advancement, limiting their opportunities for self-improvement and professional development.

In addition to familial responsibilities, gender dynamics manifest in disparities in salary, management issues, and a pervasive culture of male dominance within newsrooms. Female journalists frequently navigate these challenges by adapting their behavior to fit into a male-dominated environment, often experiencing self-doubt and frustration as a result. Despite their efforts, female journalists are not immune to physical threats and violence, necessitating strategies to mitigate risks while covering sensitive topics or navigating potentially dangerous situations. Despite the obstacles they face, female journalists in

Azerbaijan demonstrate resilience and solidarity in their profession. They offer support to one another privately, despite enduring intense scrutiny and criticism from society. These findings underscore the urgent need for greater awareness and action to address gender disparities within Azerbaijani journalism, advocating for the rights and well-being of female journalists and striving towards a more equitable and inclusive media landscape.

In the panorama of Azerbaijani journalism, this study emerges as a vital contribution, not only shedding light on the experiences of female journalists but also amplifying their voices in a field dominated by male perspectives. By delving into the nuanced realities faced by women in journalism, it fills critical research gaps and provides a deeper understanding of the gender dynamics at play. Moving forward, the findings of this study have the potential to spark transformative change within the field of Azerbaijani journalism. By advocating for gender-sensitive policies and providing tailored support for female journalists, strides can be made towards a more inclusive and equitable industry. It is the hope that this research will serve as a foundation for future initiatives aimed at empowering women in Azerbaijani journalism and fostering a culture of gender equality.

In acknowledging the contributions of this study, gratitude is extended to the participants who generously shared their experiences and the stakeholders who supported this research endeavor. Their narratives not only enrich the academic discourse but also pave the way for tangible action towards a future where all journalists, regardless of gender, can thrive and make meaningful contributions to society.

However, the study contains some limitations. The interviewees are located in Baku, as they work with either international or Baku-based media outlets. Since there are no interviewees from regional media outlets residing in other regions, the perspectives shared in the interviews are limited in representing regional correspondents or journalists based in cities, towns, or villages outside the capital city. This gap hinders the comprehensive understanding of the differences between Baku and other regions, which could have provided valuable insights into regional journalism dynamics.

Furthermore, the author's status as an independent journalist may introduce bias, particularly when interviewees from governmental media organizations share their perspectives on gender dynamics in their workplace. Apart from the limitations mentioned, another potential constraint could be the reliance on self-reported data. Since the study primarily relies on interviews, the data collected may be subject to bias or inaccuracies based on the interviewees' perceptions or interpretations. The limited number of interviews can

also be acknowledged as a limitation, as this study may not capture every issue and detail pertaining to gender dynamics in the journalism field in Azerbaijan from the perspective of female journalists. Additionally, considering that female journalists may identify as queer, gender-neutral, or gender-fluid, further research may require a larger sample size to adequately represent these diverse perspectives.

Furthermore, the study's scope may be limited to the specific time period during which the interviews were conducted, potentially overlooking changes or developments in gender dynamics over time. Finally, logistical constraints, such as time and resource limitations, may have restricted the number of interviews conducted or the depth of analysis possible within the study.

For further research, employing a survey methodology with a broader sample size would enhance the value of the research topic. Given the underexplored nature of this field, a quantitative approach could provide additional statistical insights into the gender dynamics of Azerbaijani journalism. Exploring the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status could provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by female journalists. Additionally, comparative studies with other countries or regions could provide a cross-cultural perspective on gender dynamics in journalism. Finally, exploring the role of organizational policies and practices in fostering gender equality within newsrooms could offer practical insights for promoting diversity and inclusivity in the field.

Summary

V dynamické oblasti ázerbájdžánské žurnalistiky zůstávají zkušenosti novinářek významným, avšak nedostatečně prozkoumaným aspektem. Tato práce, vedená kritickou feministickou teorií, se snaží prozkoumat převládající genderové dynamika a jejich dopad na osobní a profesní život novinářek. Prostřednictvím kvalitativní analýzy polostrukturovaných rozhovorů vedených s patnácti novinářkami studie odhaluje nuance v pohledu na výzvy, kterým ženy v ázerbájdžánské žurnalistice čelí. Novinářky se pohybují ve složité síti očekávání a omezení, od rodinného odporu po společenský skepticismus, a často vyvažují své profesní aspirace s tradičními genderovými rolemi. Zjištění poukazují na rozdíly v odměňování, v zacházení na pracovišti a na potřebu novinářek přizpůsobit své chování tak, aby zapadly do převážně mužsky orientovaného odvětví.

Práce také osvětluje širší společenský kontext a zkoumá, jak kulturní normy a reality formují zkušenosti novinářek v Ázerbájdžánu. Přestože čelí překážkám a omezením, tyto novinářky prokazují odolnost a odhodlání ve své snaze o pravdu a sdělování příběhů. V závěru výzkumu jsou uvedena doporučení pro budoucí studie a iniciativy zaměřené na řešení genderových problémů, s nimiž se novinářky setkávají, a prosazování inkluzivnějšího a spravedlivějšího mediálního prostředí v Ázerbájdžánu.

List of References

- Abdinov, A. (1996). Education in Azerbaijan, The Challenges of Transition. *Azerbaijan International*, Winter 1996 (4.4), 16-18, 84.
https://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/44_folder/44_articles/44_education.html#:~:text=During%20the%20Soviet%20period%2C%20Azerbaijan,for%20its%20well%2Deducated%20population.
- Adeoye-Olatunde, O. A., & Olenik, N. L. (2021). Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews. *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy*, 4, 1358–1367. <https://doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk/10.1002/jac5.1441>.
- Aghakhanov, M. (2011, October 13). Müstəqilliyin 20 ilində jurnalistikamız nə qazanıb, nə itirib? (Tanınmış jurnalistlərin cavabı). (Original translation: What have we gained and lost in our journalism over the past 20 years of independence? (Responses from prominent journalists)). *Modern.az*.
<https://modern.az/news/17842>.
- Al Jazeera. (2023). Azerbaijan arrests two journalists investigating political corruption. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/21/azerbaijan-arrests-two-journalists-investigating-political-corruption>.
- Alhojailan, M. I. (2012). Thematic analysis: a critical review of its process and evaluation. In *WEI international European academic conference proceedings*, Zagreb, Croatia.
- Amnesty International. (2021, May 12). Azerbaijan: Gender-based reprisals against women must stop. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur55/4103/2021/en/>.
- Apa.az. (N.d.) About section. <https://apa.az/about>.
- Bartimus, T., Fawcett, D., Kazickas, J. Lederer, E., Mariano, A. B., Merick, A. M., et al. (2002). *War torn: Stories of war from the women reporters who covered Vietnam*. New York: Random House.
- Bartlett, T. K. (1989). Feminist Legal Methods. *Harvard Law Review*(103): 829-888.
- Bayramova, P. (2022, February 17). Azerbaijan Says It Will Remove Police Officers Over Media Harassment. *Voice of America*.
<https://www.voanews.com/a/azerbaijan-says-it-will-remove-police-officers-over-media-harassment/6446083.html>.
- BBC News Azərbaycanca. (2013, December 18). Azərbaycan 2013: ilin əsas 10 hadisəsi. (Original translation: Azerbaijan in 2013: A Recap of the Top 10 Events of the Year).
https://www.bbc.com/azeri/azerbaijan/2013/12/131218_yearender_10_events.
- BBC News Azərbaycanca. (2014, December 26a). Bakı: "Azadlıq" radiosunun ofisi "axtarışdan sonra möhürlənib". (Original translation: Baku: Office of "Azadliq" radio "sealed following search").
https://www.bbc.com/azeri/region/2014/12/141226_azadliq_search.
- BBC News Azərbaycanca. (2014, December 26b). Azərbaycan 2014: ilin əsas hadisələri. (Original translation: Azerbaijan in 2013: A Recap of the Top Events of the Year).

- https://www.bbc.com/azeri/azerbaijan/2014/12/141226_azerbaijan_2014_events.
BBC News Azərbaycanca. (2023, February 27). Tənqidi statusdan sonra işdən çıxarılmış keçmiş "Azertac" əməkdaşı intihara cəhd edib. (Original translation: A former employee of "Azertag," who was dismissed after expressing critical views, attempted suicide). <https://www.bbc.com/azeri/articles/crge19ep04go>.
- BBC News Azərbaycanca. (2023, October 23). "Uduzmuşam. Kişi kimi, çəkilmişəm kənara", ANS-in qurucusu Vahid Mustafayev. (Original translation, "I have lost. Like a man, I have been pulled aside", Founder of ANS, Vahid Mustafayev). [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Uvlzwr3BWAs?si=veZzlmQr7nTfiAV5>.
- BBC News. (2023, April 10). Azerbaijan media guide. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17047325>.
- Beauvoir, S. de. (2015). *The second sex*. Vintage Classics.
- Belkin, L. (1989, August 20). Bars to Equality of Sexes Seen as Eroding, Slowly. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/08/20/us/bars-to-equality-of-sexes-seen-as-eroding-slowly.html>.
- Braithwaite, D.O., & Schrod, P. (Eds.). (2021). *Engaging Theories in Interpersonal Communication: Multiple Perspectives*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003195511>.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2). 77-101. ISSN 1478-0887 Available from: <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/11735>.
- Bushina, E., Ryabichenko, T. (2018). Intergenerational Value Differences in Latvia and Azerbaijan. In: Lebedeva, N., Dimitrova, R., Berry, J. (eds) *Changing Values and Identities in the Post-Communist World. Societies and Political Orders in Transition*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72616-8_5.
- Butler, J. (2006). *Gender trouble*. Routledge.
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of research in nursing*, 25(8), 652-661. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>.
- Crenshaw, K. (2013). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. In *Feminist legal theories* (pp. 23-51). Routledge.
- Di Mauro, T. (2022) Does Gender Play a Role in Peace Journalism Practices? An Analysis of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Coverage of the 44 days Karabakh War. 63 p. Master thesis. Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism, Supervisor prof. Ing. Michal Dimitrov, Ph.D.
- Elekberov, C. (2018, February 6). Azərbaycanca ilk dəfə: jurnalistika və Dayanıqlı İnkişaf Məqsədlərinə dair təlim [Press release]. (Original translation: First time in Azerbaijan: training on journalism and Sustainable Development Goals). Azerbaijan UN.

- <https://azerbaijan.un.org/az/97910-az%C9%99rbaycanda-ilk-d%C9%99f%C9%99-jurnalistika-v%C9%99-dayan%C4%B1ql%C4%B1-i%CC%87nki%C5%9Faf-m%C9%99qs%C9%99dl%C9%99rin%C9%99-dair-t%C9%99lim>
- Ellada. (2011, February 1). "Podkast - audio bloqçuluq"la bağılı ilk seminar keçirilib. (Original translation: The first seminar on "Podcast - audio blogging" was held) Xeberler.az.
<https://xeberler.az/new/details/podkast-audio-bloqçuluqla-bagli-ilk-seminar-kecirilib--5693.htm>.
- Fakt Yoxla. (n.d.). Sardar Jalaloglu: "The age of marriage in Azerbaijan is 32, 33, 35".
<https://www.faktyoxla.info/en/cemiyyet/sardar-jalaloglu-the-age-of-marriage-in-azerbaijan-is-32-33-35#:~:text=-%20In%20recent%20years%2C%20the%20highest,30%20and%2025.2%20years%2C%20respectively>.
- Franks, S. (2013). *Women and Journalism*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Freedom House. (2023). *Freedom in the World Index*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/azerbaijan/freedom-world/2023>.
- Freedom House. (2024). *Freedom in the World Report*.
https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/FIW_2024_DigitalBooklet.pdf.
- Front Line Defenders. (2019). Mehman Huseynov Sentenced.
<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/mehman-huseynov-sentenced>.
- Gardashova, A. (2021, September 11). ANS-i əvəz edən kanal yoxdur: səbəbləri... - Professor. (Original translation, Professor: "There is no channel that replaces the ANS: Reasons..."). Axar.az. <https://axar.az/news/gundem/586038.html>.
- Gerçek Gündem. (2014). 'Beni öldürmek kimin işine yarayacak?'.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20151117030108/http://www.gercekgundem.com/medya/79982/beni-oldurmek-kimin-isine-yarayacak>.
- Geybulla, A. (2020). Government hits activists' online profiles: Journalists and activists are finding their social media profiles hacked and sometimes deleted in a clear harassment campaign in Azerbaijan. *Index on Censorship*, 49(3), 8–10.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306422020958268>.
- Geybulla, A. (2023). Uncensored journalism in censored times: Challenges of reporting on Azerbaijan. *Journalism*, 24(2), 313–327.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211036872>.
- Globalinfo.az. (2023, November 30). "Jurnalistlərin 3-cü binası"ndakı mənzillər şəhid ailələrinə verildi. (Original translation: The apartments in the "Journalists' 3rd Building" were given to the martyrs' families).
<https://globalinfo.az/jurnalistlerin-3-cu-binasindaki-menziller-sehid-ailelerine-verildi/>.
- Gupta, A. (2024). *Qualitative Methods and Data Analysis Using ATLAS. ti : A Comprehensive Researchers' Manual*. (1st ed.). Springer International Publishing AG.
- Heyat, F. (2002). *Azeri women in transition: Women in soviet and post-soviet azerbaijan*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Heyat, F. (2008). *New Veiling in Azerbaijan: Gender and Globalized Islam*. European

- Journal of Women's Studies, 15(4), 361-376.
<https://doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk/10.1177/1350506808095275>.
- hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Human Rights Watch. (2023, November 22). *Azerbaijan: Crackdown on Independent Media*
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/22/azerbaijan-crackdown-independent-media>
- Institute of Statistics of UNESCO (n.d). *Researchers by age*.
<https://uis.unesco.org/node/3080143>.
- International Federation of Journalists. (2012). *Gender Balance in Azerbaijani Media*.
<https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/asia-pacific/article/gender-balance-in-azerbaijani-media>.
- Jurnalistika Elmi Tədqiqatlar Laboratoriyası. (2014). *BDU Jurnalistika Fakültəsi*.
<https://jur-etl.blogspot.com/p/jurnalistika.html>.
- Justice for Journalists. (2023). *ATTACKS ON MEDIA WORKERS IN AZERBAIJAN IN 2022*. <https://jfj.fund/attacks-on-media-workers-in-azerbaijan-in-2022/>.
- Kazimov, S. (n.d.). *Azerbaijan. Media Landscapes*.
<https://medialandscapes.org/country/azerbaijan>.
- Kushner, K. E. & Morrow, R. (2003). *Grounded Theory, Feminist Theory, Critical Theory*. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 26(1), 30-43.
<https://oce-ovid-com.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk/article/00012272-200301000-00006/HTML>.
- Lukáš, O. (2024, March 6). *The winner of this year's Homo Homini Award is Azerbaijani anti-corruption media outlet, Abzas Media. People in Need*.
- Mammadli, J. (2001). *Jurnalistikanın aktual problemləri (dərs vəsaiti)*. (Original translation: *Current Issues in Journalism (Textbook)*).
<http://elibrary.bsu.edu.az/files/kitablar/874.pdf>.
- Mammadov, R. (2020). *Political Activist, Citizen's Helper, and Entertainer: A Study of Professional Role Perception of Journalists in Azerbaijan*. *Journalism Practice*, 15(7), 911-936, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1758189>.
- Mammadov, R. (2021). *Portrait of an Azerbaijani journalist: unpaid, dissatisfied, but nevertheless passionate and committed*. *Caucasus Survey*, 9(1), 60-83,
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23761199.2020.1867437>.
- Mehrabov, I. (2015). *Gendered Surveillance and Media Usage in Post-Soviet Space: The Case of Azerbaijan*. *Baltic Worlds*, ISSN 2000-2955, E-ISSN 2001-7308, 8(1-2), 44-48, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8225-3447>.
- Mehrabov, I. (2016). *Azerbaijani Women, Online Mediatized Activism and Offline Mass Mobilization*. *Soc. Sci.* 2016, 5(4), 60,
<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci5040060>.
- Melki, J. P., & Mallat, S., E. (2016). *Block Her Entry, Keep Her Down and Push Her Out*, *Journalism Studies*, 17(1), 57-79,
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.962919>.
- Melki, J., & Hitti, E. (2021). *The Domestic Tethering of Lebanese and Arab Women*

- Journalists and News Managers, *Journalism Practice*, 15(3), 288-307, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1715822>.
- Mitchelstein, E., Boczkowski, P. J., Andelsman, V., Etenberg, P., Weinstein, M., & Bombau, T. (2020). Whose voices are heard? The byline gender gap on Argentine news sites. *Journalism*, 21(3), 307-326, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919848183>.
- Modern.az. (2018, August 30). "APA Holding" tamamilə bağlandı. (Original translation: "APA Holding" was permanently shut down). <https://modern.az/news/175555/>.
- O'Muirheartaigh, C. (2008). Sampling. In *The SAGE Handbook of Public Opinion Research* (pp. 294-308). SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607910>.
- Official website of ITV. (n.d.). Haqqımızda. (Original translation: About us). <https://itv.az/about>.
- Official website of Media Development Agency. (2022). Mediada gender bərabərliyi və peşəkarlıq mövzusunda təlim keçirilib. (Original translation: Training on gender equality and professionalism in the media was held). <https://media.gov.az/mediada-gender-beraberliyi-ve-pesekarliq-movzusunda-telim-kecirilib/>.
- Official website of the President of Azerbaijan. (2017, July 20). İlham Əliyev jurnalistlər üçün tikilmiş növbəti binada Milli Mətbuat Günü münasibətilə mənzillərin paylanması mərasimində iştirak edib. [Press release]. (Original translation: İlham Aliyev participated in the ceremony of distribution of apartments on the occasion of National Press Day in the next building built for journalists). <https://president.az/az/articles/view/24740>.
- Palmer, L., & Melki, J. (2016). Shape Shifting in the Conflict Zone. *Journalism Studies*, 19(1), 126–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670x.2016.1161494>.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry: A Personal, Experiential Perspective. *Qualitative Social Work*, 1(3), 261-283. <https://doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk/10.1177/1473325002001003636>.
- Reporters Without Borders. (2023). 2023 World Press Freedom Index – journalism threatened by fake content industry. <https://rsf.org/en/2023-world-press-freedom-index-journalism-threatened-fake-content-industry>.
- Rhode, D.L. (1989). *Justice and Gender. Sex Discrimination and the Law*. Harvard University Press.
- Ruoho, I. & Torkkola, S. (2018). Journalism and Gender. Toward a Multidimensional Approach. *Nordicom Review*, 39(1), 67-79. <https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2018-0002>.
- Safety of Journalists Platform. (2020, December 10). Journalist Arzu Geybullayeva Targeted by Harassment Campaign. <https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/78245853>.
- Steiner, L. (2017). Gender and Journalism [Published Online]. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.91>.

- Stricker, A. M. (2022). How gendered discrimination limits women's professional practice in conflict reporting in Latin America. *Digitální repozitář UK*. <https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/176423>.
- The Coalition For Women In Journalism. (2020, July 15). Azerbaijan: Independent Journalists Covering Nagorno-Karabakh Protests Are Targeted On Social Media. <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/azerbaijan-independent-journalists-covering-nagorno-karabakh-protests-are-targeted-on-social-media?rq=azerbaijan>.
- The Coalition For Women In Journalism. (2022, May 10). Azerbaijan: Man Armed With Knife Attacks Ayten Mammadova, Warns Her Against Journalistic Investigation And Coverage Of Minor Girl's Murder. <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/azerbaijan-man-armed-with-knife-attacks-ayten-mammadova-warns-her-against-journalistic-investigation-and-coverage-of-minor-girls-murder?rq=azerbaijan>.
- The Coalition For Women In Journalism. (2024, February 7). Azerbaijan: Several Journalists Intimidated and Obstructed While Covering Elections. <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/azerbaijan-several-journalists-intimidated-and-obstructed-while-covering-elections?rq=azerbaijan>.
- Thompson, H. (2013). 'I'm Coming to Rape You Bitch: Is Online Abuse Silencing Female Journalists, *XCity Magazine*, 27 (spring): 48-50.
- Tohidi, N. (1996). Soviet in public, Azeri in private: Gender, Islam, and nationality in Soviet and post-Soviet Azerbaijan. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 19(1–2), (111-123). ISSN 0277-5395, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(95\)00074-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(95)00074-7).
- Tokluoglu, C. (2005). Definitions of national identity, nationalism and ethnicity in post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(4), 722-758. <https://doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk/10.1080/01419870500092951>.
- Wigginton, B., & Lafrance, M. N. (2019). Learning critical feminist research: A brief introduction to feminist epistemologies and methodologies. *Feminism & Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353519866058>.
- Zviyita, I., & Mare, A. (2023). Same threats, different platforms? Female journalists' experiences of online gender-based violence in selected newsrooms in Namibia. *Journalism*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849231183815>.

List of Appendices

Appendix no. 1: Interview Guide (list)

Questions in English

Introduction, Background:

1. Can you please introduce yourself as your name (English version), age, journalistic experience (with years), role in your company, professional specialization, and if you are journalism faculty alumna or not?
2. What motivated you to pursue a journalism career?
3. How has your personal and professional background influenced your journey as a journalist in Azerbaijan?
4. In the context of Azerbaijan's conservative society, which societal pressures or cultural norms have you faced as a female journalist when you first started your education or career?

Education:

5. (If they are journalism faculty alumni) Reflecting on your journalism education, how has it prepared or not prepared you for the unique challenges faced by women journalists in Azerbaijan?
6. (If they do not have an educational background in journalism) Since you did not graduate from journalism faculty, do you think lack of journalism education affects your activity as a female journalist?
7. Have you had access to mentorship or professional guidance throughout your journalism career?
8. How would you describe the accessibility of mentorship and professional guidance for female journalists compared to their male counterparts in your experience?

Gender Dynamics in Newsrooms:

9. Having worked across various media outlets, what different gender dynamics did you observe among them?
10. How do you believe gender dynamics shape and influence the experiences of women journalists in Azerbaijan?
11. With the increasing digitization of the media, how has this affected the perception of women journalists in society, whether in traditional or online journalism environments?

Effect of Gender Dynamics during Work Processes:

12. Have you encountered specific challenges related to your gender in the course of your work?
13. How is the representation of women in Azerbaijani media, which stereotypes have you encountered or observed that impact your work?
14. How do global discussions on gender issues align or differ from the on-the-ground realities of female journalists in Azerbaijan?
15. Considering economic factors, do financial considerations or disparities play a role in shaping the experiences of women journalists in Azerbaijan?
16. How do you perceive the term "feminism" within the context of Azerbaijan, and does it influence your approach to reporting on gender issues?

Role of Leadership and Recognition:

17. How can the appearance of women in the leadership role in journalism in Azerbaijan be interpreted?

Improvement within the Profession:

18. Looking ahead, what changes or improvements would you hope to see in terms of gender dynamics within Azerbaijan's journalism field?

Questions in Azerbaijani:

Giriş, əsas məlumatlar

1. Zəhmət olmasa, adınız (ingiliscə versiyası), yaşınız, genderiniz, jurnalistikada təcrübəniz (il ilə), işlədiyiniz şirkət və şirkətinizdəki rolunuz, ixtisaslaşmanız, jurnalistika fakültəsi məzun olub-olmamağınızla bağlı məlumat verərdiniz.
2. Jurnalist kimi fəaliyyətə başlamaq üçün sizə motivasiya verən nə olub?
3. Şəxsi və peşəkar keçmişiniz Azərbaycanda jurnalist kimi təcrübənizə necə təsir edib?
4. Azərbaycanın mühafizəkar cəmiyyəti kontekstində jurnalistika təhsilinizə, yaxud işinizə başlayarkən bir qadın jurnalist kimi hansı cəmiyyət təzyiqləri və ya sosial normalar ilə qarşılaşdınız?

Təhsil:

5. Jurnalistika fakültəsi məzunu olmağınız Azərbaycanda qadın jurnalist kimi çətinliklərə qarşı sizi nə qədər hazırlamışdı?

6. Jurnalistika fakültəsini bitirmədiyinizə görə, jurnalistika təhsilinin olmaması qadın jurnalist kimi fəaliyyətinizə necə təsir edib?
7. Jurnalistika karyeranız boyu mentorluq və ya peşəkar rəhbərliyə əlçatımlılığınız olubmu?
8. Müşahidənizə və təcrübənizə əsasən, kişi həmkarlar ilə müqayisədə qadın jurnalistlər üçün mentorluğun və peşəkar rəhbərliyin əlçatanlığını necə təsvir edərdiniz?

Redaksiyalarda gender dinamikası:

9. Müxtəlif media orqanlarında işləmişiniz, onlar arasında gender dinamikasında hansı fərqlər müşahidə etmişiniz? Hansısa fərqlər görmüsünüzsə, bu fərqlər nə ilə əlaqədar olub? Redaksiyadan, yoxsa işçilərin öz seçimlərindən?
10. Sizcə, müşahidə etdiyiniz gender dinamikası Azərbaycanda qadın jurnalistlərin təcrübələrini necə formalaşdırır və onlara təsir edir?
11. Medianın rəqəmsallaşması istər ənənəvi, istərsə də onlayn jurnalistika mühitində cəmiyyətdə qadın jurnalist qavrayışına necə təsir edib?
12. İşiniz zamanı genderinizlə bağlı xüsusi problemlərlə qarşılaşmışınız mı?
13. Azərbaycan mediasında qadınların təmsilçiliyi necədir, işinizə təsir edən hansı stereotiplərlə rastlaşmışınız və ya müşahidə etmişiniz?
14. Gender problemləri ilə bağlı global müzakirələr Azərbaycanda bir qadın jurnalist kimi yaşadığınız reallıqlarla nə dərəcədə üst-üstə düşür və ya fərqlidir?
15. İqtisadi amilləri nəzərə alsaq, Azərbaycanda qadın jurnalistlərin təcrübələrinin formalaşmasında maliyyə məsələləri və ya qeyri-bərabər maaş rol oynayır mı?
16. Azərbaycan kontekstində feminizm ifadəsini necə qəbul edirsiniz və bu, gender problemləri ilə bağlı reportajlara yanaşmanıza təsir edirmi?

Liderlik və təmsilçiliyin rolu:

17. Azərbaycanda jurnalistika sektorunda qadınların lider rolunda görünürlüyünü necə şərh edərsiniz?

Peşədə inkişaf:

18. Gələcəyə nəzərən, Azərbaycanın jurnalistika sahəsində gender dinamikası baxımından hansı dəyişiklikləri və ya təkmilləşmələri görmək istərdiniz?