

Educational Television and Public Knowledge in the South Caucasus: A Comparative Analysis of Broadcasting Policies and Educational Media Content in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia (2021–2026)

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Abstract

Television continues to play a significant role in shaping public knowledge, promoting education, and supporting cultural development despite the rapid expansion of digital media. This study comparatively examines the educational and informative functions of television broadcasting in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia during the period 2021–2026. The research is based primarily on original qualitative and quantitative data collected from official television websites, broadcast schedules, media archives, and reports published by international organizations. Six major television channels representing state, public, and private broadcasters were selected for comparative analysis. Qualitative and quantitative content analysis, thematic analysis, and comparative research methods were employed to evaluate editorial policies, program diversity, educational broadcasting, and public service initiatives. The findings reveal considerable differences in media strategies among the three countries. Georgia demonstrates the most diversified educational broadcasting model through multilingual public services, innovative digital projects, and comprehensive educational initiatives. Armenia maintains a balanced public broadcasting system with stable educational programming and well-organized digital archives. Azerbaijan places stronger emphasis on cultural, historical, and patriotic content; however, educational programming has declined within state and private television, while the public broadcaster continues to preserve a relatively stronger educational function. Overall, informational and entertainment programs substantially outnumber educational broadcasts across the South Caucasus. The study concludes that strengthening educational television, preserving digital educational resources, and expanding public-service media initiatives would significantly enhance lifelong learning and public awareness throughout the region.

Keywords

Educational television; Public broadcasting; Media education; Television policy; South Caucasus; Azerbaijan; Armenia; Georgia; Comparative media studies; Educational communication; Content analysis

¹ Received: 20 February 2026; Accepted: 28 April March 2026; Published: 17 August 2026

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1. Introduction

Television remains one of the most influential platforms for disseminating information, shaping public opinion, preserving cultural identity, and promoting lifelong learning. Although digital media and online streaming services have transformed contemporary media consumption, television continues to play a central role in public communication, particularly in countries where traditional broadcasting remains the primary source of news and educational content. As a result, evaluating television's educational function has become increasingly important for understanding how media contribute to knowledge dissemination, civic awareness, and social development.

The South Caucasus represents a particularly valuable region for comparative media research due to the shared historical legacy and differing political, cultural, and media environments of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. Although these neighboring countries have experienced similar post-Soviet transformations, their television systems have evolved differently in terms of ownership structures, editorial policies, public service broadcasting, and the production of educational content. These differences provide an opportunity to investigate how national broadcasting strategies influence the promotion of education through television.

Since 2017, the author has conducted continuous research on television broadcasting in the South Caucasus. Earlier studies focused primarily on political communication and news coverage, whereas the present doctoral research shifts attention to the educational function of television. It examines the place, significance, and evolution of educational programming within the broadcasting schedules of major Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Georgian television channels between 2021 and 2026.

The originality of this study lies in its exclusive reliance on primary qualitative and quantitative data. Most of the statistical information presented has not previously been published in a unified form. Considerable effort was devoted to identifying television broadcasters, collecting programming schedules, examining digital archives, and compiling data from official institutional sources. Because reliable statistical information concerning television broadcasting—particularly in Azerbaijan—was fragmented, inaccessible, or unavailable in existing literature, the study required extensive independent data collection and verification.

The research not only identifies the number of state, public, and private television broadcasters operating in each country but also compares their programming structures, educational initiatives, genre distribution, editorial priorities, and the development of specialized educational media projects. Furthermore, it examines television schools, educational online media platforms, discontinued educational programs, and changes in editorial policies over a six-year period.

By integrating quantitative media indicators with qualitative content analysis, this study offers one of the first comprehensive comparative assessments of educational television broadcasting in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. The findings contribute to media studies, communication research, educational policy, and public service broadcasting literature while providing evidence-based recommendations for strengthening educational media across the South Caucasus.

2. Methodology

This study employed a comparative mixed-method research design integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the educational role of television broadcasting in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia between 2021 and 2026. The methodological framework was designed to ensure systematic comparison of broadcasting systems, editorial priorities, educational programming, and public service media across the three South Caucasus countries.

The research is based almost entirely on original primary data collected from official television websites, broadcast schedules, digital archives, institutional reports, and international media organizations. Initial information regarding the television landscape was obtained from internationally recognized organizations, including Media Landscape, Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, the Caucasus

Research Resource Center (CRRC), and the International Republican Institute (IRI). These organizations provide comprehensive assessments of media systems, press freedom, broadcasting environments, and political communication in the South Caucasus. Because available information was often fragmented and updated irregularly, additional verification was conducted using official broadcaster websites and archival sources.

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to select representative television channels from each country. Selection was based on three principal criteria: (1) high audience reach and national significance; (2) availability of an official website containing accessible programming information and archives; and (3) a broadcasting profile emphasizing news and analytical programming rather than exclusively entertainment content. Applying these criteria resulted in the selection of six major television broadcasters representing state, public, and private ownership models.

Both qualitative and quantitative content analyses were conducted to examine program genres, educational broadcasting, editorial priorities, thematic diversity, and changes in programming over time. Particular attention was given to educational programs, science communication, cultural broadcasting, children's education, historical programming, and public awareness initiatives. Thematic analysis was employed to identify dominant editorial patterns, while comparative analysis was used to evaluate similarities and differences among the three national broadcasting systems.

The investigation also included an assessment of discontinued television programs, educational television projects, tele-school initiatives, specialized educational media platforms, and digital educational resources. These variables enabled the identification of long-term trends in educational broadcasting and provided evidence regarding the extent to which television fulfills its educational mission within contemporary public media systems.

By combining original empirical data with systematic comparative analysis, the study provides a comprehensive evaluation of television as an educational institution in the South Caucasus and offers a methodological framework applicable to future comparative media research.

2. Literature Review

Television has long been recognized as one of the most influential mass media platforms, serving not only as a source of information and entertainment but also as an important instrument for education, cultural preservation, and civic engagement. Although digital technologies and online media have transformed the global communication landscape, television continues to play a central role in public knowledge dissemination, particularly within public service broadcasting systems and developing media environments. Consequently, scholars have increasingly examined television from perspectives including educational communication, media policy, public broadcasting, and digital transformation.

The theoretical foundations of comparative media studies were established by Hallin and Mancini (2004), who demonstrated that media systems differ according to political institutions, ownership structures, journalistic professionalism, and state intervention. Later, Hallin and Mancini (2012) expanded this framework beyond Western democracies, emphasizing that media systems in post-socialist and transitional societies require context-specific analysis. Their theoretical model provides an appropriate framework for comparing television systems in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, where broadcasting continues to reflect unique political, cultural, and institutional characteristics.

Media scholars have consistently emphasized that television performs functions extending beyond information dissemination. McQuail (2013) argues that mass media contribute significantly to education, socialization, cultural continuity, and public participation. Similarly, Meyrowitz (1985) explains that electronic media reshape social interaction and influence the transmission of knowledge by reducing traditional barriers between institutions and audiences. These theoretical perspectives support the argument that television remains an essential educational institution despite the expansion of digital communication.

The transformation of public service broadcasting has also received considerable scholarly attention. Jakubowicz (2007) argues that public broadcasters must adapt to technological and societal changes while preserving their educational mission. Likewise, Van Cuilenburg and McQuail (2003) describe the evolution of media policy toward more complex communication environments in which public interest, market competition, and technological innovation coexist. These studies provide an important theoretical basis for evaluating whether contemporary broadcasters continue to fulfill their educational responsibilities.

Research specifically addressing educational television demonstrates its continuing influence on learning outcomes. Ishkova (2014) found that television contributes significantly to preschool children's cognitive and social development when educational content is systematically integrated into programming. Similarly, Ahinda et al. (2014) reported that educational television positively influences children's language acquisition and academic performance, particularly when exposure is supervised and supported by parents or educators. These findings suggest that educational broadcasting remains an effective component of informal learning.

Recent studies increasingly examine the relationship between media technologies and education in the digital era. Williamson and Eynon (2020) discuss the growing integration of artificial intelligence into educational systems and its implications for future learning environments. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Williamson et al. (2022) demonstrated how digital technologies and distance education transformed educational practices worldwide, highlighting the expanding role of media in formal education. More recently, Williamson et al. (2024) emphasized that educational technology research should remain sensitive to cultural, political, and institutional contexts rather than adopting universal assumptions. Their work reinforces the importance of contextual comparative studies such as the present research.

International organizations have likewise emphasized the educational responsibility of media. UNESCO (2021) identifies media and information literacy as an essential competency for contemporary societies and encourages cooperation between educational institutions and media organizations. The *Global Education Monitoring Report* (UNESCO, 2023) further argues that technological innovation should complement, rather than replace, inclusive educational systems. These policy documents underscore the continuing relevance of educational broadcasting within national education strategies.

Within the post-Soviet context, comparative educational research has expanded considerably. Hernandez-Torrano et al. (2021) demonstrated substantial differences in educational research productivity among post-Soviet countries, while Hovakimyan et al. (2021) analyzed the transition from centralized educational governance toward more participatory models in higher education. Aydarova et al. further examined the historical legacy of socialist educational traditions and their continuing influence on contemporary educational systems. Together, these studies provide important contextual understanding of the educational environments in which television broadcasting operates across the South Caucasus.

Research specifically focusing on media systems in the South Caucasus remains relatively limited. Freedman and Shafer (2013) examined journalism and media development in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, identifying significant differences in media freedom, political influence, and democratic transition. Pearce and Rice (2014) investigated digital communication in the region, demonstrating that language continues to influence access to information and online participation. Although these studies analyze broader communication systems, they provide valuable contextual insights for understanding national broadcasting environments.

Among the few studies devoted specifically to television in the South Caucasus, Abashina (2015) conducted a comparative analysis of public television programming in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. The study revealed notable differences in editorial priorities, programming diversity, and public service broadcasting strategies, providing one of the earliest comparative assessments of regional

television systems. However, the analysis focused primarily on public broadcasters and did not examine educational programming comprehensively.

More recently, Karchava-Shartava (2025a, 2025b) reviewed existing scholarship concerning the role of television in promoting education throughout the South Caucasus. These review studies identified a significant gap in comparative empirical research and emphasized the need for systematic quantitative evaluation of educational television content across Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia.

Despite these valuable contributions, the existing literature exhibits several important limitations. First, previous studies generally examine individual countries rather than providing integrated comparative analyses of the South Caucasus. Second, most research relies on secondary data, while comprehensive primary datasets concerning television programming remain scarce. Third, educational television has received considerably less scholarly attention than political communication, journalism, or media freedom. Finally, little research has investigated long-term changes in educational broadcasting before and after the rapid digital transformation observed during the last decade.

The present study addresses these gaps by employing original qualitative and quantitative data collected directly from television broadcasters, official archives, and institutional sources between 2021 and 2026. Through a comparative analysis of state, public, and private television channels in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, this research provides one of the first comprehensive evaluations of educational broadcasting in the South Caucasus and contributes new empirical evidence to the fields of comparative media studies, educational communication, and public service broadcasting.

3.Results and Discussion

The comparative analysis of television broadcasting in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia revealed substantial differences in the extent to which television systems contribute to educational communication, public knowledge dissemination, and digital accessibility. Although all three countries maintain mixed broadcasting systems composed of public and private television networks, their editorial priorities, technological development, and commitment to educational programming differ considerably (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 2012; McQuail, 2013; Jakubowicz, 2007). The findings demonstrate that the educational function of television in the South Caucasus remains secondary to political, cultural, and entertainment objectives, although important national distinctions can be observed (Abashina, 2015; Freedman & Shafer, 2013; Karchava-Shartava, 2025a, 2025b).

Azerbaijan

The findings indicate that Azerbaijan possesses the largest television market among the three countries included in the study, with 47 broadcasting channels, including foreign broadcasters, while 25 channels are domestically established. Three television stations—AZTV, ICTIMAI TV, and XAZAR TV—were selected because of their nationwide coverage, official websites, and predominance of news and analytical programming. This selection ensured the inclusion of public, state-owned, and commercial broadcasting sectors, thereby providing a representative overview of the national television environment (Hallin & Mancini, 2012; Freedman & Shafer, 2013).

Content analysis revealed several structural weaknesses within the Azerbaijani television environment. First, official websites are poorly organized, with limited archival accessibility and inconsistent preservation of previously broadcast programmes. Many historical broadcasts that were previously available have been replaced by fragmented YouTube uploads, making longitudinal media analysis difficult and reducing public access to educational resources. This finding demonstrates insufficient digital preservation practices compared with international public-service broadcasting standards (UNESCO, 2021, 2023; Williamson et al., 2022; Jakubowicz, 2007).

A second major finding concerns the declining presence of educational programming. The state broadcaster has discontinued approximately 70% of its educational productions, while private broadcasters devote only limited attention to educational television, prioritizing entertainment-oriented programming instead. Consequently, educational broadcasting has gradually lost its strategic importance

within Azerbaijan's television landscape. Similar trends have been observed in media systems undergoing commercialization, where audience ratings increasingly influence editorial priorities (McQuail, 2013; Van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003).

Nevertheless, ICTIMAI TV represents an important exception. Compared with both state and private competitors, the public broadcaster maintains a relatively diverse portfolio of educational, cultural, scientific, and social programmes. Although the total number of educational programmes has slightly decreased since 2024, ICTIMAI TV continues to promote civic awareness, intellectual competitions, and social education. However, none of the analysed broadcasters currently provides sufficient educational content specifically designed for preschool and primary-school audiences. Previous research has demonstrated that educational television contributes positively to children's language acquisition, cognitive development, and academic achievement, emphasizing the importance of age-specific educational broadcasting (Ahinda et al., 2014; Ishkova, 2014; UNESCO, 2021).

These findings suggest that Azerbaijani television primarily fulfils nation-building and cultural representation functions, while its contribution to lifelong learning and educational innovation remains comparatively limited. Similar observations regarding the educational orientation of broadcasting in the South Caucasus have been reported by Abashina (2015) and Karchava-Shartava (2025a, 2025b).

Armenia

The Armenian television system demonstrates a more balanced relationship between public-service broadcasting and commercial television. Among 36 television stations operating nationally and regionally, Armenia 1 and Shant TV were selected because they represent the country's principal public and private broadcasters. Their organizational structures reflect the coexistence of public-service values and market-oriented broadcasting models commonly observed within transitional media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2012; Freedman & Shafer, 2013).

Unlike Azerbaijan, Armenian broadcasters maintain comprehensive digital archives, allowing users unrestricted access to previous programmes. Such transparency considerably improves media accessibility and strengthens television's educational role beyond real-time broadcasting. The public broadcaster offers educational programmes targeting different demographic groups, whereas Shant TV combines educational content with entertainment programming while maintaining a commercially sustainable broadcasting model. These findings correspond with UNESCO's recommendations concerning digital accessibility and lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2021, 2023).

An important characteristic identified during the analysis is Armenia's balanced editorial policy. Television schedules simultaneously emphasize national identity, historical memory, religion, and cultural heritage while remaining open to international perspectives. Many broadcasters publish multilingual online content, reflecting greater international orientation and broader accessibility for foreign audiences (Pearce & Rice, 2014; Freedman & Shafer, 2013).

Furthermore, Armenian public television places considerable emphasis on civic education through analytical discussions, documentaries, and socially relevant debates. Rather than relying exclusively on entertainment, programming frequently encourages civic participation, critical thinking, and family values. The coexistence of traditional television formats alongside modern educational programmes illustrates a gradual modernization process that preserves cultural continuity while adapting to contemporary broadcasting standards (Jakubowicz, 2007; McQuail, 2013; Abashina, 2015).

Overall, Armenia demonstrates a comparatively stronger integration of educational objectives into public-service broadcasting than Azerbaijan, although commercial broadcasters continue to prioritize audience-oriented entertainment.

Georgia

The Georgian broadcasting system exhibits the highest level of digital innovation and multimedia integration among the three South Caucasus countries. The analysis focused on the First Public Broadcaster and Imedi TV, representing public and private broadcasting respectively. These findings

support previous research describing Georgia as possessing one of the most diversified broadcasting environments in the region (Freedman & Shafer, 2013; Hallin & Mancini, 2012).

One of the most significant findings concerns the advanced digital infrastructure maintained by the Georgian Public Broadcaster. Beyond traditional television programming, the broadcaster provides online magazines, podcasts, digital archives, multilingual news services, virtual educational projects, radio broadcasting, cultural platforms, and specialized educational initiatives such as *Georgia 360*, *Scena*, and *Diverse Georgia*. These projects substantially expand television's educational function beyond conventional broadcasting and reflect international trends in multimedia public-service broadcasting (Williamson et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023; Jakubowicz, 2007).

Unlike Azerbaijan and Armenia, Georgia demonstrates extensive integration between television and digital media ecosystems. Educational communication is delivered through multiple complementary platforms rather than solely through scheduled television programmes. This diversified approach increases audience accessibility while supporting lifelong learning opportunities, a development consistent with current educational technology research (Williamson & Eynon, 2020; Williamson et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2023).

The study also found that private television occupies a comparatively stronger position in Georgia than in neighbouring countries. Imedi TV consistently achieves higher audience ratings than the public broadcaster, reflecting stronger commercial competitiveness. Nevertheless, the public broadcaster continues to provide deeper analytical and educational content, whereas Imedi emphasizes shorter, more commercially attractive programming formats. Similar distinctions between commercial and public-service broadcasters have been widely documented within comparative media studies (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; McQuail, 2013).

Although many educational projects have recently been discontinued, the Georgian Public Broadcaster remains the regional leader regarding innovative educational initiatives and digital public-service broadcasting.

4.Comparative Analysis of Teleschool Initiatives

A comparison of pandemic-era television education demonstrates significant differences in national responses. All three countries introduced television-based distance education during COVID-19; however, Georgia developed the most comprehensive and sustainable model. These observations are consistent with international studies examining the growing educational role of broadcasting during the COVID-19 pandemic (Williamson et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Georgia's Teleschool covered virtually all school subjects and educational levels while simultaneously preserving complete digital archives that remain publicly accessible after the pandemic. Armenia implemented a comparable project, but only partial archives remain available through YouTube. Azerbaijan distributed educational broadcasts across multiple television channels, reducing accessibility, while only fragments of the educational archive have been preserved. These findings highlight the importance of digital preservation strategies alongside programme production (UNESCO, 2021, 2023; Williamson et al., 2022).

These findings indicate that successful educational television depends not only on programme production but equally on long-term digital preservation, accessibility, institutional commitment, and effective integration with digital media platforms (Williamson et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2023).

5.Overall Comparative Discussion

The comparative evidence demonstrates three distinct broadcasting models within the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan emphasizes national identity, historical memory, and state representation, although educational broadcasting has experienced a substantial decline. Armenia maintains a balanced model combining educational, cultural, and civic programming with effective digital archiving and multilingual communication. Georgia demonstrates the most innovative broadcasting environment through its integration of television, digital platforms, multilingual services, podcasts, virtual educational projects,

and long-term preservation of educational content. These differences largely reflect broader institutional, political, and technological characteristics of each country's media system (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 2012; McQuail, 2013; Abashina, 2015).

Despite these differences, one common characteristic unites all three countries: educational programmes remain considerably less numerous than informational, political, and entertainment broadcasts. Educational topics are generally presented through news coverage or expert interviews rather than comprehensive educational productions designed for different age groups. Consequently, television across the South Caucasus continues to underutilize its potential as an instrument of lifelong learning, public education, and knowledge dissemination (UNESCO, 2021, 2023; Ahinda et al., 2014; Ishkova, 2014; Karchava-Shartava, 2025a, 2025b).

The findings therefore suggest that future broadcasting policies should move beyond traditional news-oriented coverage of education and invest in sustainable educational television ecosystems integrating television, digital archives, podcasts, online learning platforms, and multilingual educational resources. Such an approach would strengthen public-service broadcasting while enhancing educational accessibility throughout the South Caucasus region, supporting the broader transformation of television from a conventional broadcasting medium into an integrated educational communication platform (Jakubowicz, 2007; Williamson et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2023; Hallin & Mancini, 2012).

5. Conclusion

This study provides one of the first comprehensive comparative analyses of the educational role of television broadcasting in the South Caucasus, focusing on Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia during the period 2021–2026. By integrating original qualitative and quantitative data collected from television archives, official broadcasters' websites, programming schedules, and institutional sources, the research offers new empirical evidence regarding the current state of educational broadcasting in the region.

The findings demonstrate that although all three countries recognize television as an important medium for informing society, considerable differences exist in the extent to which broadcasters fulfill their educational mission. Azerbaijan possesses the largest television market; however, educational programming has gradually declined, particularly within state broadcasting, while digital archiving and accessibility remain insufficient. Armenia demonstrates a more balanced broadcasting model in which public television continues to integrate educational, cultural, and civic content while maintaining accessible digital archives. Georgia exhibits the highest level of innovation through its integration of traditional broadcasting with digital media, multilingual platforms, podcasts, online educational projects, and comprehensive digital archives, thereby expanding television beyond its conventional broadcasting function.

The comparative analysis further revealed that educational broadcasting remains substantially underrepresented across all three countries when compared with news, political, and entertainment programming. Although public service broadcasters continue to perform the strongest educational role, commercial television increasingly prioritizes audience ratings and entertainment-oriented content. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the strategic importance of television as an educational platform; however, the long-term sustainability of educational initiatives varied considerably among the three countries. Georgia demonstrated the most successful institutional model through the preservation and continued accessibility of its Teleschool resources.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support comparative media system theory by demonstrating that broadcasting policies continue to reflect broader political, institutional, and cultural characteristics of each country. At the same time, the study extends existing scholarship by providing longitudinal primary evidence concerning educational television in the South Caucasus, a field that has received relatively limited scholarly attention.

The practical implications of this research are equally significant. Public broadcasters should strengthen their educational mandate by expanding educational programming for different age groups, particularly preschool children and young audiences. Television institutions should invest in digital preservation,

multilingual accessibility, educational archives, podcasts, and interactive learning platforms to enhance lifelong learning opportunities. Stronger cooperation between ministries of education, public broadcasters, universities, and independent educational organizations would further improve the quality and accessibility of educational media content throughout the region.

Although this study focuses on three South Caucasus countries, its methodological framework may be applied to comparative media studies in other post-socialist and transitional societies. Future research may extend the geographical scope, incorporate audience reception studies, examine the educational effectiveness of specific television programmes, and investigate the growing interaction between television, artificial intelligence, and digital learning environments.

Overall, the study demonstrates that television continues to possess considerable educational potential. However, realizing this potential requires strategic investment, institutional commitment, and the transformation of broadcasting from a predominantly information- and entertainment-oriented medium into an integrated platform supporting lifelong education, public knowledge dissemination, and digital learning.

Declarations

Funding

This research received no external funding and was conducted as part of the author's doctoral research within the Doctoral Educational Program in Mass Communication at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Caucasus International University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was not required for this study because it did not involve human participants, personal interviews, surveys, experiments, or clinical investigations. The research was based exclusively on publicly available television broadcasts, official broadcaster websites, digital archives, programming schedules, and publicly accessible institutional documents.

Informed Consent

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study consist of original qualitative and quantitative datasets compiled from official television websites, publicly available broadcast schedules, digital archives, institutional reports, and media resources in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia between 2021 and 2026. Additional research materials are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

The author solely conceived and designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, interpreted the findings, drafted and revised the manuscript, and approved the final version for publication.

Acknowledgements

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the public, state, and private television broadcasters, media institutions, and educational organizations in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia whose publicly accessible archives, official websites, and broadcasting materials provided the primary data for this comparative study.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) was used solely to improve the academic language, grammar, and stylistic quality of the manuscript. The author retained full responsibility for the study's conceptualization, research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings, and all scientific conclusions presented in this article.

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