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**WOMEN IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD  
KÜRESELLEŞEN DÜNYADA KADIN**



**SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİR EŞİTLİK VE SOSYAL ARAŞTIRMALAR DERGİSİ**





## Special Issue: Women in a Globalizing World - A Scholarly Perspective

Esteemed Colleagues and Readers,

*The Journal of Sustainable Equity and Social Research (JESER)* is pleased to present our latest special issue, entitled "Women in a Globalizing World". This edition comprises six peer-reviewed articles that critically examine the multifaceted challenges, achievements, and ongoing struggles faced by women in various global contexts.

This special issue encompasses a diverse range of topics, including:

- The work-life balance paradigm of female scientists in Uzbekistan
- Socio-economic empowerment strategies for women market vendors in the Philippines
- A century of women's political participation in Turkey: Historical trends and contemporary challenges
- An ethical analysis of bridewealth practices in African philosophy
- Gender discrimination in Iran: Perspectives from Iranian students at Erciyes University
- A statistical examination of girls' access to K-12 education across regions in Turkey

These scholarly works offer a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of gender equality and women's rights by examining the intersectionality of challenges and opportunities women face on a global scale. The rigorous research conducted by our contributors significantly advances our understanding of these complex and crucial issues within their specific cultural and sociopolitical contexts.

As an academic journal dedicated to sustainable equity and social research, we posit that this special issue will make substantial contributions to the field of women's studies and gender research. Furthermore, we anticipate that it will serve as a catalyst for future scholarly inquiry and discourse. We invite you to engage critically with this rich content and consider its implications for both theory and practice in the realm of gender studies and beyond.

We extend our gratitude to all contributors and reviewers who have made this special issue possible. We trust that you will find the enclosed articles both intellectually stimulating and academically rigorous.

Yours in scholarship,

The Editorial Board

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## Özel Sayı: Küreselleşen Dünyada Kadın - Akademik Bir Perspektif

Değerli Meslektaşlarımız ve Okuyucularımız,

*Journal of Sustainable Equity and Social Research (JESER)* olarak, "Küreselleşen Dünyada Kadın" başlıklı en son özel sayımızı sunmaktan memnuniyet duyuyoruz. Bu sayı, çeşitli küresel bağlamlarda kadınların karşılaştığı çok yönlü zorlukları, başarıları ve devam eden mücadeleleri eleştirel bir şekilde inceleyen altı hakemli makaleyi içermektedir.

Bu özel sayı, aşağıdakiler de dahil olmak üzere geniş bir konu yelpazesini kapsamaktadır:

- Özbekistan'daki kadın bilim insanlarının iş-yaşam dengesi paradigması
- Filipinler'deki kadın pazar satıcıları için sosyo-ekonomik güçlendirme stratejileri
- Türkiye'de kadınların siyasi katılımının yüzyılı: Tarihsel eğilimler ve çağdaş zorluklar
- Afrika felsefesinde başlık parası uygulamalarının etik analizi
- İran'da cinsiyet ayrımcılığı: Erciyes Üniversitesi'ndeki İranlı öğrencilerin perspektifleri
- Türkiye'de kız çocuklarının K-12 eğitimine erişiminin bölgeler arası istatistiksel incelemesi

Bu akademik çalışmalar, kadınların küresel ölçekte karşılaştığı zorlukların ve fırsatların kesişimselliğini inceleyerek toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği ve kadın hakları konusunda nüanslı ve kapsamlı bir analiz sunmaktadır. Katkıda bulunanlarımızın titiz araştırmaları, bu karmaşık ve kritik konuların belirli kültürel ve sosyo-politik bağlamlar içindeki anlaşılmasını önemli ölçüde ilerletmektedir.

Sürdürülebilir eşitlik ve sosyal araştırmalara adanmış bir akademik dergi olarak, bu özel sayının kadın çalışmaları ve toplumsal cinsiyet araştırmaları alanına önemli katkılar sağlayacağını öngörüyoruz. Ayrıca, gelecekteki akademik sorgulamalar ve tartışmalar için bir katalizör görevi göreceğini tahmin ediyoruz. Sizleri bu zengin içerikle eleştirel bir şekilde etkileşime girmeye ve bunun toplumsal cinsiyet çalışmaları alanında ve ötesinde hem teori hem de uygulama açısından etkilerini düşünmeye davet ediyoruz.

Bu özel sayıyı mümkün kılan tüm katkıda bulunanlara ve hakemlere şükranlarımızı sunuyoruz. Ekte yer alan makaleleri hem entelektüel açıdan uyarıcı hem de akademik açıdan titiz bulacağınıza inanıyoruz.

Akademik saygılarımızla,

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## THE WORK-LIFE STRUGGLE OF UZBEK WOMEN SCIENTISTS

Nigora MAMADAMINOVA<sup>1</sup> 

### Abstract

This study delves into the work-life balance struggles of Uzbek women scientists, aiming to illuminate the multifaceted challenges they face in their professional and personal lives. Despite significant reforms in Uzbekistan's higher education system and the country's efforts to promote gender equality, women in academia continue to encounter substantial barriers. The study employs a qualitative methodology, including semi-structured interviews with ten women scientists from various higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. The findings reveal that these women are highly qualified and experienced, yet they face societal expectations to manage household responsibilities, care for children, and uphold traditional family roles, which significantly impact their career progression. The research highlights the support extended by family members. This support often enables them to continue their careers despite societal pressures. However, the study also underscores the lack of organizational support systems within academic institutions. The study concludes that while individual resilience and family support are crucial, systemic changes at both societal and organizational levels are necessary to foster a more equitable environment for women scientists in Uzbekistan. The findings suggest that implementing supportive policies and creating a more inclusive academic culture are vital steps toward achieving gender equality and empowering women in science. This research contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality in academia and offers insights for policymakers and educational institutions aiming to support the professional development of women scientists.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to explore the work-life challenges faced by Uzbek women scientists. Understanding these challenges is crucial for empowering women in academia and supporting their career development. Women in academia face significant challenges due to societal, organizational, and individual factors. Societally, entrenched socio-cultural frameworks, including religion and gender roles, create negative attitudes that hinder women's career progression (Peus et al., 2015; Al-Kayed, 2015). Research across various countries, including Turkey, Pakistan, and the United States, highlights that women are often expected to prioritize family obligations over their careers, affecting their professional growth (Neale & Özkanlı, 2010; Blackwood et al., 2011).

Organizationally, higher education institutions (HEIs) are male-dominated and patriarchal, often prioritizing norms aligned with men's experiences, which results in harsher evaluations and undervaluation of women's skills (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; O'Connor, 2020). Despite initiatives for gender equality, progress is slow due to resistance from entrenched structures (O'Neil et al., 2008).

At the individual level, women struggle with work-life balance, particularly when managing family responsibilities. The 'motherhood myth' and societal expectations often force women to choose between career and family, leading to fewer aspirations for leadership roles (Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2021).

In Uzbekistan, traditional gender roles further exacerbate these challenges, limiting women's opportunities for education and career advancement despite recent reforms aimed at promoting gender equality (Fayzullaeva, 2018; Madalinska-Michalak & Mamadaminova, 2022). Addressing these systemic barriers is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment that supports women's academic and professional growth.

Uzbekistan, amid numerous reforms, is striving to implement gender equality across various spheres of life. This study is the first of its kind to investigate the work-life balance of women scientists in Uzbekistan. Notably, the topics of gender equality and women's empowerment have only begun to gain academic attention in the past 5-6 years. Women occupy a unique and complex role in Uzbek society. Since 2017, following governmental changes, there has been a noticeable increase in attention and support for women from the government. The current administration has placed greater emphasis on appreciating and empowering women. During this transformational period, significant reforms have been implemented, including those related to education and women's empowerment. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing political, legal, and educational changes within higher educational institutions by examining the lives of ten women scientists in Uzbekistan. The researcher conducted interviews either in person or online/over the phone to gather insights into their work-life struggles.

The following sections of the article delve deeper into the challenges women face at societal, organizational, and individual levels, with a particular focus on work-life balance issues. It then provides an overview of the context of Uzbekistan, emphasizing women's status and traditional roles. Subsequent sections discuss reforms in higher education management, highlighting efforts to empower women across various spheres of the "New Uzbekistan." The article concludes with a discussion of the methodology, findings, and implications, followed by recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Difficulties faced by academic women in their careers can be categorized into three levels: societal, organizational, and individual. A strong consensus exists that the socio-cultural framework prevalent in most national contexts is the primary cause of the disadvantages women encounter. According to Peus et al. (2015), social barriers, including religion,

local beliefs, societal attitudes, politics, and other social factors, negatively impact women's careers across various countries and cultures. Al-Kayed (2015), Almaki et al. (2016), and Al-Asfour et al. (2017) similarly acknowledged that these social barriers contribute to negative male attitudes towards women and reinforce gender role stereotypes. The socio-political dimension involves deeply ingrained hegemonic traditions and cultural norms, often influenced by religious beliefs, which women are compelled to accept due to their circumstances (Cubillo & Brown, 2003).

Research indicates that women are expected to shoulder more family obligations than men, particularly in traditional societies. This expectation poses a significant challenge to the academic career development of women academicians in various regions. Studies have documented such challenges in Turkey (Neale & Özkanlı, 2010), Pakistan (Batool & Sajid, 2013), Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia (Luke et al., 2003), Iran (Hosseini, 2008), and even among African American women in the United States (Blackwood et al., 2011).

Despite the notable increase in the number of women in organizations over recent years, these entities remain predominantly male-dominated (Fitzgerald, 2014; Peterson, 2014; O'Connor, 2015). Existing literature suggests that women's career progression diverges from men's due to gender-specific developmental differences, as well as organizational and societal factors (O'Neil et al., 2008).

Cubillo and Brown (2003) provide an analysis supporting this perspective, describing universities as patriarchal institutions that inherently favor men. Similarly, O'Connor (2020) highlights the hierarchical and paternalistic nature of educational institutions. The structures and practices of academic organizations tend to prioritize intellectual norms and experiences that align with those of men, as academia was originally established and designed by men to cater to their needs and preferences (CohenMiller et al., 2022).

Many women report that their organizations do not adequately value their skills, facing harsher performance requirements and lower pay, which makes developing their credibility a persistent challenge (Van Velsor and Hughes, 1990 as cited in Hopkins et al., 2021).

Researchers such as O'Connor (2020) emphasize the need to address the organizational structure and culture of higher education institutions (HEIs) to foster gender equality. Progress in reducing gender inequality within male-dominated HEIs has been slow, largely due to resistance from entrenched structures and cultures, which undermine the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality.

In summary, women in academia face significant barriers at societal, organizational, and individual levels. Socio-cultural frameworks, including religion, local beliefs, and ingrained gender roles, contribute to negative attitudes and reinforce stereotypes that disadvantage women. Additionally, organizational structures in higher education institutions, which are historically patriarchal and hierarchical, further impede women's career progression. These institutions often prioritize norms and experiences aligned with men's needs, devaluing women's skills and imposing harsher performance requirements. Addressing these systemic issues within higher education is crucial for promoting gender equality and enabling women to advance in their academic careers.

### 2.1. Family and work-life balance

Backman (2012) suggests that informal gender dynamics within universities contribute to the differing career outcomes between men and women in academia. A significant issue lies in the perception among senior colleagues that women must choose between a career and family, a concept referred to as the 'motherhood myth' (Etzkowitz et al., 2000). This perception, rather than the career ambitions of women themselves, is often the root of the problem (Cox, 2008; Moir, 2006). Research by Dubach et al. (2012) revealed that academic mothers

were four times more likely than fathers to feel undervalued and unsupported in the workplace after having children (as cited in White & Machado-Taylor, 2016).

Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova (2021) found in their study of women's advancement to leadership roles in Central Asia that, despite their high qualifications and numerous achievements, many women prioritized their families over their careers. Consequently, they rarely aspired to leadership positions and often felt unqualified to assume leadership responsibilities when opportunities arose.

Women face challenges not only due to family demands, which men typically do not experience (Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011; Shakeshaft et al., 2007), but also when taking career breaks. The decision of when and how to re-enter the workforce poses another significant hurdle (Adapa et al., 2015). According to Cohenmiller (2022), Motherscholars encounter difficulties balancing work and personal lives, which can adversely affect traditional measures of productivity (Kossek, 2016; Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). Although men and women faculty generally spend the same amount of time on work weekly, mothers of young children spend less time on research, a critical activity for career prestige and advancement at research institutions (Misra et al., 2012). Despite efforts in some countries, such as Sweden (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001), to support mothers, gender inequality remains pervasive in academia (Mayer & Tikka, 2008).

The literature offers numerous recommendations for creating work-life benefits that assist employees in managing their various responsibilities. These include parental leave, reduced work hours, flexible work schedules, alternative career paths, job sharing, and telecommuting. There is a consensus that flexible work arrangements and decreased organizational time commitments would facilitate better integration of women into the workforce (O'Neil et al., 2008).

In conclusion, achieving a true balance between work and life for women in academia requires not only policy changes but also a transformation in organizational culture and attitudes. Institutions must recognize and accommodate the unique challenges faced by women, particularly mothers, to foster an environment where they can thrive both professionally and personally.

## **2.2. The context of Uzbekistan. Women's status in the family and society in Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan has undergone various reforms since 2017, resulting in significant changes across all spheres of life. These transformations have brought about substantial cultural, economic, political, and social shifts, infusing Uzbekistan with a fresh energy and dynamism while maintaining a strong connection to tradition. These advancements have also introduced a range of influences from the Anglo-American West, significantly contributing to Uzbek culture by integrating more capitalist values (Hashimova, 2019).

Existing at the intersection of history and modernity, and at the crossroads of East Asian, European, and Middle Eastern cultures, contemporary Uzbekistan presents a complex landscape. Rapid social changes have influenced the formation and maintenance of masculinities (Zhao, 2022). Research on changing gender norms in Uzbekistan, though limited, has explored the evolving relationship between Uzbek men and women amidst political, religious, and ethnic dynamics. Social changes linked to Soviet modernity and Western influences have brought gender equality into public discourse (Fathi, 2006; Turaeva, 2017).

Despite gender equality being a core value in Uzbekistan's civil and family laws, traditional gender ideologies continue to prescribe normative expectations for women and men within the family and society (Fayzullaeva, 2018; Senate Committee on Women and Gender Equality of Uzbekistan, 2020; cited in Zhao, 2022).

Following Uzbekistan's independence, the country faced significant economic challenges that disproportionately affected women. Many women lost their jobs, with teachers leaving their professions to pursue entrepreneurship. This economic instability led parents to become hesitant about investing in their daughters' higher education, a critical decision in a country where families bear the financial burden of tertiary education (Madalinska-Michalak & Mamadaminova, 2022). As a result, with increased university tuition fees, fewer women had the opportunity to pursue higher education. Economic constraints often led families, especially those with limited resources, to prioritize their sons' education, as daughters were expected to marry and leave the family home (Asian Development Bank, 2018).

Before delving into the current state and reforms in higher education, it is essential to understand the traditional role of women in Uzbek society. Uzbekistan maintains deeply rooted traditional values where women primarily serve as mothers and housewives. Women's educational choices are often heavily influenced by parents, close relatives, or husbands.

In Uzbek society, traditional concepts related to motherhood, children, and family are prevalent. Women face the challenge of balancing family responsibilities with pursuing careers and professional development. Research (Akhmedova, 2019) indicates that the aspiration to integrate personal and professional lives in modern societies creates societal challenges. Economic difficulties have further complicated this balance, as men in families often migrate to neighboring countries for work, leaving women to assume additional responsibilities. In rural areas, women have increasingly engaged in farming, with social and economic transitions leading to the feminization of farm labor and, to a lesser extent, farm management (World Bank report, 2019). Women, compelled to take on these new roles, must navigate changes in gender norms while maintaining traditional

household responsibilities, thus increasing their work burden (Najjar et al., 2022).

For women pursuing careers in business, politics, or other fields, balancing professional ambitions with reproductive roles remains an expectation (Asian Development Bank, 2018). The traditional distribution of family responsibilities typically persists, exacerbating women's time poverty and limiting their opportunities for self-development, competitiveness in the labor market, and participation in small and medium-sized enterprises.

Policy changes alone are insufficient to alter entrenched gender expectations. Innovators concerned with gender equality must engage with local households, extension officers, and village leaders to challenge restrictive gender norms. Evidence suggests that while gender norms remain restrictive, they are evolving, particularly among mothers-in-law in households with migrant males.

Contemporary socio-cultural expectations in Central Asia often position women as the primary caretakers of their families' well-being and domestic responsibilities. Family values remain paramount, even in the face of divorces, economic hardships, and gender-based violence. Consequently, women's activism may not always reflect a liberal progressive agenda. Their pursuit of rights does not necessarily challenge male dominance or the existing gender hierarchy. Some women strive for the right to work and political participation, while others seek liberation from wage labor to fully embrace their roles as wives and mothers (Peshkova, 2020).

However, reforms across various sectors are gradually transforming these traditional roles, with more women actively participating in diverse aspects of life. Recent statistics from Uzbekistan illustrate these changes.

### **2.3. Higher Education Management in Uzbekistan**

The study focuses on women in science in Uzbekistan, aiming to illuminate their lives and challenges within Uzbek society. We will now

examine the organizational level amidst the numerous changes occurring in the country.

Reforms are being implemented to democratize management further and align with international standards. These reforms involve updating the legal, moral, and informational frameworks within the educational process, ensuring transparency and reform in the management system, and maintaining objectivity and accuracy in student organization and selection processes (Ismailov, 2023).

Like many other countries, Uzbekistan has intensified its efforts to elevate the activities of higher education institutions to meet international standards. A successful integration into the global higher education landscape has become a key focus of Uzbekistan's higher education policy (Uralov, 2020). This policy emphasizes increasing the number of foreign universities, branch campuses, and collaborations with developed countries. In recent years, Uzbekistan has placed significant emphasis on enhancing the international prestige of its higher education institutions.

In 2018, as part of many anticipated reforms, a senior government official expressed the country's ambition to become a higher education hub for the Central Asia region by 2030 (Abdukhakimov, 2018). Beyond economic benefits, this initiative is expected to improve the country's global image. The role of International Branch Campuses (IBCs) in attracting international students was highlighted in early planning documents. In 2019, this vision was formalized in the Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 (Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019). The Concept set several targets to be achieved by 2030, including a 50% higher education participation rate, the establishment of 45 institutions based on foreign programs, 15% of students being international, and goals related to institution rankings and publications (Muratov & Wilkins, 2014).

Although many sectors of Uzbekistan's economy are experiencing changes and gender equality is

gradually being promoted in various aspects of life, there are still no specific regulations addressing gender equality within higher educational institutions. As women are key change-makers and their leadership styles differ from those of men, achieving gender equality at the organizational level is crucial. This would inspire the younger generation to pursue higher education and aspire to leadership roles within academia.

Creating a supportive environment with family-friendly regulations that allow women to develop both their personal and professional skills is essential for alleviating the work-life struggles of women scientists. Due to substantial domestic responsibilities and societal expectations, women may find it challenging to focus on their professional work, particularly in research areas.

The following section presents the results of interviews with Uzbek women scientists from various regions, followed by the Methodology and Findings.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

To address the research questions, a qualitative method was employed in this study. This approach was chosen based on literature that emphasizes the effectiveness of qualitative research in exploring complex phenomena and capturing the depth of human experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

The research questions guiding this study are:

- What are the primary challenges faced by Uzbek women scientists in balancing their professional and personal lives?
- How do cultural expectations and societal norms in Uzbekistan impact the work-life balance of women scientists?

In April 2024, ten interviews were conducted with women from higher education institutions, primarily located in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. The recruitment strategy involved reaching out to potential participants via their university email addresses. Despite initial plans for a larger sample size, logistical constraints limited the number of interviews to ten. These were



conducted either in person, online, or via telephone. A total of 177 invitations were sent to women professors across various regions of Uzbekistan, with 17 emails being undeliverable due to incorrect addresses. Out of the remaining invitations, only three affirmative responses were received.

During an in-person meeting with one participant, assistance was requested to obtain contact information for other experienced women professors. This approach revealed a key insight: many individuals in Uzbekistan infrequently use their work emails and are hesitant to respond to unknown contacts, despite the clarity of the researcher's identity and purpose. Consequently, the snowball sampling method was employed to identify additional participants.

The participants, aged between 40 and 55 years, had been employed at their respective universities for approximately 15-25 years. All were married, and 90% had an average of 2-3 children. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in both Uzbek and Russian, with Russian being the first language for some respondents, despite their Uzbek nationality. The interview guide comprised nine questions (see Appendix 1), covering topics such as daily activities, work-life balance challenges, societal expectations, prioritization between career and personal commitments, and stress management strategies.

Participants were informed about the research aims and assured of their anonymity in both the invitation letter and prior to the commencement of interviews. The interviews ranged from 25 to 70 minutes in duration and were recorded with the participants' consent. However, two participants declined to be recorded, necessitating note-taking during the interviews and immediate post-interview recollection recording. The interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, a technique particularly suited for capturing subjective experiences, perspectives, and opinions.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Eagly's (1987) social role theory, which argues that widely shared gender stereotypes stem from the gender division of labor within a society, is used to explain the findings of this study. Social role theory traces the process of socialization and personality development through individuals' participation in increasingly diverse and complex social roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). These roles create socially shared patterns of expectations for behavior, linking individuals to their social environments (Newman & Newman, 2020). Given the unique cultural, traditional, and value context of Uzbekistan, this theoretical framework is particularly relevant for understanding women's career and work-life balance.

### 4. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

To understand the challenges faced by women scientists in Uzbekistan, I conducted interviews with ten participants and identified several key findings:

- 40% of respondents teach additional courses or undertake extra teaching hours at separate educational institutions.
- 30% of respondents have previously held leadership positions.
- Only one of the respondents' spouses was employed at higher educational institution.

All participants are well-qualified and experienced professors and lecturers in higher educational institutions. Balancing work and family responsibilities, they face societal expectations that women should manage family duties, household chores, and cooking. They have developed strategies to plan their days and prioritize essential activities. Most participants handle housework, cooking, and sending their children to school in the mornings. To prepare for their classes, they often wake up very early to begin their workday.

"I don't know if it is because of my age or due to my life experience, but I now understand that if I am not well, then my work and family will not be well. So, first of all, I learned to take care of myself and that I feel well. This realization came after 16 years of marriage and 20 years of work experience," stated Participant 1.

While they express a deep love for their profession, the participants endured numerous difficulties



during the early years of their careers, particularly when their children were young and they lived with extended family members. Participant 8 recounted:

“I learned to be patient while living with my husband's brothers' families and my mother-in-law in one large household. Although we now live separately, those 14 years taught me to remain calm and manage stress.”

The role of spousal support emerged as significant in their academic pursuits. Within Uzbek culture, as highlighted in the literature review, the role of mother-in-laws is highly regarded. Several professors who consider themselves successful in their careers noted that the demanding yet supportive nature of their mother-in-laws contributed significantly to their achievements. Additionally, mother-in-laws often assisted in raising their grandchildren. Participants emphasized their efforts to meticulously schedule their days to balance work and family duties. However, some mentioned that their husbands exhibited jealousy or lack of support, especially when the participants engaged in organizational tasks at work. Despite this, the support from their mother-in-laws enabled them to continue their professional endeavors.

Participant 9 shared:

“I still remember my mother-in-law's words: ‘I don't like a woman who sits at home. If a woman has a career, she manages both home and career. If she just stays at home, she manages nothing!’”

The participants identified the relentless nature of academic work as one of the biggest challenges in their careers, noting that work often extends into their home life. They expressed feelings of guilt over not being able to publish as much as they desired due to the extensive preparation and grading required for their classes.

Despite facing significant personal and professional challenges, the participants, whose children are now grown, exhibited strong resilience shaped by their hardships. Many had experienced profound losses, which taught them the brevity of life and the importance of continuous self-improvement and aiding others. Participant 3, aged 45, reflected:

“I remember it was extremely difficult. I often had only 2-3 hours of sleep per day, and I would rest only when I was at the university. Listening to my colleagues' experiences, which were often more

challenging than mine, helped me cultivate patience with my own issues.”

These experiences underline the critical interplay between personal resilience, familial support, and professional dedication in the careers of Uzbek women scientists.

A minority of participants indicated that they engage in sports and meditation as stress-relief methods to boost their energy levels. Socializing with friends and spending quality time with family members were the primary avenues for relaxation among this demographic. Participant 2 shared:

“I never had time for myself before. I worked even on weekends, giving extra classes. But now that I am over 40, I see the consequences in my health. Therefore, I try to work less and walk 10,000 steps every day”.

Participant 8 remarked:

“I always want to do some yoga or other types of sports. But I cannot find the time. I meet with my friends twice a month to get some rest from work and relax.”

To maintain a balance between family responsibilities and work tasks, participants primarily sacrificed their own rest time. They often slept less and sometimes did not allocate time for meals, eating while engaging in other activities. Nonetheless, they noted that their spouses, in-laws, and children are now supportive of their efforts.

Also, it is important to highlight that the participants expressed concerns about the lag in their research areas due to time constraints and wished they had more time to dedicate to their research endeavors.

Drawing on the social role theoretical framework, this study elucidates the complex interplay between societal expectations and the professional lives of women scientists in Uzbekistan. Social role theory posits that widely shared gender stereotypes arise from the division of labor within a society, shaping behaviors and expectations through the process of socialization (Eagly, 1987). In the context of Uzbekistan, deeply rooted cultural norms and traditional values significantly influence women's roles both at home and in the workplace.

According to the findings of the current study, it can be noticed that work life balance is very hardly performed by the Uzbek scientists. As it was already found in previous researches (Cubillo &

Brown, 2003; Mohajeri & Mousavi, 2017; Neale & Özkanlı, 2010) that in traditional societies women have more responsibilities in the families compared to societies in more developed countries.

Uzbek culture is distinctive, with women bearing a significant share of responsibilities. They tend to marry earlier and have more children compared to women in other nations, making it particularly challenging to balance studies or a career with family obligations. In some families, mother-in-laws may decide when a woman works or has children. If the mother-in-law is supportive and educated, she often encourages her daughter-in-law to be active and pursue a career. In general, Asian women are expected to be more submissive and obedient, devoted to the family, which complicates career advancement.

The participants did not mention any examples of organizational support systems for women scientists. This highlights the critical need for government regulations that support working mothers, enabling them to achieve a better work-life balance. This finding aligns with the argument of Cubillo and Brown (2003) that universities are patriarchal institutions that inherently favor men. Similarly, O'Connor (2020) emphasized the hierarchical and paternalistic nature of educational institutions.

The structures and practices of academic organizations can be analyzed from a perspective that highlights how they have historically prioritized intellectual norms and experiences that align with those of men. This is because academia was originally established and designed by men, catering to their needs and preferences (CohenMiller et al., 2022). Therefore, while societal changes are necessary to advance women's empowerment and gender equality, organizational changes are equally important. Developing support systems within academic institutions is essential to create a more equitable environment for women scientists.

During the interviews with women scientists in Uzbekistan, considerable potential was observed, with participants demonstrating extensive experience and knowledge in their fields. However, not all participants were actively engaged in research activities, despite the critical importance of publishing and research engagement in academia. As Uzbekistan's higher education system

undergoes significant reforms, it is essential to uphold and promote the values of research, gender equality, and women's empowerment in higher education to facilitate women's development.

When asked about their willingness to assume leadership positions in academia, participants indicated that they had declined such opportunities due to the heavy workload, stress, and bureaucracy associated with these roles. They were concerned about not having enough time for their families, aligning with findings from other literature (Bubshait 2012; Islam et al, 2023; Redmond et al., 2017).

Living in extended families, while shouldering responsibilities not only for the household, children, and spouse but also for in-laws, can present numerous challenges. However, interview results indicate that mothers-in-law played a particularly supportive role in the career development of the women scientists interviewed, often having a more significant impact than the women's spouses. They facilitated the continuation of studies, active professional engagement, and childcare, and assisted in resolving conflicts between the women and their spouses. Despite the considerable responsibilities at home and work, the women exhibited resilience and strength, bolstered by the support of their spouses and parents. It is thus evident that living in extended families, while presenting increased domestic workload, can also offer substantial advantages. These advantages include support systems that enable women to pursue their careers more effectively. Successfully navigating these circumstances requires the ability to cope with difficulties and identify opportunities even in challenging times.

As suggested by the theoretical framework of social role theory, the impact of women's social roles on their careers can be observed in societies with strong cultural values, such as Uzbekistan. In these traditional settings, women are primarily seen as caretakers, mothers, and daughters-in-law, roles that significantly influence their career trajectories.

The interviews with women scientists revealed a strong resilience and determination to continue their careers despite these societal expectations. However, not all women in the society possess such a strong will, and thus, the traditional social roles can impede the career success of many women scientists. The societal expectation that women

should prioritize family responsibilities often leads them to reject leadership roles. This prioritization is not solely about family duties but also involves the stress and increased workload associated with leadership positions.

Women in leadership face additional challenges, including the expectation to balance demanding professional roles with extensive domestic responsibilities. This dual burden can be overwhelming and discourages many from aspiring to higher positions within academia. Thus, while individual resilience plays a significant role, the broader societal norms and expectations profoundly impact women's career advancements. Addressing these issues requires not only societal changes to support gender equality but also organizational reforms to create supportive environments that enable women to thrive both personally and professionally.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The current study was conducted to understand and investigate the work-life balance of Uzbek women employed in academic institutions in Uzbekistan. To generalize the findings, it is important to conduct both quantitative and qualitative studies in the region, as the unique culture and traditions significantly impact women's careers. Although only ten women participated in the study, valuable insights were gained into their career experiences and their struggles to balance personal and professional lives.

The research revealed that women need more support from organizational perspectives. While cultural and individual barriers are often discussed, changes within organizations are also crucial. It is recommended to conduct further studies to understand the impact of mother-in-laws on career selection and career development for women in Uzbekistan.

Therefore, I would like to highlight the following: the government of Uzbekistan is actively working on gender equality, cultural-traditional roles of women, and women's empowerment. Although it will take time to observe the results of these initiatives, the importance of organizational changes must also be recognized and incorporated into ongoing developments. When women scholars receive better workload management and more support from both their families and universities, they will be more productive at work and less likely

to compromise their health, ultimately benefiting families, organizations, and society as a whole.

Moreover, the findings of this study underscore the critical need for systemic changes within academic institutions to foster a more supportive environment for women. This includes implementing policies that promote flexible working hours, providing childcare facilities, and creating mentorship programs specifically aimed at nurturing the careers of women scientists. Additionally, raising awareness and training within organizations about gender biases and the unique challenges faced by women can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture.

Another important aspect to consider is the role of professional networks and support groups in empowering women academics. Encouraging the formation and participation in such networks can provide women with valuable resources, peer support, and opportunities for collaboration, further enhancing their ability to balance work and family responsibilities effectively.

The potential of Uzbek women in academia is immense, but it remains underutilized due to existing structural and cultural barriers. By addressing these barriers through comprehensive policy changes and fostering a supportive organizational culture, Uzbekistan can unlock the full potential of its women scientists. This will not only contribute to the advancement of science and education in the country but also promote greater gender equality and societal progress. As Uzbekistan continues to reform its higher education system, it is crucial to integrate gender-sensitive policies and practices that recognize and address the specific needs of women scholars. By doing so, the nation can ensure that women are not only able to contribute effectively to academia but also thrive in their personal and professional lives.

In summary, while significant strides are being made towards gender equality and women's empowerment in Uzbekistan, a multifaceted approach that includes organizational reforms, cultural shifts, and supportive policies is essential for achieving a sustainable and inclusive academic environment. Such efforts will ultimately lead to a more equitable and prosperous society where women can excel and contribute meaningfully to their fields.

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**OVERCOMING BARRIERS TOWARDS SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: THE CASE OF WOMEN MARKET VENDORS IN ILIGAN CITY, PHILIPPINES**

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**Abstract**

Market vendors play a crucial role in the urban economy by providing essential goods and services. They are vital components of the local marketplace addressing supply and demand imbalances that formal businesses may not address. This study explores the factors influencing the empowerment of women market vendors at Tambo Market in Iligan City, Philippines. This specifically examines the socio-economic dynamics, challenges, and coping strategies of the vendors, emphasizing the roles of income generation and entrepreneurial autonomy in their socio-economic empowerment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews of 21 female market vendors, revealing that daily income is a primary motivator for their continued engagement in the market which supports household expenses, education, and financial assistance for family members. Autonomy over business operations, including flexible working hours and decision-making, enhances their economic independence and work-life balance. However, vendors face several challenges, both immediate and underlying. Immediate challenges include market location, volatile prices of goods, competition, and financial difficulties. Underlying systemic issues such as lack of government support, difficulties with perishable goods, and health concerns further exacerbate their struggles. Despite these barriers, these women vendors demonstrate resilience and adaptability. They employ various coping strategies, including leadership and organizational skills, borrowing from cooperatives, and relying on familial support. Their persistence reflects a strong sense of empowerment derived from their entrepreneurial role and support systems. This study also highlights the need for targeted support and interventions to address the systemic issues impacting women vendors and enhance their economic empowerment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Iligan City is a coastal city in the Northern Mindanao region, Philippines. Among the city's famous establishments was the old market located in Palao village that was built in 1960. During the administration of former Mayor Celso Regencia, the old market was demolished and the construction of the new market of Iligan City started. The primary purpose of the relocation is to pave the way for infrastructure improvement and market modernization. In 2019, after the construction of the temporary market site, vendors were temporarily relocated near the city's bus and jeepney terminal complex in Tambo village, hence the Tambo market.

Public markets also called wet markets are considered as traditional food providers and significant sources of food and agricultural products (Zhang & Pan, 2013; Huang et al., 2015 as cited in Carmen et. al., 2020). It plays an important role in local economic development by providing a convenient facility for small-scale entrepreneurs to establish their business operations (Zhong et. al, 2020) and one of these entrepreneurs are women market vendors. In fact, marketplaces are key sites for women's economic empowerment as well as national poverty reduction (UN Women). By definition, public market vendors are micro-entrepreneurs playing an important role in the economic condition of any locality. They created jobs for themselves and for others (Asia, 2023).

Women market vendors play a vital role in the urban economy and are important drivers of food security. Women predominate in all of these markets, although male participation is not entirely abnormal (Dewey, 2011). Women contribute significantly to the economy by generating income for themselves and their family. On the other hand, public market vending, or simply market vending, refers to the activity of selling goods or services in a designated public market area. Vendors typically operate in small businesses or stalls within a public market, where they sell a variety of products. As market vendors offer opportunities for women seeking economic independence, however most of the informants in this study encountered challenges that not only hinder their ability to expand their businesses but also restrict their overall empowerment.

This study explores how these women market vendors overcome the barriers towards

empowerment such as price fluctuation and market location among others.

The researchers conducted this study in order to understand and address the challenges that these women vendors faced. By identifying the barriers they've experienced, this study can inform and recommend government interventions to promote gender equality and socioeconomic advancement contributing to the empowerment of women concerned. By examining the challenges, the study seeks to identify strategies employed by women market vendors to overcome these barriers and achieve empowerment within their socio-economic context. Through this, we can enable women to better their lives, engage fully in the economy, and support the general development and stability of their communities.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As defined, women empowerment refers to the process of providing women with the necessary resources and opportunities to exercise their rights, participate in decision-making processes, and have control over their lives (Reshi & Sudha, 2022). It is essential for socio-economic development as it is considered as one of the major factors for increasing worldwide development efforts (Gram et. al as cited in Kursheed & et. al, 2022). Additionally, economic empowerment is the ability to make and act on decisions that involve the control over and allocation of financial resources. Women who are economically empowered contribute more to their families, societies and national economies. It has been shown that women invest extra income in their children, providing a route to sustainable development (Golla et. al., 2011). On the other hand, women become empowered socially when they have a supportive environment and access to different affirmative programs and policies for the empowerment of women along with the provision of secure and equal access to necessities of life (Hoque & Itohara, 2009 cited in Kursheed & et. al., 2022). Social empowerment is the process of building the autonomy, power, confidence and other necessary means to enact change and pave the way for a better future. It takes place at both the individual and the collective level. For an individual, social empowerment could look like gaining the inner and outer resources to make personal choices, such as what to eat, where to live

and other decisions that allow us to control our environment and way of life (Martinez, 2022).

In many cases, women are one of those undervalued sectors in society but women's empowerment is significantly increasing. The main factors that pushed these women to engage in the informal sector such as market vending are lack of employment (formal sector) and having no income to support themselves and their families. The involvement of women in the informal sector, such as market vending, is a crucial part of their socio-economic empowerment, which is also a crucial element of overall development.

Previous studies also revealed the barriers or the challenges experienced by women market vendors. The daily realities for women market vendors involve a number of economic, social and political challenges and these include loss or damage of products during transportation, unsuitable space to sell goods, difficulties in obtaining permission for stall set-up and uncomfortable market facilities (UN Women, 2017). Under gender expectation, these women vendors are also responsible for the bulk of unpaid household chores and taking care of the children elderly, and the sick, to feed their families, however, women vendors also shoulder productive, or market, responsibilities (Tong, S. & et. al, 2022).

Women market vendors confront countless challenges in their daily operations. To address these issues and foster socio-economic growth, government policies and aid programs have been implemented. In the latest *Global Gender Gap* report, the Philippines occupies the 17th EAP (East Asia and Pacific) region, after New Zealand. A key driver behind the progress has been the *Philippine Magna Carta for Women*, a landmark law signed nearly 13 years ago seeking to eliminate discrimination against women (Buchhave & Belghith, 2022). In addition, the Philippine government has a strong legal and policy framework to protect and promote women's rights, as well as women's engagement in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), 2014) promoting women empowerment, protection, and support for entrepreneurship. Government intervention, through policy making and aid

provision, is crucial in mitigating these challenges and empowering these women entrepreneurs.

Limited literature and research explore the interplay between the challenges experienced by women market vendors and their socio-economic empowerment in the context of the Philippines. Thus, this research initiative is crucial for identifying the barriers encountered by women market vendors in Iligan City and for developing targeted interventions to improve their economic participation. By delving into the experiences of these women, this research aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing their socio-economic empowerment and to provide valuable insights for policymakers and development practitioners working to improve the lives of women in the informal sector.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive-narrative research design, gathering data from women market vendors at Tambo Market in Iligan City. The majority of participants had at least 10 years of experience, with some exceeding 30 years, and were between 31 and 76 years old. Additionally, three informants with 2-3 years of experience were included, and their insights corroborate the experiences of vendors with 10 and over 30 years in the market. Through snowball or chain-referral sampling, 21 informants were interviewed to ensure diverse perspectives, to obtain detailed and nuanced understanding of their experiences. The study's sample size of 21 informants focused solely on the Tambo Market and may limit the representation of the broader population of women market vendors in Iligan City. Despite these limitations, the research provides valuable insights into empowerment strategies utilized by women market vendors in the city.

Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were prioritized throughout the research process. The researchers used a semi-structured questionnaire and personal interviews/personal communication with the women market vendors served as the primary data collection method. A vernacular language questionnaire was developed to ensure clear communication during interviews. Data collection was held in the morning for two (2) days between 8:30 to 10:30 to minimize disruptions from market

activities yet allowing natural interruptions due to customer interactions.

#### 4. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

##### 4.1. Factors that Contribute to Socio-Economic Empowerment

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women” (Annan, 2016 as cited in Jhabvala & et. al, 2023). In the context of women, empowerment essentially refers to a feeling of awareness of one’s own situation backed up with the knowledge, skills and information which could enable women to gain higher self-esteem and facilitate their role as decision makers in the current patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities (Sama, 2017). Women’s empowerment per se involves the creation of an environment within which women can make strategic life choices and decisions in a given context (Leder, 2016). Empowerment of women through gainful employment is a constituent and instrument of development in any country and women’s lack of economic empowerment not only impedes growth and poverty reduction, but also has a host of other negative impacts including less favorable education and health outcomes for children thus, it is extremely important to ensure that women are economically, socially empowered (Das, K. & Sharma, G., 2016 as cited in Chompa, M.Y.,2022)

Additionally, Women’s Economic Empowerment is included in Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5: Achieving Gender Equality) and is central to the objective of “leaving no one behind.” According to the UN Secretary General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, empowering women is not only the right thing to do but the smart thing to do because it creates a more equitable society while improving economic and social development (UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, 2016 as cited in Jhabvala & et al., 2023). There are four types of empowerments, two of these are economic and social empowerment. Social empowerment is defined as the ability of women to access, own, and control resources while the latter as the ability to exert control over non-economic decision making within the household (Brody et. al (2015) as cited in Fox & Romero, 2017).

It is the process of gaining enough control and confidence to change how society is constructed, including its institutions and the social roles that have been assigned to people (such as gender and sex social roles) within society (Evans, 2022). Women are an essential part of our society and half of the total population, the sustainable development of a country depends on the maximum utilization and equal participation of both women and men (Chompa, 2022). On the other hand, a woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions (Golla & et al., 2011). These attributes of empowerment are exercised by the women market vendors in Tambo market, Iligan City, hence it is deemed important to explore the factors that contribute to their socio-economic empowerment.

In the Philippines, the Informal Sector Survey in 2008 estimated the number of persons employed in the informal sector to be at 15.68 million, which comprise 72.5 percent of non-agricultural employment. Workers in the informal economy are not a homogenous group and, therefore, have differentiated needs and face varying levels of vulnerability. Women, in particular, who bear most of the burden of reproductive responsibilities or unpaid care work, tend to end up in the informal economy or take informal work arrangements (Geneva ILO, 2013) because the informal economy offers them greater flexibility, autonomy and geographic proximity to do paid work while fulfilling domestic duties (Geneva: ILO, 2014).

In a study, it was found out that street vendors and peddlers make up a large portion of the Philippines’ informal economy, a nearly countless number of independent and small-scale businesses that distribute products, goods, and services outside the large economic establishments run by the government and the private sector. The World Economics website calculates that the Philippines’ informal economy is worth approximately \$470 billion, making up a significant 34.1 percent of the country’s gross domestic product (Iglesias, 2023). Not only street vendors and peddlers but market vendors too are part of this survey.



During the interview with the women market vendors in Tambo market, Iligan City, it was revealed that income generation is the primary pathway to socio-economic empowerment. These women vendors remain in this occupation for many years due to the reliable and favorable income it provides. The main reason they continue in this occupation is the advantage of having a daily income. Aside from the source of income, an informant shared, "I was able to send my children to school, cover household expenses, and even offer financial support to other family members." (E. Cabaluna, personal communication, May 4, 2024). Women spend most of their income on basic family needs such as health/medicine, school fees, and food, and some on personal items and investments (Haley & Marsh, 2021) and this narrative also applies to many women market vendors in Tambo Market, Iligan City. Typically, these women market vendors receive payments directly from customers on a daily basis and this ensures them to have access to funds to purchase inventory, cover operating expenses, and meet their daily needs. Unlike traditional businesses that may rely on monthly or periodic income, daily income helps them spread financial risk. If sales are slow on a particular day, vendors can mitigate losses by making smaller purchases or diversifying their product range.

In addition to generating income, these women are self-employed and handle the management and operations of their own businesses. As both market vendors and business owners, they have full control over their enterprises. One of the factors that contribute to this autonomy is the fact that all of them have their own stalls with licenses in the market. Having more control over their business hours is considered a form of economic empowerment. This control offers them flexibility, allowing them to balance their work with other responsibilities such as caregiving and household duties. By being able to schedule their work hours according to their needs, women vendors can optimize their selling times, leading to increased sales and earning potential. Moreover, having autonomy over their business hours grants them decision-making power, enabling them to make independent choices about when to open or close their stalls. They can also decide and control financial decisions such as what products to sell, budgeting, investment, pricing strategies, determine their operating hours and resource

allocation giving them control over their entrepreneurial endeavors. This autonomy allows them to make decisions aligned with their means, financial goals and priorities, thereby empowering them to shape their economic goals and pursue opportunities for growth and expansion.

Relevant to the discussion above is the fact that they enjoyed the autonomy not only for business endeavors but at the same time personal fulfillment. Common to the narratives among these women is the idea that "they are their own bosses." As shared by an informant, "I don't have a boss; I control my own schedule for opening and closing my stall or store, and no one dictates what I should do." (L. Balaba, personal communication. May 16, 2024). Market vending is the job they are most familiar with and serves as their preferred opportunity compared to traditional employment. All of the informants favor market vending over seeking minimum wage jobs with rigid schedules imposed by employers, where their time and actions are closely controlled. This implies that being a market vendor is not just about business but also encompasses personal aspirations.

This autonomy is crucial for women vendors as it allows them to shape their businesses according to their preferences and circumstances. Additionally, the ability to adapt their hours to changing market conditions demonstrates their resilience and competitiveness in the marketplace. By avoiding working during unsafe or unfavorable conditions, women market vendors can reduce their vulnerability and ensure their safety and well-being. Thus, having more control over their business hours empowers women market vendors in Tambo market, Iligan City by providing them with the flexibility, autonomy, and adaptability necessary for economic success and sustainability.

Finally, most of the informants highlighted the importance of having a supportive family system to effectively manage their business, which in turn contributes to increased financial earnings.

It is evident that these women market vendors in Iligan City contribute significantly to the local economy. As part of the informal economy, they remain in this occupation because the marketplace offers valuable economic opportunities and a flexible, accessible way to earn a living. It empowers women both financially and



socially, allowing them to contribute to the local economy while maintaining a work-life balance.

#### 4.2. Barriers to Socio-Economic Empowerment

Women market vendors are vital to the economy and have a big influence on regional and the national economy. Through regular transactions and consistent revenue generation, their entrepreneurial endeavors propel economic progress. In Iligan City, the women market vendors are fundamental contributors to the local economy yet their path to socio-economic empowerment is not possible without challenges. Despite their functions in providing essential goods and services, these women too encounter numerous barriers to empowerment. The researchers divided this part into two sections, the immediate challenges and underlying challenges. The former are visible obstacles that need to be addressed in the short term while the latter are systemic issues that most of the time contribute to the existence of immediate challenges and require enough time for long-term solutions.

One of the immediate challenges encountered by the women market vendors is the market location. Market location is an important attribute to more sales and overall success of any business. Location is determinant to the growth of the local economy. It is important that market location is more accessible to the general public. However, most of the informants shared that the current market location in Tambo village is one of their main challenges. As mentioned, "We are considering relocating to Palao Market because our income here is lower compared to what we could earn there. The Palao Market location is more advantageous as it is situated in the city center, whereas Tambo Market is in a more remote area." (T. Labasano, personal communication, May 4, 2024) Currently, the once vendors of Palao market are relocated in Tambo village in Tambo market in order to pave the way for market construction and modernization of the Palao market. Based on their narrative, Tambo market is situated in an area with few or no other economic establishments. This lack of surrounding businesses could mean fewer people have reasons to visit or pass by the market, reducing its foot traffic.

Another barrier is the sudden change in prices of goods. Price increases are bad enough when we know they're coming. It's much worse

when the increases are unexpected. Unfortunately, given the realities of the supply chain, compounded with labor issues, pricing is far from stable. Sudden change in prices of goods (LBM Price Readers, January 4, 2022). Majority of the women vendors shared their sentiments regarding the impact of unexpected changes in the prices of goods. They express how sudden increases in the prices of essential commodities like ginger and onions can disrupt their business operations and affect their livelihoods. As shared, "Yes, the sudden fluctuations in the prices of ginger, onions, and other goods have a significant impact on us. Sometimes we purchase them at a higher price, only to see the prices drop the very next day." (L. Tabay, personal communication, May 4, 2024). Most of these vendors operate within tight profit margins and fluctuations in prices directly impact their ability to make profits or even cover their costs or worse they may find themselves with excess inventory that they cannot sell at a profit.

On the other hand, a market with many vendors can create a vibrant atmosphere and offer customers a wide variety of choices, but it also poses challenges for individual vendors in terms of competition, not only in terms of low profit or income but interpersonal dynamics as well. For vendors selling similar products in close proximity, competition for buyers or customers intensifies. Customers have more options to choose from, leading to a dilution of demand for each vendor. As a result, vendors may experience lower sales, leading to reduced income as shared by an informant. "There are too many vendors here, and there are days when I experience very low income." (M. Jimenez, personal communication, May 16, 2024). Furthermore, high competition among vendors can also lead to price wars, some vendors may lower their prices in an attempt to attract customers. This may be beneficial but not for the long-term, it can only negatively affect their profit margins and overall income. As one vendor shared, "Some vendors monitor my prices and lower theirs to attract more buyers." (A. Go, personal communication, May 16, 2024). This scenario also connects to the presence of interpersonal dynamics among women vendors. As shared, "at times, vendors see each other as competitors, leading to feelings of rivalry and competition." (T. Amarga & E. Pasco, personal communications, May 16, 2024). This can create tension and animosity among

vendors, especially if they perceive others as threats to their business success.

In addition, the presence of barangay markets had a significant impact on the overall income of market vendors in public markets. With the presence of barangay markets or in the Philippines known as *talipapa* pose a challenge among public market vendors. More residents finding it more convenient to buy products in barangay markets may no longer patronize public markets as frequently, leading to a decrease in potential sales for vendors in public markets which led to another challenge, reduced number of customers. For the vendors, this situation seems unfair because, despite paying for their stalls and licenses monthly, there are numerous barangays or small markets within the city.

Another significant barrier is the financial challenge, which is the most prevalent issue among market vendors. The main reason for this is the access to affordable credit over a reasonable period. Some market vendors have limited start-up capital or seed money which lead to low earnings. They also have to face high costs of credit and are usually unable to identify their key competitive strengths to maintain product standards and quality (Iligan, 2019). During the interview, many women vendors disclosed their involvement in money lending activities or borrowing from cooperatives despite the burden of paying monthly interest. While initially providing financial support, these practices can lead to debt accumulation and long-term financial insecurity. It was revealed that public market vendors tend to borrow money not just for personal needs but also to buy or purchase products from their suppliers (Saha, 2016). In a recent study conducted in Davao, Philippines, it was also revealed that most women fish vendors struggle to have access to funds and choose to establish their revolving funds (Macusi & et. al, 2024). This is indeed the case for the women market vendors selling vegetables and other dry goods at Tambo Market in Iligan City. Consequently, some vendors find themselves caught in a cycle of debt as they strive to maintain and sustain their businesses, but some ultimately face bankruptcy until finding resources to start again.

Additionally, "some market vendors depend on sources of capital like loans and cooperatives to sustain their businesses." (L. Tabay, personal

communication, May 4, 2024). This indicates that access to financial resources is crucial for many women market vendors to operate effectively and remain competitive in their marketplaces. It also highlights the importance of financial inclusion initiatives and support systems for small scale businesses like market vendors.

On the other hand, the following are the underlying barriers that these women market vendors experienced. These are systemic issues or root causes that contribute to the existence of immediate challenges faced by women market vendors in Tambo market, Iligan City.

In the Philippines, public markets like Tambo market in Iligan City are local government-owned and managed economic enterprises in accordance with the Philippine Local Government Code of 1991. The sellers in the public wet markets are classified either as ambulant transient or itinerant vendors. By definition, a vendor or seller who does not hold a regular lease to any stall or who does not occupy a definite or permanent place in the market but one who comes either daily or occasionally to sell his/her wares by sitting in any place or by moving about from place to place within the market premises (City Ordinance No.2246, Market Code of Iligan City. Series of 1993, Section 4). Building on the previous discussion about stalls, many women market vendors choose to stay at Tambo Market despite occasional low income. They believe this decision is worthwhile because they anticipate being given priority for stalls in the newly renovated Palao Market once it opens to the public. Their expectation is that their existing licenses will ensure their preferential placement. Additionally, as mentioned in the study, besides taxes and registration fees, wet market stall renters have also other financial responsibilities, which include fixed expenditures such as the arkabala/monthly rental fees for use of the stalls or spaces in the City public markets (Carmen et. al, 2020), this scenario is also applicable to public market vendors throughout the Philippines, including those at Tambo Market in Iligan City.

Furthermore, when asked about receiving support, assistance, or participating in government programs to enhance their business operations, the majority of these women vendors reported that they have not received any government aid. Although a few vendors in the market previously received

market scales, these individuals were not part of this study. Additionally, the vendors have not participated in any government programs designed to improve their business operations, as they are not aware of such initiatives. As mentioned, "Personally, I haven't received any government support, but if it were available, I would be interested in receiving it." (A. Lobingco, personal communication, May 4, 2024). Five other informants also shared the sentiment of A. Lobingco. Thus, the lack of government support may have a significant impact not only to the informants concerned but to other market vendors in Tambo market in general.

Another challenge is the presence of perishable goods like vegetables and spices are inherently time-sensitive and require careful handling to maintain their freshness and quality (Kavipriya & Shalini, 2023). Perishable foods are characterized as products with a restricted shelf life, which are prone to spoilage or pose a risk to health if not stored appropriately or consumed within a specific timeframe. As shared, "as a market vendor, you need to employ specific strategies to prolong the shelf life of perishable goods to prevent profit loss." (E. Gulad, personal communication, May 16, 2024)

Furthermore, the relation between health and livelihood is undeniable. As mentioned, "their daily routines involve physically strenuous tasks, often performed under conditions that could jeopardize their well-being." (J. Ybanez, personal communication, May 4, 2024). Despite this, these women market vendors empower themselves to succeed amidst the challenges of their work, securing benefits not only for themselves but also for the families they support. Two vendors added that, "even when they are physically unwell, they persist in working because staying at home without earning means they suffer more and still need to earn money for medicines." (R. Gabuya & T. Ramos, personal communication, May 4, 2024). As long as it is not a significant health problem, most vendors persist in selling to maintain their income generation.

### 4.3. Strategies for Overcoming Barriers to Empowerment

The intersectionality of experiences among women market vendors indicates that they respond differently when discussing their methods and

strategies for overcoming the barriers to socio-economic empowerment. As market vendors, despite encountering various obstacles, they exhibit remarkable adaptability and determination to overcome challenges, maintain their businesses, and pursue growth and improvement, viewing market vending as highly beneficial. Many informants have worked as market vendors for over 10 years, with some having more than 30 years of experience and have employed various strategies to achieve economic independence, thereby contributing to their overall empowerment.

Leadership ability plays a significant role in the success of any business. Having leadership skills enables the women market vendors to make sound decisions and as entrepreneurs, they often need to make quick and strategic decisions about any aspects of their business, may it be in pricing, inventory management and customer service. As mentioned, "as a vendor, it's crucial to navigate effectively since you're in charge of your own business and rely on yourself. You need to be skilled in strategizing and managing your operations independently." (T. Ramos, personal communication, May 4, 2024). This narrative corroborated with other informants, highlighting the significance of self-reliance, adaptability, and strategic thinking. Since most of the time, market environments are dynamic and unpredictable, requiring vendors to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and market conditions. With this, it can be said that the empowerment of these women market vendors comes from within, they have the knowledge, skills and resourcefulness to navigate and overcome the barriers independently and the display of resilience is evident.

In connection to leadership ability, most women market vendors viewed their organization ability as a coping mechanism that empowers them to navigate challenges and thrive in the market. These women are more effective in managing their resources, expedite their procedures, and adjust to changing conditions by keeping their operations well-organized. This ultimately contributes to the sustainability and profitability of their enterprises by strengthening their resilience and capacity to overcome such challenges.

On the other hand, the majority of the women market vendors shared that in times of financial crisis, borrowing money from

cooperatives and lending is one of their options. 18 out of 21 informants shared that they borrowed money from cooperatives. As stated, "borrowing money has become unavoidable, especially since our move to Tambo Market. Our earnings have dropped significantly compared to when we were at Palao Market." (E. Cabaluna, personal communication, May 4, 2024). Another informant added, "we used the funds to keep our business operational." (T. Labasano, personal communication, May 4, 2024). Based on their narratives, such experience motivates them to sell every day because they have bills to pay aside from household expenses and school expenses of their children.

Additionally, familial support (support system) especially from the immediate family such as spouse and children also plays an important role among the women market vendors. Families provide a support system to help business owners manage stress, maintain perspective and improve work-life balance even amid the chaos and crushing responsibility of founding and running a business (Waltower, 2023). This statement was validated by an informant as she shared, "My husband assists me, and occasionally my children come by to help with selling or to cover for us when my husband and I have errands to run." (A. Go, personal communication, May 16, 2024). This narrative by A. Go was also supported by another informant, "occasionally, my child assists with selling, particularly when I have important events to attend." (T. Labasano, personal communication, May 4, 2024). Family members can offer practical assistance in managing the responsibilities of running a business. Overall, support from family members plays a vital role in helping women market vendors in Tambo market, Iligan City in coping with challenges by providing emotional support, practical assistance and motivation. This strong support system strengthens vendors' resilience and enables them to navigate the ups and downs of entrepreneurship more effectively.

In addition to family support and assistance, women market vendors encounter difficulties and challenges in managing their stalls, even with the low earnings stemming from these issues. They also look forward to a better marketplace in the future, as they are temporarily relocated to Tambo Market while the Pala-o Market is being prepared and is under construction. The Tambo Market, which was

built in August 2017 and began operations in January 2019, functions under the regulations specified in the Market Code of Iligan City. According to the chapter IV of the Market Code, Prioritization to Lease Market Stalls - non-delinquent stallholders of the old market shall be given priority, rights over new applicants to the stalls in the new market under a priority system established by the Market Committee on Awards and Adjudication (City Ordinance, No. 2246, Market Code of Iligan City, Series of 1993). Despite the anticipation of relocating to a conducive temporary workplace at Tambo market, vendors have encountered challenges, resulting in lower sales and shortages of earnings. Nevertheless, these women market vendors have chosen to remain and continue, holding onto the hope that their stalls will be prioritized once the relocation to the newly built market at Pala-o is completed.

This sudden change of location and market stalls is another challenge for these women vendors but fortunately they have their regular or loyal customers. Customer loyalty is crucial for business success, and it can be influenced by various factors such as customer satisfaction, quality of service, customer experience, and customer relationship management (Rane & et. al, 2023). Regarding customer loyalty, the informants are not concerned about their relocation to Tambo Market because they have established relationships with their loyal customers, or *suki*, and are adept at negotiating prices and offering quality products to them. These regular customers form the foundation of their businesses. Additionally, the interviews revealed that some women vendors do not perceive other vendors as a threat to their income because, as mentioned, "it's common in the market to encounter other vendors or businesses." (E. Gulad, personal communication, May 16, 2024). The presence of regular customers helps them cope up with certain changes in terms of their relocations, competition and other challenges encountered.

This clearly demonstrates that the coping strategy of these women market vendors in overcoming barriers and challenges involves resilience and adaptability to changes in their livelihood. They choose to stay in market vending because it offers financial empowerment and the means to support their families, despite occasional financial difficulties.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study highlights that women market vendors in Tambo Market, Iligan City, experience several factors that contribute to their socio-economic empowerment. Primarily, the regular daily income from market vending provides them with financial stability, enabling them to support their households and manage essential expenses. The autonomy afforded by self-employment allows vendors to control their business operations, including working hours and financial decisions, which helps them balance work and personal responsibilities. Family support also plays a crucial role, aiding vendors in managing their businesses and improving their work-life balance. However, they face significant barriers such as poor market location, which reduces foot traffic and sales, and unpredictable price fluctuations that disrupt their profitability. High competition among vendors and financial constraints due to limited access to affordable credit further exacerbate their challenges. Additionally, systemic issues like the lack of government support and the financial obligations associated with public market management compound these difficulties.

Despite these challenges, vendors demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability by employing leadership skills, seeking financial support from cooperatives, and maintaining strong customer relationships. These strategies, combined with their resourcefulness and family involvement,

enable them to sustain their businesses and continue contributing to the local economy.

In conclusion, the resilience, determination and resourcefulness exhibited by these women underscore their dedication to economic independence and empowerment. By addressing the barriers they face, and enhancing support mechanisms, policymakers can cultivate a more inclusive and equitable economic environment/landscape, not only offering development among vendors but ultimately advancing sustainable development in the city of Iligan.

## 6. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the researchers recommend the following measures to enhance the overall situation of the women market vendors at Tambo Market, Iligan City. First, the city government of Iligan City should create interventions to address the immediate challenges faced by these vendors. Second, vendors should receive targeted government support, including low-interest loans and programs designed to assist them. Finally, these vendors should have access to training in financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and legal and regulatory compliance to better understand their rights and obligations and adhere to relevant laws and regulations.

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## WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN TÜRKİYE: A CENTURY OF PROGRESS AND ONGOING CHALLENGES<sup>1</sup>

Zeynep Banu DALAMAN<sup>2</sup> 

### Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive examination of the historical evolution and contemporary challenges of women's political participation in Türkiye, spanning from the 19th century to the present day. Despite the early enfranchisement of women in 1934, their representation in political institutions has remained limited and often tokenistic. The study delves into the impact of Kemalist modernization policies, which initially sought to integrate women into the public sphere but did so through a masculinized lens that often confined women to state-sanctioned roles. By critically examining the masculinization of female identities and the persistent patriarchal ideologies that permeate governmental policies, the article evaluates both qualitative and quantitative transformations in women's political representation. It also addresses ongoing challenges, such as gender-based violence and the struggle for equal citizenship rights, which continue to impede women's full participation in the public sphere. The history of women's political advancement is meticulously categorized into four distinct periods: the Single-Party Period (1923-1950), Coalition Governments Period (1961-1980), Post-1980 Military Coup Governments Period (1983-2002), and the Justice and Development Party (JDP) Governments Period (2002-present). The study underscores the necessity for structural reforms to enhance both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of women's political representation. This includes the implementation of mechanisms such as gender quotas and zipper systems within political parties to ensure more opportunities for female candidates and pathways to leadership positions. The findings suggest that despite significant legislative advancements, including early enfranchisement and legal reforms, the anticipated level of gender equality remains elusive. The persistence of patriarchal ideologies within governmental policies continues to hinder qualitative transformations in women's political representation. The study acknowledges several limitations, including a reliance on secondary sources and a focus on major political periods that may overlook regional and local variations in women's experiences and activism. Future research should focus on the intersectionality of women's experiences and the impact of evolving political contexts on gender relations, contributing to a more comprehensive and inclusive discourse on women's rights in Türkiye.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The participation of women in the public sphere and political life in Türkiye can be scrutinized within the framework of Türkiye's extensive modernization process. Spanning over a century, from the 19th century to the contemporary era, women have endeavored to gain visibility in the public sphere, the business sector, and political life by embodying the ethos of the nation and the Republic while striving to transcend the confines of the private realm. Nevertheless, they persist in existing as daughters, wives, and mothers within the patriarchal architecture of the public domain. This modern, Republican, and patriotic female archetype has not achieved adequate representation within Turkish political parties and the Turkish National Assembly. In 1935, a mere 18 women were members of parliament. Until 2007, the representation of female parliamentarians remained minimal: in 2001, women constituted only 4% of the parliamentary body. For nearly six decades since 1935, the 2007 general elections marked the first instance of electing 50 women to parliament, representing 9% of the elected members. This upward trajectory persisted into 2023, culminating in an increase in the proportion of female parliamentarians to 21%, with a total of 121 women parliamentarians.

The women's movement in Türkiye germinated under the influence of interactions with the Western world commencing in the 19th century and continued to burgeon throughout the 20th century. Post-1980s, governmental policies could only partially acknowledge the burgeoning and diversifying women's movement (inclusive of the Kurdish women's movement and the Islamist women's movement) manifesting in the streets and civil society. While quantitative representation of women augmented, their qualitative representation within governments remained ensnared within a male-dominated paradigm. The discourse on whether women were subjects or objects in Turkish politics and political movements began to gain traction only post-1980s. During this epoch,

feminism emerged as both a social movement and a critical perspective. In this context, it capitalized on the achievements of the liberal and left-wing feminist movements that emerged at the end of the 19th century and permeated the trajectory of Türkiye's modernization. Women began to articulate their social and political demands and engaged in political activism as autonomous subjects. Through these movements, they became increasingly active and visible. Since the proclamation of the Republic in Türkiye, a series of reforms and regulations have been enacted to facilitate women's active participation in political life. Women were bestowed with the right to vote and be elected in 1934, thereby facilitating their political engagement. Although Türkiye was a pioneer among developed nations in early enfranchisement of women, the desired level of women's political participation has not been realized throughout the historical continuum (Avcil, 2021: 42).

The participation of women in the public sphere, as envisioned and propelled by Kemalist modernization policies, was ostensibly legitimized through the masculinization of their sexual identities. Deniz Kandiyoti (2011: 196) elucidates:

Masculinization functions as a mode of security and guarantee for the presence of women in the public sphere. In a society based on male honor, with sharp differentiation of gender identity and behaviors of male family members, women had to masculinize themselves—by cutting their hair short, wearing dark clothing, and not using makeup—to avoid being seen as sexual objects by men.

From the inception of the Republic of Türkiye until the 1980s, there existed a republican consensus regarding the status and socio-political positioning of women in Türkiye. Central to this consensus was the principle that all political and social rights were conferred upon women by the founders of the Republic. This pervasive discourse is predicated on the belief that the political, social, and fundamental freedoms accorded to Turkish women by Mustafa

Kemal Atatürk, the Republic's founder, preceded those of Western women. Within this narrative, women were perpetually subjected to scrutiny to ascertain their comprehension and exercise of their rights and freedoms. This infantilization of the female gender is intrinsically linked with a patriarchal state mentality. The initial female parliamentarians were denominated as "Republican girls." This "republican woman" archetype possessed a profession and ventured outside the domestic sphere, yet their integration into the public domain was sanctioned only under the aegis of culturally imbued conditions and constraints. From the mid-1960s onward, visible Islamic women in the public domain began advocating for women's legal freedoms and citizenship rights, critiquing feminism—perceived as a deleterious movement for Muslim women—and demanding the right to wear headscarves. If feminism is defined as a movement for liberty and defiance against gender roles and lifestyles that subordinate women to men by social institutions, then neither Kemalist feminism nor Islamic feminism mounted a rebellion against Turkish societal institutions. Nonetheless, it is imperative to consider that this transformation could potentially facilitate the emergence of a non-patriarchal society through the recognition of gender identity differences.

In this study, the metamorphosis of women throughout the Republic's history will be scrutinized in alignment with governmental policies and women's demands. In this context, the administrations of the Republic of Türkiye have been categorized into four distinct periods: (1) Single-Party Period (1923-1950); (2) Coalition Governments Period (1961-1980); (3) Post-1980 Military Coup Governments Period (1983-2002); (4) Justice and Development Party (JDP) Governments Period (2002-present). The principal inquiry here is whether the political advancements of women in Türkiye have undergone qualitative as well as quantitative transformations over the Republic's

century-long history. Furthermore, the study will examine the challenges encountered by women in the 21st century concerning their rights demands, the violence they face, and whether they possess equal citizenship rights with men in the public sphere. In this context, it is posited that despite the legislative provisions granting equal citizenship rights to women since the Republic's inception, the anticipated level of social transformation has not been actualized, and patriarchal ideologies continue to pervade governmental policies.

## 2. KEMALIST WOMEN'S POLICIES DURING THE SINGLE-PARTY ERA (1923-1950)

The quintessential equation that encapsulates modernization is the correlation between "national progress" and "women's emancipation." In this context, Kemalism stands out for its radicalism. The influence of Western civilization is most profoundly felt in the reconfiguration of gender relations and the delineation of private and public spheres. Perhaps the most enduring dichotomy between the Western and Islamic worlds resides in the conceptualization of the private sphere and female identity. In Islamic culture, the term "private" lacks an equivalent, signifying a confined, intimate space imbued with gender-specific restrictions, aptly encapsulated by the term "mahrem".<sup>1</sup> Islamic reform endeavors, metaphorically speaking, to dismantle this seclusion and propel women into the public domain. The visibility of women signifies their presence both corporeally (unveiling) and within urban, public, and political spheres (evidenced by the enfranchisement of Turkish women in 1934). Furthermore, the abrogation of Sharia law and the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926 underpinned the principle of secularism, thereby modernizing gender relations under a contemporary legal framework. In essence, the most conspicuous impact of modernization pertains to state structures and political institutions; however, its most pervasive and profound influence manifests at the level of "civilization," particularly

<sup>1</sup> Forbidden. Mahrem means intimacy, privacy, secrecy and silence (Göle, 1996: 94).



in shaping symbolic capital, constructing identities, and redefining ethics and aesthetics.

### **2.1. TURKISH FAMILY STRUCTURE AND WOMEN**

Mustafa Kemal articulates a profound recognition of the significance of the family in the nation's life and the reconstruction of Türkiye. He posits that family life constitutes the bedrock of civilization, the cornerstone of progress, and the wellspring of strength, cautioning that a deficient family life precipitates social, economic, and political debilitation (1954: 308-309). He further emphasizes that for the family to remain robust and fulfill its expected role within the nation, both male and female elements must be endowed with their inherent rights. The Republican People's Party, in its 1927 Manifesto, also underscored the paramount importance of the family, advocating for its protection and fortification within social life (*Hürriyet*, November 10, 2013). Mustafa Kemal asserts that a woman's paramount duty is motherhood and the education of her children, contending that women should not be relegated solely to domestic duties but should be acknowledged as partners and equals to their husbands (1954: 45-46). Nevertheless, the primary obligation of a woman remains being the mother and educator of her offspring. He contends that to cultivate children capable of becoming active participants in contemporary life, women must be more enlightened, more virtuous, and more knowledgeable.

### **2.2. THE WOMEN'S PEOPLE PARTY, EQUAL CITIZENSHIP, AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE**

From the early years of the Republic, Türkiye undertook significant measures to enhance the political and social standing of women. Notably, Turkish women were granted suffrage rights earlier than their counterparts in many Western nations (MFA, n.d.). The initial and most concrete achievement of the women's movement was the abolition of polygamy and the provision of civil marriage, divorce rights, and equal property rights through the Turkish Civil Code of 1926, modeled on

the Swiss Civil Code of 1912. Alongside these legal advancements, the image of the Republican woman began to evolve. The Republican woman was envisioned as both the modern, educated figure of future Türkiye and the "mother of the Turkish nation." Despite these strides, the state, which controlled the reforms, suppressed the grassroots feminist movement. This dynamic is reflected in Türkiye's official historiography, which credits the "progressive vision" of the Republic's founding cadres under Atatürk with the advancement of women's rights while neglecting the contributions and demands of women themselves. Recent feminist historiography, however, challenges this narrative by uncovering the efforts of Turkish women advocating for suffrage from the Republic's inception and even earlier, during the final days of the Ottoman Empire (Sancar, 2012; Davaz, 2014; Dalaman, 2020).

During the Second Constitutional Era and the foundational period of the Republic, enlightened women from the late Ottoman period, led by Nezihe Muhiddin, sought to transform the identity of the "Ottoman Turkish Woman" into the "Turkish woman" identity in line with the prevailing political conditions. This transformation aligned with the nation-state's objective of fostering a "citizen" identity, moving away from the imperial legacy of "subjects." Nezihe Muhiddin's vision of the Turkish woman encompassed broad segments of women, including the middle class (Zihnioğlu, 1998: 48). Her focus on reaching broader masses was inspired by the Unionists' post-Balkan War shift towards the "Anatolian" populace. The concept of the "Anatolian woman" entering the public and intellectual discourse of the time was an effort to realize the "ideal" that Ottoman women had envisioned but could not implement. For Nezihe Muhiddin and the women who participated in the National Struggle, there was significant work to be done in shaping the new Turkish woman in the nascent Republic. The enlightened women of this period were fervently committed to proclaiming that women possessed equal rights with men. They

aimed to contribute to the nationalist discourse and the nation-building process by integrating women. Indeed, just before the Republic's proclamation, on June 16, 1923, the establishment of the "Women's People's Party" (WPP) symbolized this conviction and determination:

The elevation of women is one of the most crucial conditions for our country's happier existence and the robust progress of our great revolution (Muhiddin, 1931: 11).

In the same work, she expressed their desire to contribute to the Turkish revolution from a female perspective (Muhiddin, 1931: 2). In a statement to the *Vakit* newspaper regarding the attempt to establish the WPP in May, Nezihe Muhiddin argued that it had become imperative for women to gain political rights. According to her, WPP aimed to secure women's political and social rights, defend these rights from the parliamentary platform under the Republic regime, and elevate the status of women. In this context, the WPP functioned as a political society advocating women's policies (*Vakit*, June 3, 1923).

Nezihe Muhiddin's assertive stance against the yet-to-be-defined female mission of the single-party regime, coupled with her belief that women deserved equal rights, was marked by a resolute determination: "even if they do not accept it, we will take it." The article "The Right of the Turkish Woman" published in the *Vakit* newspaper on June 4, 1923, is particularly significant. It emphasized women's equal participation in the national struggle:

The involvement of Anatolian women in the resistance during the National Struggle should be decisive in gaining political rights. The noble women of Anatolia took up pickaxes and shovels to provide for their children's sustenance, and when they saw their precious land in danger, they shouldered their rifles and personally participated in the defense of the homeland. By doing so, women proved themselves to be loyal and true children of this country, playing a prominent and practical role in every aspect of our social life and earning the

right to benefit from our political rights (*Vakit*, June 4, 1923).

A prominent news article on the front page of the *Vakit* newspaper on June 16, 1923, proclaimed: "The Women's Movement in Our City is Progressing: The Women's People's Party Will Be Officially Established Today." The establishment of WPP was thwarted on the grounds that women, who had not yet gained political rights, could not legally form a political party. In her later writings, Nezihe Muhiddin evaluated this situation as follows:

We examined and received the response that women who had not yet obtained political rights could not legally form a party. Some women among us argued that the bylaws were too excessive. Because in this bylaw, there was even a clause stating that 'our women will fulfill their military duties' (Muhiddin, 1931: 101).

The founding authority that objected to WPP allowed women to organize as an association under the name Turkish Women's Union (TWU) on the condition that the provisions in the party bylaws were softened. The transition from a party regulation that advocated for all women's rights, especially political rights, to an association regulation that restricted women in certain areas, placed them in a complementary role to men, and of course, did not mention political rights:

We amended the bylaws as much as possible and presented it again to the governor's office under the name "Turkish Women's Union." ... This time, a week later, the governor's office approved our existence and accepted the bylaws (Muhiddin, 1931: 100).

The association's bylaws retained the objective of "elevating women in intellectual and social fields to a modern and advanced position," as stated in the WPP's bylaws. However, the main change was in its content. The first target proposed by the Union to achieve this goal was added to the program, which was to raise young girls as true mothers. The clause "participation in municipal elections" was completely removed and replaced with the clause

"The Union has no connection with politics" (Çakır, 1994: 340-341).

Nezihe Muhiddin and her colleagues continued their advocacy work by establishing the magazine "Turkish Women's Path." This publication informed women about the Union's activities, led discussions on feminism, and provided updates on women's rights from different countries. Additionally, it published translations of correspondence from TWU members to suffragists around the world. The magazine emphasized the importance of educating not only girls but also boys, and highlighted women's right to join the military in the service of national defense.

By 1927, discussions culminated in significant strides toward the realization of women's political rights. Despite the controversies surrounding Nezihe Muhiddin's removal from the association she founded, TWU continued its mission with different leadership. Indeed, her exclusion was a manifestation of the ruling authorities' desire to grant women's suffrage themselves, rather than allowing women to achieve it through their struggle (Dalaman, 2022: 49).

These developments clarified women's public roles, and on December 5, 1934, the Turkish Grand National Assembly granted women the right to vote in all national elections. Subsequently, the Turkish Women's Union organized a celebration in Istanbul's Beyazıt Square. While women celebrated, newspapers heralded that they had obtained "the greatest right" (Cumhuriyet, December 6, 1934). Women voted for the first time on February 8, 1935, leading to the election of 18 women members of parliament, constituting 4.6% of the elected members (See Table-1).

In a speech at a Turkish Grand National Assembly meeting, Prime Minister and Malatya Member of Parliament İsmet İnönü remarked on the granting of suffrage to women:

Turkish women had already earned such a right. It is the right of women who worked shoulder to shoulder on the front lines and in the fields to be

involved in the country's affairs (Akşam, December 4, 1934).

In another news article, it was announced that Kazım Orbay's wife and Afet İnan visited İsmet İnönü in the Turkish Grand National Assembly and decided that December 5 would be celebrated as "Women's Day" every year (Akşam, December 9, 1934). Celebrations were held in many provinces (Adana, Siirt, Edirne, Antalya, Kilis, Zonguldak, Maraş, Ordu, Samsun, Kars, and Denizli), where women were asked about their opinions on the day's significance, and they expressed their satisfaction (Akşam, December 9, 1934: 7).

The granting of suffrage to Turkish women had a considerable impact internationally. Consequently, the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), founded in 1904, held its 12th Congress in Istanbul at Yıldız Palace from April 18-24, 1935, with delegates from approximately 30 countries. The president of the Alliance, Corbett Ashby, lauded the progress of Turkish women and the leadership of Atatürk, calling for "freedom for women and peace for humanity" (Cumhuriyet, April 19, 1935).

This call for peace stood in opposition to the rising fascism and war in Europe. The political environment grew increasingly tense. Shortly after the congress advocating for women's suffrage in 1935, it was decided to dissolve the Turkish Women's Union. Although the reasons remain unclear, some hypotheses have been proposed. The unequal composition of the delegations was criticized, and IWSA officials and TWU, which hosted the congress in Türkiye, were accused of making Allied propaganda due to the dominance of representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, while Germany, Italy, and the USSR were not represented (Kaya, 2013). On the other hand, TWU President Latife Bekir explained that the association had achieved its goals, as all rights had been granted to women in Türkiye, and the delegates unanimously decided to dissolve the association (Bozkır, 2000: 111). An autonomous movement advocating for women's suffrage was no

longer deemed necessary, and henceforth, women were expected to work within the established institutions of the Republic that had granted them "all rights".

### 2.3. THE PRE-SUFFRAGE DEBATE ON WOMEN'S MILITARY ENLISTMENT

During the early Republican era, one of the significant discussions centered around the role and status of women in the nascent Turkish state. Among these debates was the contentious issue of women's military enlistment prior to the conferral of suffrage rights. Proponents argued that women's active participation in the National Struggle, including taking up arms and engaging in combat, demonstrated their loyalty and capability, thereby justifying their inclusion in national defense and the military. This participation was seen as a testament to their deserving of political and social rights, including suffrage. Opponents, however, contended that military service and political rights should remain distinct, with the former not necessarily entitling women to the latter. This debate highlighted broader societal and governmental tensions regarding women's roles, rights, and recognition within the framework of the newly established Republic of Türkiye. This subject is also addressed in the program and regulations of the Women's People's Party. The program and regulations consist of a nine-article statute encompassing all women's rights. Article 7 stipulates, "In the event of war, measures will be taken into consideration to ensure that women assist in service." (Vakit, June 16, 1923). Essentially, this article commits women to military service during times of war and mobilization.

On June 21, 1927, the issue of women's military service was deliberated in the parliament. According to the minutes of the 2nd Term, 5th Legislative Year of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM), during the discussion of the "Military Obligation Law," Giresun Deputy Hakkı Tarık Bey took the floor while the first article of the law, which states, "Every male citizen of the Republic of Türkiye is obliged to perform military

service under this law," was being voted on. He suggested that the military duty, defined as applicable to "every male," could also extend to women:

I observe that the first article of the Military Obligation Law is written exclusively for men. The defense of the country is imposed on men by this law. In fact, we see and accept that it is imposed on men by natural law. However, I believe that the duty assigned to men by natural law is also conferred upon women. Therefore, I would like to know to what extent this duty, which is given to men by natural law and fulfilled at various times in the face of national crises, has been considered by the Committee and to what extent it has been taken into account. (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, June 21, 1927)

Kütahya Deputy Recep Peker responded, stating, "Turkish women are seen among their fellow citizens, together with the men of their country. Mothers have fulfilled their national duties by raising Turkish children who will defend the country." (Zihnioğlu, 1998: 155). At this juncture, in response to the Women's Union's pursuit of political rights, Peker invited the women of the Women's Union to military service, saying, "Since you desire to be actively involved with the fate of the Turkish homeland, then I invite you to this other honorable aspect of active involvement." (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, June 21, 1927). Subsequently, Yunus Nadi took the floor, asserting that women's pursuit of political rights did not necessarily imply they should also perform military service.

The following day, newspapers reported on the debate. Nezihe Muhiddin responded to the parliamentary discussions in an interview with *Milliyet*:

Every citizen who has proven their maturity has essentially earned these rights. Strangely, as soon as Giresun Deputy Hakkı Tarık Bey raised the issue of Turkish women's right to be deputies in the Grand National Assembly, they brought up the issue of military service. They think they will intimidate us with this. (*Milliyet*, June 23, 1927).

Falih Rifki Atay also contributed to the debate without directly addressing the issue of military service. In his article "Turkish Woman" in *Cumhuriyet*, he noted that the articles on women occupying Istanbul newspapers at the time did not concern women engaged in "positive and beneficial" activities and that he perceived a lack of seriousness in this matter. Atay argued that Turkish revolutionaries had implemented significant reforms regarding women, but the failure to extend these reforms to all women constituted a major problem. In his article, which concluded with the statement, "There is no women's issue against the government in Türkiye," Falih Rifki's views were accepted and defended by Kemalist women (Zihnioglu, 1998: 157).

All the initiatives taken and steps toward women's rights remained constrained within the boundaries set by the single-party regime. The issue of women's military service also retained a symbolic nature. As Atatürk's adopted daughter, Sabiha Gökçen, documented in her memoirs, she served as a pilot and actively participated in the Dersim campaign as a combat pilot. Sabiha Gökçen, as a woman who fought actively rather than being confined to auxiliary services behind the front lines, represented a significant departure from past experiences. She was introduced to the world as "the first female combat pilot" and remained a symbol of women's progress in society. As the only female soldier, she epitomized the modernity of the Republic. During World War II, despite the enactment of some laws concerning women's military service during mobilization, the first female officers in the military began to join the army only in 1955. The acceptance of women into military schools training officers occurred only in the 1990s.

From 1937 onward, as World War II loomed, female students in secondary schools began to receive military instruction (Ünder, 2000: 51-58). Given that military service for women remained in secondary and auxiliary roles, the content of military courses was tailored differently for women. In the "Preparation for Military Service" textbooks

prepared by Tahir Tipi, female students were subjected to propaganda as if they were about to go to war the next day, and officers had them practice with weapons "under their supervision" (Kazankaya, 2000: 50).

One aspect not covered in any study to date, but revealed through oral history research, is that female university students received short-term military training during the pre-Korean War period in the 1940s. Albums from that period depict women in military uniforms. However, these women never participated in combat. Between 1945 and 1950, there were only three universities in Türkiye: Istanbul University, Istanbul Technical University, and Ankara University. Additionally, there were teacher training institutes affiliated with these universities. In 1946, the "Universities Law" was enacted. This law comprised 81 articles and 17 temporary articles. According to this law, universities were granted "general autonomy and legal personality," while faculties were endowed with "scientific and administrative autonomy and legal personality." The Interuniversity Council (IUC) was established during this period and affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. At that time, the number of students in higher education was approximately 25,000. However, no study or archival data is available regarding the number of female students and the number of women participating in national defense courses during this period (Dalaman, 2022: 65).

### **3. THE EVOLUTION OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS AND WOMEN'S POLICIES: FROM MULTI-PARTY TRANSITION TO THE 1980 MILITARY COUP (1950-1980)**

Subsequent to the elections held immediately after 1935, there was a discernible decline in the representation of women in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT). Particularly in the 1950 and 1961 elections, a mere three women were elected to parliament (see Table-2). This period is historically notable for recording the lowest number of female parliamentarians since the



enfranchisement of women and their eligibility to stand for office was established (Arslan, 2004: 108).

Following the transition to the multi-party-political system between 1950 and 1960, the government program formulated by the Democratic Party, which succeeded the Republican People's Party (CHP) in power, conspicuously omitted any reference to women's issues. During this era, the existence of women's issues was categorically denied, and the adequacy of the regulations introduced during the early Republican period was not subjected to scrutiny. Even in programs addressing the minutiae of daily life, such as interest rates on loans, factory tenders, and the prices of certain consumer goods, there was a conspicuous absence of any mention of women and their issues (Kaplan, 1999).

The efforts to restore democracy through the 1961 Constitution did not encompass policies aimed at addressing women's issues. It is evident that the coalition governments of this period lacked any programs specifically targeting women's concerns. An analysis of the program of the 31st Government formed by the Justice Party (JP) following the 1969 General Election reveals that women were discussed solely in the context of their familial roles (Neziroğlu & Yılmaz, 2013: 2627). The notion that the JP confined women to the family sphere and reinforced their secondary roles does not align with traditional perceptions. This approach, termed "state feminism," which underscores the state's regression in women's rights, has had a prolonged impact on the political landscape (Altan Arslan, 2017: 416).

Although Türkan Akyol was appointed as the first female minister in the reform governments established during the provisional regimes commencing in 1971, no substantive policies addressing women's issues were implemented (Kaplan, 1999: 209). In fact, only two female ministers served in the governments during the 1961-1980 period (See Table-3). Women were predominantly active in the Republican Senate (See Table-4.)

During the period between 1961 and 1980 in Türkiye, a bicameral system was in place, featuring an upper legislative body known as the Republican Senate, which constituted the upper chamber of the GNAT. A meticulous examination of the lives and senatorial activities of the women who served in the Senate during this era reveals that, primarily due to the efforts of the 1961 Constitution and its implementers, women made significant political contributions to society. This period is marked by notable political endeavors undertaken by women, reflecting their critical role in Turkish political life (Candeger & Coşkun, 2018: 260).

Specifically, figures such as Aysel Baykal, Bahriye Üçok, Adile Ayda, and Nermin Abadan Unat emerged as pivotal Senate members, spearheading societal initiatives that profoundly influenced Turkish politics. These women crafted programs that integrated the needs of the era, thereby securing a significant place in political, economic, and social spheres. It is worth noting that these female members were directly appointed by the then-President of Türkiye.

The first female minister, Türkan Akyol, assumed office in the 33rd government under Prime Minister Nihat Erim. Senator Zerrin Tüzün delivered speeches expressing gratitude to Erim for appointing a female minister and for "already implementing one of Atatürk's most important revolutionary laws" (Neziroğlu & Yılmaz, 2013b: 3434). In 1974, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit established the 37th government as a coalition between the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the National Salvation Party (MSP). Although the principle of a social state was adopted and corresponding policies were developed, no direct targets were set concerning women's issues.

For the first time, the challenges faced by working women were addressed in the 39th Nationalist Front Government under Demirel's leadership (Altan Arslan, 2017: 416). This focus persisted in the 40th Ecevit Government established in 1977. Although women's issues were omitted in the 41st government program, they were included in the

43rd government agenda under the framework of "allowing widowed and pregnant women to receive salaries" (Neziroğlu & Yılmaz, 2013b: 5674). This marks a significant milestone in addressing women's issues. The emergence of this phenomenon indicates that political parties sought to appeal to urban female voters due to the increasing number of working women and the rising rate of urbanization. The 42nd government program also included objectives such as addressing wage inequality among working women and maternity leave. Additionally, presenting the image of working women alongside their roles as mothers and wives within the family introduced both traditional and modern female archetypes (Neziroğlu & Yılmaz, 2013b: 5411).

Government programs established between 1960-1980 exhibited greater attention to women's targets. However, a comprehensive policy toward women's issues remained absent compared to previous periods. Regardless of the political party forming the government, there was a consensus on addressing women's issues in a manner that included women within the family, perpetuating the traditional female identity. This demonstrates that there was no significant difference in how women were addressed, regardless of the ideological basis.

It is crucial to emphasize that political parties in Türkiye have been positioned on the political spectrum as right and left since the 1970s, with ideological distinctions becoming more pronounced. Right-wing parties paid more attention to women's issues and their challenges in their programs and the programs of the governments they formed. Although they emphasized the secondary role of women, it can be argued that they aimed to empower women in line with their ideological orientations. In fact, the aim was to provide women with a new identity distinct from the symbolic "mother" role that had persisted since the single-party period.

#### 4. POST-1980 MILITARY COUP WOMEN'S POLICIES: THE ÖZAL, DEMİREL, ERBAKAN, ÇİLLER, YILMAZ, AND ECEVİT GOVERNMENTS (1983-2002)

Since the 1980s, the women's movement has gained significant momentum both internationally and domestically, fostering a growing societal awareness regarding women's rights. Consequently, from the latter half of the 1990s onwards, pertinent national legislation has been meticulously reviewed, resulting in the implementation of various legal reforms and substantial advancements toward achieving gender equality.

A particularly noteworthy legal reform in this context is the enactment of Law No. 4320 on the Protection of the Family in 1998. This statute provides a critical legal mechanism for women or children subjected to domestic violence, enabling them to file complaints independently. Furthermore, it delineates the penalties for non-compliance with protective measures instituted by the Public Prosecutor to safeguard the victim.

In alignment with the harmonization efforts concerning the European Union (EU) acquis, significant legal reforms addressing women's rights have been instituted. The constitutional amendments adopted by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) on October 3, 2001, which took effect on October 17, 2001, embody provisions that fortify the principle of gender equality within the familial context.

The new Civil Code, which came into force on January 1, 2002, has further reinforced the status of women both within the family unit and in broader societal interactions, complementing the earlier constitutional amendments. Notable provisions of the new Civil Code include raising the legal marriage age to 18 for both genders (previously set at 17 for men and 15 for women), mandating the equal distribution of assets acquired during marriage, and ensuring that children born out of wedlock have the same inheritance rights as those born within marriage. Additionally, the Code

introduces several measures aimed at preventing violence against women (MFA, n.d.).

In the 1980s, women's movements in Türkiye sought to challenge traditional norms and beliefs by addressing societal perceptions of women and men. They succeeded in altering many people's views on women (Çaha, 2010). During this time, the term feminism was introduced, and scholarly studies on the evolution of the women's movement began to emerge.

The feminist movement engaged in significant publishing activities alongside institutional efforts such as forming associations, foundations, and companies. Inspired by the interest in the Feminist Page in *Somut* magazine, the Women's Circle was established in 1983 to evaluate women's domestic and external products and to conduct publishing, consulting, and service activities (Çaha, 2010: 185).

The independent feminist movement, which rejected the illusion of gender equality purported by Kemalism and did not settle for mere legal rights, became a radical and fundamentalist movement. Sevgi Çubukçu (2004) described it as a complete 'rebellion' movement.

In the late 1970s, a group of academic women, influenced by the UN's declaration of the 'Decade for Women' in 1975, began discussing women's issues, sparking new activism within the feminist movement. The independent feminist movement was systematically organized by women gathering around YAZKO (Writers' Cooperative). Concurrently, women at METU began gathering systematically under the name "Thursday Group" (Dalaman, 2020: 73). Besides raising awareness, the Thursday Group was the primary organizer of the No Harassment Campaign in October 1989. The rejection of a woman's lawsuit against her husband's violence by a judge in Çankırı, who cited the proverb 'Do not spare the rod from the back of the woman, nor the foal from her belly,' brought the movement to the streets (Çubukçu, 2004). Feminists viewed the traditional organization model as oppressive, authoritarian, and hierarchical, limiting

personality and individual participation. Considering that women's representation in parliament was only 2.7% between 1988-1999, the establishment of this association was a significant milestone for the women's movement (See Table-5).

Moreover, Türkiye quickly signed CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, to participate in the Nairobi conference closing the UN Decade for Women in 1985. The reawakening women's movement wrote a petition in March 1986, calling for urgent government measures to ensure the effective implementation of the convention, unexpectedly gathering 6,000 signatures (Berber, 2017). The 'Women's Petition' campaign, initiated by feminists in Ankara and Istanbul, garnered significant attention and became the first mass action after 1980. Following this campaign, the Association Against Discrimination was established to adapt CEDAW into domestic law (Çubukçu, 2004; Timisi & Gevrek, 2002).

The most notable institutional success of the feminist movement in Türkiye is exemplified by the "Women's Library and Information Center." During this period, women fought against domestic violence from fathers and husbands behind closed doors. Local women's shelters were established to help women escape violence and oppression. The "Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation" emerged as an institution dedicated to combating violence against women. Despite rising feminist awareness, a 1988 study revealed that while male and female politicians advocated for more women in politics, families did not want their daughters to become politicians. Particularly, being a politician was not an important goal for women themselves, indicating another area of struggle (Ayata, 1995: 71). One of the unique institutions that emerged from the feminist movement is "KA.DER (Association for Supporting Women Candidates)," which was established in March 1997 under the leadership of Şirin Tekeli. A primary objective of KA.DER is to

enhance women's political representation in Parliament.

During the period from 1983 to 2002, an examination of the ministers responsible for formulating government policies reveals that, regrettably, the number of female ministers did not exceed two. Additionally, these ministers were predominantly assigned the role of "State Minister Responsible for Women and Family," which underscores the persistent patriarchal perspective towards women in parliament (See Table-6). It is crucial to highlight exceptional instances related to women during this era. Although the inclusion of women in decision-making mechanisms within politics is perceived as a significant advancement, it is evident that this did not substantially influence women's policies. Tansu Çiller, who became Türkiye's first female prime minister, and Meral Akşener, who served as the Minister of Interior, made Çiller's government a beacon of hope for women. However, as illustrated by the subsequent statements, the program of the first female prime minister lacked any new or alternative perspectives, regulations, or proposals concerning women and women's issues, aside from some customary expressions:

By enhancing the educational levels of women and increasing their access to vocational training opportunities, their employment in non-agricultural sectors will be expanded. This will be particularly achieved through the implementation of incentive policies aimed at enabling women to own their own businesses. New policies will be developed to ensure the contribution of female labor to the economy and to facilitate more effective participation of women in decision-making processes (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1993: 390).

One of the pivotal events marking the onset of polarization debates centered around women during this period (the 57th Ecevit Government) was the "headscarf" controversy. On May 2, 1999, the inaugural session of the newly opened Parliament was held under the chairmanship of the oldest member, Elazığ Deputy Ali Rıza Septioğlu,

as per procedural requirements. The entry of Virtue Party (FP) Istanbul Deputy Merve Safa Kavakçı into the General Assembly hall wearing a headscarf triggered intense reactions, particularly from the DSP benches; conversely, FP deputies applauded Kavakçı's entry into the General Assembly. DSP members argued that Kavakçı could not attend parliamentary sessions with a headscarf according to the Rules of Procedure. DSP Chairman Bülent Ecevit, taking the floor due to the prolonged procedural debates, remarked, "...This is not a place to defy the state. Please put this woman in her place." This statement escalated the tension, with DSP deputies chanting "out ... out" rhythmically, and DSP's female deputies occupying the rostrum (Tekin, 2020: 760). Subsequently, Kavakçı's immunity was lifted on the grounds of her U.S. citizenship and failure to disclose it, preventing her from taking the oath. Following this incident, the headscarf became a political symbol in Türkiye. As Nilüfer Göle (2009: 7) also pointed out, this movement:

Since the 1980s, Islamist movements, which have rapidly evolved beyond mere political movements or religious beliefs to permeate the public sphere and carve out new spaces within daily life practices, have prompted an effort to dissect their multifaceted nature at a micro level, even down to their molecular structures.

## 5. WOMEN'S POLICIES OF THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (JDP) GOVERNMENTS (2002-2024)

Since winning all elections and forming successive governments since 2002, the JDP's women's policy, despite containing liberal tendencies, distinctly reflects its conservative identity. The Party argues that men and women are not equal and approaches demands based on gender equality with skepticism (Yüksel, 2021: 105). Although the party's program addresses a wide range of women's issues, from education to violence, honor killings to poverty, and civil society organization to political participation, it does not include the expression "gender equality" (AK Party, 2021). In other words, while women's issues are widely covered in

fundamental documents and political discourse, including the party program, a women's perspective is not emphasized. Some researchers argue that the JDP's conservative stance on women's issues stems not from its Islamist roots but from the male-dominated structure that permeates nearly all political tendencies in Türkiye (Yeğenoğlu & Coşar, 2014a: 159).

According to senior members of the political party, women and men are not naturally equal. This understanding is reflected not only in rhetoric but also in practice. For instance, at the first International Women and Justice Summit organized by the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM), a government-supported non-governmental organization (GONGO)<sup>1</sup> with the most rapidly established branches, President Erdoğan stated, "The nature of men and women is different, and women's need is not equality but equal value. The women's rights struggle in many developed countries is stuck in certain molds. The focus on equality in the women's rights struggle disrupts justice" (BBC, 2021, 08 March). Following this statement, the emphasis on "women-men equality" shifted to "women-men justice," a stance most criticized by women's organizations in Türkiye (Diner, 2018: 105). A striking example of this is the naming of the committee established in the Turkish Grand National Assembly to ensure gender equality. Despite objections from women's organizations, the commission was named the "Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men" (Yeğenoğlu & Coşar, 2014b: 160).

Such statements and practices are not aligned with the principles of gender equality and women's rights recognized by international human rights law. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to which Türkiye is a party, defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex

which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (CEDAW, Article 1).

The issue of the headscarf has consistently been a primary agenda item for the voters of the JDP. The headscarf ban, particularly in higher education institutions, has led to significant violations of fundamental citizenship rights. This ban was not limited to educational institutions but was also enforced in public service positions. Consequently, the headscarf issue, a multidimensional problem, has directly or indirectly influenced the JDP's policies.

The headscarf ban was initially lifted in 2013 through changes to the dress code regulations, removing the ban in public institutions, with the exception of the military, police, and judiciary. In the following years, the regulation was expanded to include these institutions, and by 2017, the headscarf was completely permitted for women working in public institutions.

The active participation of headscarved women in all areas of social life and their visibility in the public sphere have been encouraged. Politics and the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) are at the forefront of these areas. Following the regulatory changes in 2013, four female JDP deputies began to participate in parliamentary sessions wearing headscarves. Konya deputy Gülay Samancı, Kahramanmaraş deputy Sevede Beyazıt Kaçar, Denizli deputy Nurcan Dalbudak, and Mardin deputy Gönül Bekin Şahkulubey attended the General Assembly sessions after returning from Umrah with their heads covered (Yüksel, 2021: 108). This trend has continued to grow, and in the 2023 general elections, more than half of the female deputies elected from the JDP wore headscarves.

<sup>1</sup> The term "Government organized non-governmental organization" (GONGO) refers to organizations that, despite being named "civil society" organizations, are not independent

and do not contribute to the expansion of civil space and democratization. Instead, they work to promote the state's agenda and disseminate its views and ideologies (Doyle, 2017).



Thus, the JDP has encouraged the symbolic representation of women in Turkish politics. Female deputies, once seen as symbols of modernity during the single-party period and symbols of the system's democracy during military coup periods, have become representatives of the identity symbolized by the headscarf under the JDP.

As shown in Table-7, the number of female deputies in JDP governments has steadily increased. The proportion of female candidates, which was six percent in the 2002 elections, rose to eleven percent in 2007, eighteen percent in the June 2015 elections, and twenty-one percent in the 2023 elections (Sancar, 2018: 78-82). Today, 121 female deputies in the TBMM are from the JDP. The proportion of female deputies in the JDP, except for the 26th term, has consistently increased. It is evident that the number and proportion of female deputies in the JDP constitute a significant share of the overall female deputies in the TBMM. The Kurdish movement's party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), which entered the 2023 elections under the name of the Green Left Party, has also contributed to the increase in the number of female deputies since 2002. The number of female deputies for the party stands at 30.

In JDP governments, the patriarchal structure of Turkish politics has not been disrupted. Despite occasional increases in the number of female ministers to two, women have generally been appointed as Ministers of Family and Social Policies, with few exceptions. Nimet Baş, the longest-serving minister in Türkiye, served as the Minister of State Responsible for Women and Family and later as the Minister of National Education for 8 years, 1 month, and 7 days in the 59th and 60th terms of the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan governments (See Table-8). Following the 2011 general elections, the "Ministry of State Responsible for Women and Family" was abolished and replaced by the "Ministry of Family and Social Policies." This structure emphasizes the importance of women in the private sphere within the family. Establishing a ministry with this name, instead of a

Women's Ministry, once again underscores the conservative structure of JDP governments.

During the Third Erdoğan Government (2011-2014), the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention was ratified by the TBMM. Social security premiums were reduced to encourage the employment of men aged 18-29 and women aged 18 and over. The Ministry of Family and Social Policies was established. The "Law on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women" No. 6284, an essential step for implementing the Istanbul Convention, was enacted (Kayagil, 2017: 47). However, on March 20, 2021, Türkiye withdrew from the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, via a presidential decree. The Minister of Family, Labour, and Social Services, Zehra Zümrüt Selçuk, stated that the Istanbul Convention was not the only tool in combating violence against women, saying, "At this point, all the necessary tools are available in our primary and secondary legislation to protect our women and combat violence against women." Many women's organizations are demanding a reversal of the decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, an international document preventing violence against women, through protests held daily in different cities (BBC, March 30, 2021).

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, traditionally known as a "male-dominated" institution, women have significantly shattered this perception and risen to high-level positions. Following the appointment of Filiz Dinçmen as the first female ambassador in 1982, the number of female ambassadors in the ministry gradually increased. This number rose from 8 in 2000 to 19 in 2005, 21 in 2010, 37 in 2015, and 60 in 2019. Currently, there are 257 ambassadors in the ministry, 193 of whom are men, and 64 are women. With this figure, women constitute 25 percent of the ambassadors in the ministry. Of the female ambassadors, 39 serve in foreign missions, while 25 are based at the

ministry's headquarters (Çetin & Yüzbaşıoğlu, 2021).

Furthermore, according to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted on October 31, 2000, women are expected to be more involved in peace agreements. However, according to the Council on Foreign Relations data, only 13 percent of negotiators have been women over the past 30 years (Tokyay, 2021). Türkiye has not prepared a national action plan to implement the UN's 1325 Resolution. Although a national coordination meeting was held under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 2016, the plan to involve female diplomats in negotiations in conflict regions lost priority due to subsequent political events.

Another critical issue in Türkiye's foreign policy is NATO membership and military power. As a leading defense organization, NATO has adopted the UN's 1325 Resolution and developed new concepts to protect women in armed conflict zones, involve them actively in post-conflict peace negotiations, and increase the proportion of women in military units participating in NATO peacekeeping operations (Dönmez, 2023). In Türkiye, which has the second-largest army in NATO, the participation rate of women in the armed forces is very low. The proportion of women in active service is 1.2 percent (Alemdar, 2023). In conclusion, the evolving role and visibility of women in Turkish politics and public institutions, particularly under the JDP, highlight significant strides towards gender representation, although challenges and traditional patriarchal structures persist.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The initiatives aiming to augment women's political representation and the formulation of women's policies in Türkiye have yielded substantial advancements, underscoring the imperative for women to assume a more visible, active, and effective role in the public sphere. These endeavors strive to enhance women's participation in political life, elevate awareness of the gender identities sculpted by societal norms and patriarchal

structures, and achieve gender parity in these domains.

Kemalist women, while favoring their societal identity, also manifest ambivalence regarding their gender identities. Observations reveal that women often refrain from overtly expressing their gender identities, constrained by the stringent and conservative dictates of familial and societal institutions, which impede them from interrogating their identities.

A notable parallel exists between the political representation of women during the single-party regimes that governed for 27 years post-establishment of the Republic and the JDP administrations that have been in power for the past 21 years. This parallel is particularly evident in the political representation of women. During the single-party era, women were perceived as symbols of modernization and exemplars of the contemporary Turkish woman. In the present context, women are prominently recognized as emblematic figures in the struggle for the right to wear headscarves. Another similarity is the predominant identification of women within the private sphere, where they are expected to fulfill roles as "good wives and good mothers," with a pronounced emphasis on family as their primary focus.

The adequacy and efficacy of governmental policies on women's rights in Türkiye have been subjects of prolonged debate. Despite various initiatives in recent years to integrate women into social life and safeguard their rights, disparities persist in the workplace. Women in Türkiye exhibit a low labor force participation rate and are predominantly engaged in low-paying employment. Additionally, women encounter gender discrimination in the workplace, constraining their access to equitable opportunities.

The government endeavors to implement policies aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for women in the workforce, proffering various incentives to boost female labor force participation. However, the

sufficiency of these policies and their impact on attaining gender parity in the labor market remain contentious. Furthermore, violence against women continues to be a significant issue, with the government striving to address it through various policies. Nonetheless, violence against women remains pervasive and necessitates urgent solutions.

There is broad consensus on the necessity for increased political representation of women in Türkiye. However, this representation requires enhancement both quantitatively and qualitatively. Women should not be relegated to roles such as family and social ministers. Augmenting the qualitative aspect of women's political representation involves creating avenues for women to ascend to leadership positions. Greater political participation by women would ensure a more accurate reflection of their needs and perspectives, fostering justice and equality in all aspects of their lives.

Women's political representation in Türkiye is predominantly male-dominated, necessitating structural reforms to bolster female participation in political life. Political parties need to provide more opportunities for female candidates through mechanisms like quotas and zipper systems, and establish pathways for women to rise to leadership positions.

Enhancing women's political representation is not only crucial for women's rights but also for the overall well-being of society. An increased female presence in the political arena would ensure a more accurate representation of women's needs and views, thereby contributing to greater justice and equality in all areas of life.

In conclusion, it is essential to qualitatively advance women's political representation in Türkiye within the framework of the "equal citizen" concept. Creating opportunities for women to ascend to leadership positions will better reflect women's needs and perspectives, thereby contributing to Türkiye's overall welfare.

The trajectory of women's participation in Türkiye's public and political spheres underscores the complex interplay between modernization efforts, patriarchal structures, and feminist movements. Despite significant legislative advancements, including early enfranchisement and legal reforms, the anticipated level of gender equality remains elusive. The Kemalist policies of the early Republic, while pioneering, often perpetuated a masculinized vision of female identity, limiting women's roles to those sanctioned by the state. Post-1980s, the diversification of the women's movement, encompassing both liberal and Islamist feminisms, began to challenge these constraints, advocating for broader socio-political recognition and rights. However, the persistence of patriarchal ideologies within governmental policies continues to hinder qualitative transformations in women's political representation.

This study highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the historical and contemporary dynamics of gender politics in Türkiye, emphasizing the importance of both legislative action and societal change in achieving true gender equality. However, it is important to acknowledge several limitations. Firstly, the study predominantly relies on secondary sources, which may introduce biases or overlook grassroots perspectives. Secondly, the focus on major political periods and movements may not fully capture the regional and local variations in women's experiences and activism. Lastly, the evolving political context and recent developments may not be fully reflected in the analysis, necessitating ongoing research to keep abreast of changes.

Future research should focus on the intersectionality of women's experiences and the impact of evolving political contexts on gender relations, contributing to a more comprehensive and inclusive discourse on women's rights in Türkiye.

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## TABLES &amp; FIGURES

Table 1: Parliamentary Representation during the Single-Party Period

year	Number of Female Parliamentarians	Total Number of Members of Parliament	Ratio of Female Parliamentarians to General
1935	18	395	4.6%
1939	15	429	3.7%
1943	16	435	3.7%
1946	9	465	1.9%
Total	58	1724	3.36%

Source: (Şahin, 2010)

Table 2: Female Parliamentary Representation during the 1950-1980 Period

year	Number of Female Parliamentarians	Total Number of Members of Parliament	Ratio of Female Parliamentarians to General
1950	3	487	0.6%
1954	4	541	0.7%
1957	7	610	1.1%
1961	3	450	0.7%
1965	8	450	1.8%
1969	5	450	1.1%
1973	6	450	1.3%
1977	4	450	1.3%
Total	40	3888	1.02%

Source: (Şahin, 2010)

Table 3: Female Ministers of Türkiye from 1950 to 1980

Minister	ministry	Party	Government	term of office	Duration
Turkan Akyol	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare	Independent	33rd Government - Nihat Erim	26.3.1971-11.12.1971	8 months, 2 weeks, 1 day
Hayriye Ayşe Nermin Neftçi	Ministry of Culture	Independent	38th Government – Sadi Irmak	17.11.1974-31.3.1975	4 months, 2 weeks

Source: (Tekin, 2020)

Table 4: Female Representatives of the Republican Senate and Their Terms of Service

Name	education	Method of Election	Party and Term
Nazire Özel Şahingiray	Ankara University, Faculty of Language, History, and Geography, Department of Sumerology	Elected (Senator of Istanbul)	JP 15.10.1961–7.6.1964
Hatice Mualla Akarca	Ankara High Agricultural Institute, Ankara University, Faculty of Language, History, and Geography,	Elected (Senator of Muğla)	JP 15.10.1961–5.6.1966

	Department of German Language and Literature		
Emine Mebrure Aksoley	Ankara University, Faculty of Law	Elected (Senator of Istanbul)	RPP 7.6.1964–14.10.1973
Fatma Hikmet İşmen	Ankara University, Faculty of Agriculture	Elected (Senator of Kocaeli)	Worker's Party of Turkey- 5.6.1966–12.1.1975
Solmaz Belül	Istanbul University, Faculty of Law	Elected (Senator of Istanbul)	RPP 4.10.1973–14.10.1979
Aysel Baykal	Istanbul University, Faculty of Law	Elected (Senator of Istanbul)	RPP 14.10.1979–12.9.1980
Nimet Zerrin Tuzun	Ankara Girls' Technical Teacher Training School	Presidential Quota	9.6.1964–10.10.1971
Bahriye Üçok	Ankara University, Faculty of Language, History, and Geography, Department of Medieval Turkish and Islamic History, State Conservatory, Department of Opera	Presidential Quota	14.10.1971–14.10.1977
Adile Ayda	Ankara University, Faculty of Law and Faculty of Language, History, and Geography, Department of French	Presidential Quota	13.7.1976–3.7.1978
Nermin Abadan Unat	Istanbul University, Faculty of Law	Presidential Quota	25.7.1978–12.9.1980

Source: (Candeger & Coşkun, 2018: 258)

Table 5: Female Parliamentary Representation during the 1983-2002 Period

year	Number of Female Parliamentarians	Total Number of Members of Parliament	Ratio of Female Parliamentarians to General
1983	12	399	3%
1987	6	450	1.3%
1991	8	450	1.8%
1995	13	550	2.4%
1999	22	550	4.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>2399</b>	<b>2.6%</b>

Source: (Şahin, 2010)

Table 6: Female Ministers of Türkiye from 1983 to 2002

Minister	Ministry	Party	Government	Task Date	Duration
Imren Aykut	Minister of Labor and Social Security	ANAP (Motherland Party)	46. Government – Turgut Özal	21 December 1987-9 November 1989	3 years, 6 months, 2 days

	Minister of State Responsible for Women and Family  Minister of Environment		47th Government – Yıldırım Akbulut  48. Government - Mesut Yılmaz  53. Government - Mesut Yılmaz  53. Government - Mesut Yılmaz	9 November 1989-23 June 1991  20 April 1990-21 November 1991  6 March 1996-28 June 1996  30 June 1997-11 January 1999	7 months, 1 day  3 months, 3 weeks and 1 day  1 year, 6 months, 1 week and 5 days
Işıl Saygın	Minister of Environment  Minister of Tourism  Minister of State for Women and Family	ANAP	52. Government – Tansu Çiller  53. Government – Mesut Yılmaz  51st and 52nd Government – Tansu Çiller  55th Government - Mesut Yılmaz	23 February 1996-6 March 1996  6 March 1996 - 28 June 1996  5 October 1995-23 February 1996  30 June 1997-11 January 1999	11 days  3 months, 20 days  4 months, 2 weeks and 4 days  1 year, 6 months, 1 week and 5 days
Tansu Ciller	Minister of State for Economy  Minister of Foreign Affairs	DYP (True Path Party)	49. Government – Süleyman Demirel  54. Government – Necmettin Erbakan	21 November 1991-25 June 1993  28 June 1996-30 June 1997	1 year, 7 months, 4 days  1 year, 2 days
Meral Aksener	Minister of Interior	DYP	54. Government – Necmettin Erbakan	8 November 1996-30 June 1997	7 months, 3 weeks and 1 day
Güler İleri	Minister of State for Women and Family	SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party)	49. Government – Süleyman Demirel	20 November 1991-22 February 1992	3 months, 2 days
Turkan Akyol	Minister of State for Women and Family	SHP	49. Government – Süleyman Demirel  50th Government – Tansu Çiller	4 March 1992-25 June 1993  25 June 1993-27 July 1994	2 years, 4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days

Önay Alpago	Minister of State for Women and Family	SHP	50th Government – Tansu Çiller	27 July 1994 – 27 March 1995	8 months
Aysel Baykal	Minister of State for Women and Family	CHP	50th Government – Tansu Çiller	27 March 1995-5 October 1995	6 months, 1 week and 1 day
Ayfer Yılmaz	Minister of State for EU Affairs  Minister of State for Foreign Trade	DYP	53. Government – Mesut Yılmaz  54. Government – Necmettin Erbakan	6 March 1996 - 28 June 1996  28 June 1996-30 June 1997	1 year, 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days
Aysel Çelikel	Justice Minister	Independent	57. Government – Bülent Ecevit	5 August 2002 - 18 November 2002	3 months, 1 week and 6 days
Melda Bayer	Minister of State for Women and Family	DSP (Democratic Left Party)	57. Government – Bülent Ecevit	10 July 2002-18 November 2002	4 months, 1 week and 1 day
Tayyibe Gülek	Minister of State responsible for Cyprus and for Turks living abroad	DSP	57. Government – Bülent Ecevit	12 July 2002-18 November 2002	4 months, 6 days

Source: (Tekin, 2020)

Table 7: Female Parliamentary Representation during the Period 2002-2024

Year	Number of Female Parliamentarians	Total Number of Members of Parliament	Ratio of Female Parliamentarians to General
2002	24	550	4.4%
2007	50	550	9.1%
2011	79	550	14.3%
June 2015	97	550	17.6%
November 2015	81	550	14.7%
2018	103	600	17.1%
2023	121	600	20.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>3950</b>	<b>14%</b>

Source: (Şahin, 2010)

Table 8: Female Ministers of Türkiye from 2002 to 2024

Minister	Ministry	Party	Government	Task Date	Duration
Güldal Akşit	Minister of Tourism	AKP (Justice and Development Party)	58th Government – Abdullah Gül	18 November 2002 – 29 April 2003	5 months, 1 week and 4 days
	Minister of State for Women and Family			59. Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	29 April 2003-2 June 2005



Nimet Baş	Minister of State for Women and Family  Minister of education	AKP	59th and 60th Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  60. Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	29 April 2003-1 May 2009  1 May 2009-6 June 2011	6 years, 2 days  2 years, 1 month, 5 days
Selma Aliye Kavaf	Minister of State for Women and Family	AKP	60. Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	1 May 2009-6 July 2011	2 years, 2 months, 5 days
Fatma Sahin	Minister of Family and Social Policies	AKP	61st Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	6 July 2011-25 December 2013	2 years, 5 months, 2 weeks and 5 days
Ayşenur İslam	Minister of Family and Social Policies	AKP	61st Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan 62. Government - Ahmet Davutoğlu	25 December 2013-28 August 2015	1 year, 8 months, 3 days
Ayşen Gürcan	Minister of Family and Social Policies	Independent (later AKP)	63. Government - Ahmet Davutoğlu	28 August 2015-24 November 2015	2 months, 3 weeks and 6 days
Beril Dedeoğlu	EU Minister	Independent	63. Government - Ahmet Davutoğlu	22 September 2015-24 November 2015	2 months, 2 days
Sema Ramazanoglu	Minister of Family and Social Policies	AKP	64. Government - Ahmet Davutoğlu	24 November 2015-24 May 2016	6 months
Fatma Güldemet Sari	Minister of Environment and Urbanization	AKP	64. Government - Ahmet Davutoğlu	24 November 2015-24 May 2016	6 months
Fatma Betül Sayan Kaya	Minister of Family and Social Policies	AKP	65th Government - Binali Yıldırım	24 May 2016-10 July 2018	2 years, 1 month, 2 weeks and 2 days
Julide Sarieroğlu	Minister of Labor and Social Security	AKP	65th Government - Binali Yıldırım	19 July 2017-10 July 2018	11 months, 3 weeks
Zehra Zümürüt Selcuk	Minister of Family, Labor and Social Services	Independent (later AKP)	66th Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	10 July 2018-21 April 2021	2 years, 9 months, 1 week and 4 days
Ruhsar Pekcan	Minister of Commerce	Independent (later AKP)	66th Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	10 July 2018-21 April 2021	2 years, 9 months, 1 week and 4 days

Derya Yanık	Minister of Family and Social Services	AKP	66th Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	21 April 2021-4 June 2023	2 years, 1 month, 2 weeks
Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş	Minister of Family and Social Services	Independent (later AKP)	67. Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	June 4, 2023	on duty

Source: (Tekin, 2020)

## AN ETHICAL APPRAISAL OF WOMEN AND BRIDEWEALTH IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

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### Abstract

In a typical African culture, bridewealth is an obligation that must be fulfilled by the betrothed male to the family of the bride. Bridewealth is the compensation to the wife's family for the loss of her domestic and agricultural labour (the daughter), and it formalizes the transfer of reproductive rights to the husband's family (Chae et al., 2021). It appears that there is a reciprocal benefit for the two families, however, it has been found that the payment of bridewealth is a cause of domestic violence and reproductive constraints. In the ensuing discussion, we argue that while in the African culture, the wife has to fulfill various duties to the husband, the adverse effects of bridewealth payment must not be overlooked. This paper makes an ethical appraisal of the bridewealth in Ghana by examining it through the lens of various normative ethical theories. It discusses the moral imperative that deontology poses to the woman. Furthermore, we will assess virtue ethics and the teleological ethical theories within the context of marriage in Ghana. Through our evaluation, we deem Aristotle's virtue ethics to be a feasible means through which the payment of bridewealth will alleviate the pernicious effects it has on women.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The institution, as well as the ceremony of marriage in Africa, is largely characterized by the presentation and exchange of gifts. It is thus important that we highlight and bring to the fore the ethical undertones and implications of such presentations on the married couple, especially the bride and the society as a whole. Scholarly writings abound on the notion of bridewealth in the marriage institution of the Africans. Most of the writers attempt to show the relevance of the practice of payment of bride wealth, others equally argue that the stability of the marital union is hinged on the payment of bridewealth, (Ogbu, 1978, Akurugu, et al., 2022, Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997), whilst other scholars also take the unpopular position of holding that the payment of bride wealth is the cause of most cases of domestic violence and marital instability, (Ngutor, et al., 2013, Kaye et al., 2005). The latter position then propels such scholars to argue for the abolishment of the practice of the payment of bride wealth as part of the requirements for the marriage union. Even though change has been accepted to be a constant thing, and Africa has undergone several layers and levels of change in the past decade, the concept of bride wealth has persisted through the season, even though there is enough evidence on the adoption and adaptation of western practices in the performance of the marriage ceremony. The relationship that exists between the payment of bride wealth in marriage and how power is wielded in such relations or the power dynamics between a man and a woman in marital institutions where bridewealth is presented has also been researched and the results are mostly of a similar view irrespective of the context or cultural setting.

Bridewealth has been described as the presentation of items, money, and some specific requirements that are met by the family of the groom to the family of the bride in a quest to perform marital rites. The term bridewealth is sometimes used interchangeably with bride price and marriage payment. It has been referred to as the presentation

of gifts, goods, and services to the bride's family by the family of the groom (Goody and Tambiah, 1973). Oguli Oumo (2004) also considers it to be a contract in which material items such as cattle, pigs, fowls, and other animals or money are paid or given by the groom to the bride's family in exchange for the bride as a form of compensation for her labor and capacity to produce children. The practice has different names in different countries or regions of Africa. It is referred to as Kem by the Tiv of central Nigeria and Lobola by the Zulus (Ansell, 2001, Ngutor, et al., 2013). Ogbu, (1978: 245) has categorized the payments made in the marriage process by Africans into three sections. He talks of Mutual payments, Uxoral payments, and Viroral payments under which we can classify the payment of bridewealth. Bridewealth has also been considered the prime presentation whereas other presentations before or after the marriage are considered contingent presentations. However, it is only the prime presentation that makes a marriage legal even though the contingent presentation could have been going on long before the contracting of the marriage. The contingent presentation gives the man goodwill with the family of the bride.

For our present purpose and discussion, we agree with Ogbu (1978) in his consideration of marriage as a publicly recognized celebrated union between a man and a woman, a man and one or more women which will be in line with the rules of the given society or the socially accepted norms. Two ideas that stand out from this definition of marriage are that, it is publicly recognized and also based on society's preferred norms or values. As a result, the mechanisms of the marriage institutions vary depending on the society and what is deemed acceptable by such a community. Marriage, also seen by some cultures in Africa as a rite of passage has some significant characteristics which include; marriage formation (marriage ceremony), responsibilities of marriage partners to their spouses, and marital dissolution (divorce).

This paper seeks to add to this existing scope of available knowledge on the issue of women and

bridewealth by situating the discourse in African Philosophy and proceeding from an ethical perspective. We hope to bring to the fore the ethical issues and implications that emanate from the payment of bridewealth. Our ethical appraisal as indicated in the title will largely focus on the woman. We employ various normative ethical theories as well as virtues ethics in the context of marriage and its implications for the woman. Especially, the moral imperative that deontology poses to the woman amidst the unequal power and social relations that serve as the undertones for the African marriage. This topic is important in African Philosophy because as a people, our mindset matters and is responsible for the way we respond to issues and even live our lives. As such, getting to know the philosophical undertones and repercussions our institutional practices such as marriage have on us, is very important. The effects of holding on to a sense of duty (deontologism) even in the face of danger and or when there seems to be suppression and oppression have dire consequences on the agents of the marriage institution. That has called for an ethical appraisal of women in marriage and bridewealth in African philosophy. Bridewealth has been argued by some to be an element of the marriage practice used to solidify relationships between families and also to produce as well as secure the legitimacy of children born out of the union (Akurugu et al.,2021). Bridewealth has been also described to be one of the ways by which a husband demonstrates his gratitude and appreciation for a good wife, appreciation of the worth of the woman, and even helps curb the rate of divorce (Mwamwenda &Monyooe, 1997: 270). Even though we agree with some of these positions and ideas about marriage, when it comes to divorce and its connection with the payment of bridewealth there could be several perspectives to look at it from given that even though it could have been true in the past that the payment of bridewealth prevented divorce (Ogbu,1978), the exorbitant nature of bridewealth in the current dispensation seems to suggest that there is now a connection between marital instability, the

rate of divorce and the high cost of bridewealth (Ngutor, Yandev & Arumun, 2013). There is also the issue of bride wealth constraining the autonomy of women, the disempowerment of women in marriage, and the call for the abolishment of the practice in the marriage contract as espoused by writers such as Dery, (2015) and Akurugu et al., (2021).

However, none of these writers look at the ethical perspectives of the demand placed on the woman in marriage who has the obligation to the husband due to the payment of bridewealth by the husband's family to the bride's family. This paper aims to appraise the moral imperative that is silently placed on the wife in marriage amidst the unequal power relations generated by the payment of bridewealth. This work contributes to the already existing body of knowledge on bridewealth by taking an ethical and philosophical lens to examine the issues. The normative theories of consequentialism and deontologism which both prescribe how we should behave in society will help us in looking at the position of the woman in the marriage. We also assess the employment of virtue ethics and its relevance within the context of the marriage institution. Our write-up is organized into four sections. We begin with an introduction, followed by a literature review on women and bridewealth in marriages in Africa, we then engage the ethical theories of deontologism, consequentialism, and virtue ethics in the assessment of the implications of the payment of bride wealth on women in African Philosophy and finally draw our conclusions with recommendations.

## 2. WOMEN AND BRIDEWEALTH IN GHANA

Christine Horne et al. (2013) in their paper, *The Shadow of Indebtedness: Bridewealth and Norms Constraining Female Reproductive Autonomy*, present an elaborate experiment to substantiate the idea that 'bridewealth payment precipitates reproductive constraints'. The conundrum (the reproductive constraints on the woman) seems to stem from Ghanaian (and most cultures in Africa) cultural norms that grant the man putative

authority over the reproductive and domestic labour of a woman upon bridewealth payment (Horne et al., 2013, p. 504). This invariably gives the man control over the job and sexual activities of the woman. Horne et al. point out that the sexual domination of the man in marriage leads to adverse effects such as sexually transmitted diseases and domestic violence. Preposterously, it was found that the community is less conscientious when domestic violence occurs in a marriage in which the man has paid the bridewealth fully.

Let us discuss the experiment in detail. The vignette experiment was carried out amongst the Ewes in the Volta region in Ghana. The experiment aimed to “assess a theoretical prediction regarding the causal link between bridewealth and normative constraints on women’s reproductive autonomy” (Horne et al., 2013: 507). 72% of women (with an average age of 41 years old) involved in the experiment were married. The authors highlight an appalling incident in which a woman was beaten by her husband, even though he had not completed payment of the marriage settlement, because she was inconspicuously taking contraceptives. To our surprise, women and men did not express profound discontent with the domestic violence inflicted on the woman. Horne et al. suggest this may have been the case because the man had paid a portion of bridewealth. Moreover, it was realized that while full bridewealth payment augmented the normative reproductive constraints on the woman, the meta norms amongst the Ewes were less optimal towards protecting a woman from such occurrences. To juxtapose this with the effect bridewealth payment has on the economic facet of the woman, the authors assert that full bridewealth payment did not have significant repercussions on the income of the woman in marriage. However, we should note that in a case where the woman has financial autonomy, once the man paid bridewealth in full, the woman was likely to be a victim of the same subjugation as a woman who is not financially autonomous.

In summation of the paper, Horne et al. conclude that bridewealth payment (particularly full

payment) essentially causes reproductive constraints on the woman. Kamil Fuseini’s (2013) paper shares many similar adumbrations as Horne et al. After having conducted a vignette experiment, Fuseini confirms that there are reproductive constraints hurled at women upon bridewealth payment. If bridewealth payment leads to these inauspicious effects, can we effectively resolve this problem by obviating the bridewealth payment? Let us focus on Akurugu et al.’s (2021) paper, *Bridewealth, Women’s Subordination and Agency in Marriage: An Ethnographic Critique of Gender Activism in Rural North-Western Ghana*, to explore this possibility.

Akurugu et al. (2021) argue that the plea by gender activists to abrogate bridewealth from various cultures will exacerbate the cynical effects that bridewealth payment has on women. They validate this position by conducting an ethnographic fieldwork study in Northern Ghana from 2013 to 2014. The focus of this research was the Dagaaba ethnicity of North-Western Ghana. Firstly, Akurugu et al. espouse how indispensable the religious beliefs of the Dagaaba people are to the values they have in the society. Members of the society had to ensure that every decision they took did not defy the religious values of the community. Any defiance of the ancestors and the god’s demands would incite horrendous incidents in the community. Because of this, there was trepidation in the community and meticulousness to ensure that the decisions that they took would appease the ancestors and the gods (Akurugu et al., 2021: 3). Consequently, this precipitated the obedience of women toward the patrilineal structure of society and in effect, this led to subjugation in marriage.

The Dangaaba women do not have control over their children and encounter economic constraints. That is, they are not allowed to sell any farm produce without permission from their husbands. Due to the subjugation of women, several gender activist organizations have submitted fiats to eradicate bridewealth payment. The findings of the field research by Akurugu et al. (2021) on the



perception of women (in the Dagaaba community) concerning the removal of bridewealth reveal the following:

1. Heterosexual marriage was the basis of society and thus free marriage was not an option
2. Bridewealth brings honour and legitimacy to women and children
3. An end of bridewealth will precipitate societal disdain as women in free marriage will be seen as worthless to their congenital families. (Akurugu et al., 2021: 6)

We cannot ignore the cultural values of African societies concerning bridewealth payment. As we have observed from the findings by Akurugu et al., bridewealth is essential to the legitimacy of women and children in marriage. Additionally, with the communitarian ideology of the Africans, women would not want to create ubiquitous negative impressions by society on their marriage. Besides, during the interviews that were conducted amongst the Dangaaba people, there was a unanimous decision to sustain the bridewealth.

Akurugu et al. (2021) thus suggest that we can alleviate the negative repercussions of bridewealth by embracing 'nego-feminism'. This form of feminism is conscious of African values and emphasizes negotiation, compromise and collaboration (Nnaemeka, 2004). It will help in returning to the traditional court system and in turn, alleviate the negative ramifications of bridewealth payment while upholding the values and norms of various African societies.

This section has discussed most of the literature that relates to bridewealth payment in Ghana. As we have noticed, the adverse effects of bridewealth payment on women across various Ghanaian cultures are similar. That notwithstanding, the removal of bridewealth payment would exacerbate the effects. We should also be appreciative of the benefits that the bridewealth has for women in marriage. In the next section we will look at the

implications of acting based on duty as a moral standpoint from which the woman could take in the marriage due to the payment of bridewealth.

### 3. THE ETHICAL IMPLICATION OF THE PAYMENT OF BRIDEWEALTH

In this final segment, we look at how the moral theories of deontologism, consequentialism and virtue ethics could be used in the discourse of the payment of bridewealth and its aftermath. The payment of bridewealth has not been considered a morally wrong action. However, it is the implications of the payment especially on the bride in the marriage that is under investigation. If the payment of the bridewealth by the man in a marriage places the woman under some obligation towards the man, then there is the need to look at how such obligations are, and how they came about and whether these obligations promote the success of the union or it is to the detriment of the woman. Acting based on duty means that you are only fulfilling the demands of duty no matter the prevailing circumstances and consequences in a marriage. The idea that one has a duty to perform as a result of the payment of bridewealth somehow undermines the concept of acting out of love and mutual respect in any institution of marriage between a man and a woman. The idea that there is a sense of duty placed on a woman in a marriage due to the payment of bridewealth in a marriage can be used to account for the behavior of some women who only act out of the societal demands placed on them in the marriage. It explains why a woman maltreated in her marital home may choose to stay and still strive to meet these marital obligations since her bridewealth was paid in the contraction of the marriage, in some cases, the inability of the bride's family to return the bridewealth means the bride must continue to stay in the marriage no matter how worse it gets.

Acting based on some principles or rules suggests that one is prevented or limited in performing some actions that a person may deem as good. This is because that which is considered good has already been defined by the rules. A good action is then one

which is a result of performing the duties assigned. From a deontological perspective, some actions such as telling lies, stealing, and breaking a promise, and others are considered bad actions irrespective of the circumstances at play. In this case, moral agents are expected to always act based on the rules or principles of duty underlying the actions of the moral agent. This led McNaughton and Rawlings (1993) to argue that deontology places a demand on the agent not to violate a particular constraint even if, by doing so the agent could avoid a larger number of violations of the same constraints by others. The implication of a deontological perspective in a marriage setting is that a wife is expected to act based on the duty of obedience or submission to the husband due to the payment of bridewealth. However, in situations where this obedience and submission may lead to negative consequences or effects on the woman, she is prevented from acting with consequences in mind since all she is concerned with is the performance of her duty. In the quest to fulfill the duty placed on the woman in marriage, negative consequences could be overlooked which is detrimental to the person as a moral agent. For instance, in situations where the husband holds the view that he owns the woman as a property since he has paid her bridewealth and so does not allow the woman to make autonomous moral decisions regarding her finances, reproductive health, and things like that, such a woman will be suffering under the burden of performing her duty in marriage.

Moreover, an aspect of deontology that could be accepted or applied in situations of this nature is one that is advocated by Immanuel Kant. Kantian deontology which argues in favor of the use of the goodwill in the performance of actions based on duty, could be employed. This is because reasoning based on duty requires the use of the goodwill. The goodwill ensures that rationality is made the central pillar of the moral discourse. Based on rationality, actions that were performed solely due to the interest of the performer and the emotions of the

moral agent were considered actions that lack moral worth (Kant & Schneewind, 2002). However, the argument is that should reasoning be made the major factor in the examination of moral decisions, such actions will go beyond mere duty as a requirement for the performance of an action and use reasoning as a necessary and universal principle needed in the context of women and the payment of bridewealth in a marriage.

Consequentialism as a moral theory could be appealed to in the context of the payment of bridewealth and considerations of the woman as a property of the man who pays the bridewealth and as a result denies the woman any sense of autonomy as a moral agent. The effects of such practices have been identified earlier and they are a product of the moral decisions being made. These consequences are largely disadvantageous to the couple as a team and not only to the individual or woman alone. Another position from which the ethics of the relationship that arises between the husband and wife as a result of the payment of bridewealth which leads to the moral degeneration or degrading of the agency of the wife could be identified in virtue ethics.

Virtue ethics which focuses on the individual character of the moral agent in decision-making instead of rules and consequences, could be the solution to the problem that is being grappled with. The development of the individual character which in this case is the character of the husband and wife is that which looks beyond rules and obligations and makes the marriage function based on mutual respect and love. When a relationship is based on mutual respect and love, there will be no room for power dynamics and a sense of ownership of one partner by the other. Reasoning from the position of Aristotle's concept of virtue, it is evident that the virtuous person is the person who acts in accordance with reason. This is why reason when employed in Kant's rational morality, could be a reason for its consideration as a solution. From Aristotle's virtue ethics, it is evident that traits such as wisdom, empathy, and reason could be

employed instead of strict obedience to rules and obligations. Thus, in our context, a bride who embraces the tenets of virtue ethics instead of the pursuit of deontologism which makes her act simply because it is her duty to perform a particular action even if such an action is leading to dire and irreversible consequences, will be open to know when to stop enduring abuse or violence of any form in the name of performing one's duty. Virtue ethics will help to develop character and promote happiness. This is because, just as Aristotle observed, the concept of virtue ethics makes adherence to rules and obligations redundant (Brown, 2009). These ideas make virtue ethics more attractive as compared to the other moral theories. Virtue ethics therefore talks about the very lives of humans and also goes beyond the stage of simply telling that which is right from wrong, and helps in promoting human flourishing. The focus will no longer be on the duty one owes to another since bridewealth has been paid but will be on the use of rationality, the cultivation of empathy, and the application of wisdom in the marriage. Thus, it is not an argument about the need to abolish the payment of bridewealth or to continue its payment, but rather it is about the ethical implications it has on the woman in the marriage. As we have discussed, the practice of virtue ethics will promote more positive implications instead of acting solely based on duty.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This discussion has appraised bridewealth in Ghana, through the lens of normative ethical theories. We have found that deontology and various teleological ethical theories fall short in providing narratives to alleviate the negative repercussions that women face upon bridewealth payment in Africa. Deontology, for example, could

perpetuate the problems associated with bridewealth payment because of its emphasis on duty, rules and principles and its neglect of the consequences of certain decisions. In situations where this obedience and submission may lead to negative consequences for the woman, she is prevented from acting with consequences in mind since all she is concerned with is the performance of her duty. While consequentialism seems to be a more convincing approach, we have argued that its focus on the result of moral decisions overlooks the importance of cultivating virtues for the partners. What happens if, in an attempt to avoid certain effects of bridewealth payment, one partner takes a decision (with the end in sight) that is not mutually beneficial to the other partner?

We, therefore, propose virtue ethics as a viable approach to alleviating the negative repercussions of bridewealth payment. Virtue ethics emphasizes the need to cultivate virtues such as wisdom, empathy mutual respect, friendliness, etc for the spouses. These virtues ensure that each partner does not commit reprehensible actions towards the other. As such, men who have cultivated these virtues are less likely to make certain decisions after bridewealth payment that can affect the wife negatively. Moreover, through the inculcation of virtues for the individual partners, certain traditional norms that exacerbate domestic violence and constrain the liberty of women in marriage will be mitigated. Virtue ethics is more satisfactory than deontology and consequentialism in promoting positive implications of bridewealth payment.

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## OPINIONS OF IRANIAN STUDENTS AT ERCIYES UNIVERSITY REGARDING GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN IRAN

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### Abstract

This study examines the perspectives and experiences of Iranian students at Erciyes University regarding gender discrimination in Iran. Highlighting that equality between men and women is essential for human rights and social justice, the research addresses the persistent patriarchal norms and gender discrimination prevalent in many cultures, particularly in South and East Asia. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, women's rights in Iran have faced increased scrutiny, with systemic inequalities remaining widespread. Using qualitative research methods, including group interviews with 11 Iranian students, the study reveals a high level of awareness among participants regarding gender discrimination. They identified discrimination in various contexts such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, custody, and travel, alongside recognizing women's low social status and restricted access to equal opportunities in the workplace. The findings emphasize the urgent need for the Iranian government to promote women's rights and gender equality.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between men and women has always been male-dominated throughout history, across all cultures, and even from the earliest periods of history. Gender-based disability and discrimination are widespread across the world, especially in South and East Asia (Bustan, 2006: 5-31).

Discussions on redefining the status of women in society in Iran began to gain prominence after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Gender discrimination in Iran is a condition where women do not have equal rights with men or where male superiority is accepted in society (Ravdarad & Nayebi, 2007). As the influence and visibility of women in decision-making mechanisms within society increase, gender equality in the country's political public life will become more pronounced, and this prominence will enhance the government's sensitivity in protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of women. In Iran, women's rights are governed by a legal system based on Islamic Law (Arıkan, 2022), and in some cases, women's rights are distinct from those of men. For example, in Iran, the testimony of women is not equal to that of men, and two women are required to testify to be accepted as a witness in court (Iranian Islamic Penal Code, 2013).

The preamble of the Iranian Constitution dedicates a separate section to women, describing them as the cornerstone of the family, 'raising individuals in accordance with the ideology/regime,' 'the helper of men,' and, in Article 21, as those whose 'personality must develop' (Okyar, 2017: 121- 133). Women were foundational elements of the Iranian regime during the early years of the revolution. They played a significant and critical role, particularly during the Iran-Iraq War, by encouraging their husbands, brothers, and sons. According to the 1906 Constitution, all Iranians are equal before the law. However, despite this recognized equality, women were not granted the right to vote or be elected. This right was given to women starting on January 26, 1963. Beyond the right to vote, women are treated

as second-class citizens in all legal regulations, in both public and private spheres (Okyar, 2017). Additionally, in Iran, even when women perform the same job as men, they receive lower wages (Gugerdchiyan et al., 2014).

According to Article 1133 of Iran's Civil Code, men can apply for divorce at any time, while women can only apply for divorce in "extraordinary circumstances". All this information indicates the creation of two types of citizens in Iran. On one side, there are first-class male citizens who enjoy the benefits of Sharia rules, and on the other side, there are second-class female citizens who bear the burden of these rules and continue to do so (Civil Code of Iran, 1928). Gender equality is not only a human rights issue and a condition of social justice but also a fundamental prerequisite for development and peace. A transformed partnership based on gender equality is essential for sustainable, people-centered development. A continuous and long-term commitment is crucial for women and men to work together and face the challenges of the twenty-first century for themselves, their children, and society.

Investigating the perspectives of Iranian students at Erciyes University on this issue can provide a different perspective on gender discrimination in Iran. This research can offer a broader understanding of the conditions of women living in Iran and help people living in Turkey gain more insight into the viewpoints of those living in Iran. Additionally, by addressing the experiences of Iranian students in Turkey, this research can foster understanding and interaction between cultures.

### 1.1. Research Objective and Questions

This research aims to understand the perspectives of Iranian students regarding gender discrimination in Iran. The equality of rights between men and women in Iran is a contentious issue, and this study seeks to understand the views and experiences of women concerning gender equality. The aim of the research is to better understand the thoughts and experiences of Iranian



students regarding gender discrimination and to present findings that can draw the attention of policymakers and society to this issue. Therefore, the results of the research can help draw attention to women's rights and gender equality among policymakers and the broader community.

In line with this aim, the research focus and sub-questions are as follows:

### 1.2. Research Focus Question:

How are the awareness levels and attitudes of Iranian students studying at Erciyes University shaped regarding gender discrimination in Iran?

### 1.3. Sub-Research Questions:

What are the awareness levels of Iranian students at Erciyes University about gender discrimination in Iran?

In which areas do women in Iran experience gender discrimination?

In what areas do the legal regulations in Iran support or encourage social discrimination?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the study "Gender Discrimination" by Kellison (2022), gender discrimination is widely practiced, particularly against women or individuals who do not conform to strict social norms of masculinity and femininity. This article aims to examine the different strategies used by religious ethicists in their analyses of gender discrimination, especially within the context of Muslim and Christian traditions in the West.

According to the study "Gender Discrimination Policy" by Bobbitt-Zeher (2020), this section examines the use of policy as both a weapon against and a tool for sustaining gender inequality. It first addresses the legal conceptualization of discrimination policy, including issues of intent and impact. Then, it reviews the international, constitutional, and legal levels of anti-discrimination policies. Finally, it examines key policy issues that shed light on how discrimination persists, including the absence of anti-

discrimination policies, policies with discriminatory effects, and the implementation, enforcement, and effectiveness of discriminatory policies. The discussion is divided into two parts: the first focuses on workplace discrimination, and the second turns to other areas. The study concludes with fundamental guidelines for anti-discrimination policies (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2020).

The study "Negotiating Challenges and Aspirations in a Gendered Work Environment: The Voices of Women Working in the Iranian Broadcasting Media" by Ghasemi (2020) presents findings from in-depth interviews with 30 Muslim women working at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). This research aims to shed light on how women negotiate the challenges and aspirations they face in a male-dominated work environment. According to the study's results, two primary challenges were identified: (a) the gendered stratification of job positions and opportunities, and (b) the complexity of adhering to physical proximity and religious behavioral norms required by the job (Ghasemi, 2020).

In a study conducted by Bidarbakhtniya and Jerjerzade (2019), factors influencing gender-based wage gap between male and female workers in Iran are examined. The results of the research indicate that increasing the level of education among women reduces gender inequality in wages in the country. However, even for equal work and equal education, there still exists a significant wage gap between genders. This discrimination is observed to be more prevalent in the private sector compared to the public sector.

In a study conducted by Rafeatjah and Kheyrikhah (2013), the views of managers were surveyed to examine the obstacles faced by women in the workplace in Iran. It is emphasized that in Iranian traditional culture, women's economic activity is considered unnecessary because men are generally regarded as the breadwinners of the family. However, women can utilize their skills in the social sphere and participate in employment. The participation of all individuals is necessary for

sustainable development. In this study, barriers and problems hindering women's employment were examined by utilizing the experiences and expertise of senior managers. Additionally, solutions and suitable conditions for women's employment were put forward. The results indicate that all managers believe in the economic, social, and psychological importance of women's employment. While women emphasize economic necessity, men emphasize social necessity. The majority of managers share the view that women's employment is beneficial for both families and society. Therefore, it was concluded that structural and cultural barriers need to be taken seriously for women to be employed in society and appropriate conditions to be created.

Archer (1984) discusses in the study "Gender Roles as Developmental Pathways" that gender roles are discussed as developmental pathways in four descriptive dimensions. The first three dimensions - rigidity, complexity, and consistency - are associated with processes operating at specific developmental stages. The fourth dimension, continuity, pertains to the overall developmental trajectory. Limited evidence suggests the following: There is a more rigid male role in childhood, although evidence regarding adults is less clear. There is some evidence that the male role in childhood is more complex and inconsistent. Developmentally, the female role becomes less flexible during adolescence, while the male role becomes more flexible and diverse. The role of women throughout adulthood, especially in relation to events like the birth of the first child, shows more variability. These findings are discussed in relation to broader societal and historical implications, as well as their connection to challenges associated with gender roles.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, a focus group interview was conducted with 11 participants who are Iranian students studying at Erciyes University. The participants were selected from different cities and socio-economic groups, with the majority being between the ages of 20-30. Additionally, students

from various academic departments were included in the study.

During the interview, the participants' behaviors and reactions were carefully observed, and audio recordings were made. These recordings were divided into important sections based on the research questions, and the participants' perspectives were organized into two separate sections along with key terms. Some participants' personal experiences were also recorded. The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods, specifically coding and systematic interpretation analysis. Researchers identified main themes and sub-themes by considering the key terms, topics, and other significant elements that emerged during the coding process. This systematic interpretation analysis process will help to achieve a deeper understanding of the data and fulfill the research objectives. The aim of this research is to understand the perspectives of Iranian students regarding gender discrimination in Iran. For this purpose, a qualitative research method has been used. The qualitative research method is employed to understand people's experiences, thoughts, and feelings, often requiring an in-depth study. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), a source providing information on qualitative research methods, qualitative research focuses on qualitative data to understand social phenomena, events, or behaviors.

As a data collection method, a focus group interview was used. A focus group interview is a research method that involves face-to-face interaction with a group of people to gather in-depth information on a specific topic. This method allows participants to express their thoughts and experiences interactively. In the selection of participants, it is important that Iranian students have experience with gender discrimination. Therefore, the majority of participants should be Iranian and female. Additionally, it is crucial that participants come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and vary in age range.

In this research, a qualitative research method was used. The qualitative research method is employed to understand people's experiences, thoughts, and feelings, often necessitating an in-depth study. The research field is Erciyes University. Iran is a country where intense debates on gender equality occur, and thus, this field was chosen to understand the perspectives of Iranian students regarding gender discrimination.

For the selection of participants, one of the researchers, being Iranian, communicated with students and selected participants using the snowball sampling technique. It was determined that most participants should be Iranian and that both men and women, with diverse socio-economic backgrounds and age ranges, should be included. Most participants are studying in the medical faculty and are self-financed. The sample size was determined to be sufficient to allow for a productive discussion in a focus group interview with 11 participants. In this context, 4 male and 7 female students participated in the focus group discussion.

### 2.1. Data Generation Techniques

As a data generation method, the researchers used a focus group interview to understand the perspectives of Iranian students regarding gender discrimination. A focus group interview is a research method involving face-to-face interaction with a group of people and is used to gather in-depth information on a specific topic. This method allows participants to express their thoughts and experiences interactively.

### 2.2. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The transcripts were analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods such as coding and systematic interpretation analysis.

Coding is one of the qualitative data analysis methods and allows researchers to break the data into meaningful parts. During this process, the

researcher identifies specific keywords and topics, grouping the data in a meaningful way. This coding process helps in better understanding and analyzing the data. A systematic review is a method used to collect, summarize, and synthesize all existing evidence in a study. Systematic reviews enable researchers to use a reliable and objective approach to answer a specific research question.

The researcher identified main themes and sub-themes during the coding process by considering the key terms, topics, and other significant elements that emerged from the data. This systematic interpretation analysis process will help achieve a deeper understanding of the data and fulfill the research objectives. In conclusion, the data obtained using qualitative data analysis methods will be analyzed through coding and systematic interpretation analysis. These analysis methods will aid in better understanding the data and achieving the research objectives.

## 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1. Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination is the unfair treatment or inequality that individuals face due to their gender. This type of discrimination can be observed in various areas of individuals' social, economic, and political lives and is considered a serious issue in many societies (Kellison, 2022). Gender discrimination has been deeply rooted in many cultures throughout history and has been observed in numerous societies where women hold a lower status compared to men. This discrimination can involve restrictions or disadvantages for women in areas such as education, employment, politics, property rights, and family relationships.

Gender discrimination has been the subject of numerous research and academic studies. For instance, Simone de Beauvoir, known for her book "The Second Sex," examined gender discrimination and provided a significant theoretical framework regarding women's social gender roles and inequalities. This work laid the foundations of the feminist movement and played a crucial role in the

struggle for gender equality (Beauvoir, 1949). Another important reference is the book "Gender Trouble" by Judith Butler. In this work, Butler argues that gender is a social construct and that gender roles are not inherent but socially constructed. According to Butler, the norms and expectations in this construction process form the basis of gender discrimination (Butler, 1990).

In the fight against gender discrimination, there exist a series of international agreements and documents. One of these is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which aims to establish international standards for granting women equal rights and eliminating gender discrimination (CEDAW, 1979). Although progress has been made in the fight against gender discrimination, it is important to note that there is still much work to be done in this area. Gender equality is a fundamental issue in terms of justice and human rights, and continuous efforts should be made worldwide to end gender discrimination.

### 3.2. Gender Roles

Gender roles are a culturally and socially constructed reflection of the specific behaviors, expectations, and roles that society attributes to individuals based on their biological sex. These roles are associated with the characteristics, roles, and behavioral patterns that a society assigns to a particular gender. Gender roles encompass how individuals should behave, which roles they should assume, what skills they should possess, and what responsibilities they should bear.

Gender roles are shaped by cultural, social, and historical factors. Various institutions such as society's beliefs, values, norms, education system, media, and family can influence individuals in learning their gender roles. For example, in many societies, men are expected to be strong, active, competitive, and to assume leadership roles, whereas women are often associated with emotional, caregiving, and domestic roles. These gender roles can manifest in various aspects of

individuals' lives. For instance, in the workplace, women are often underrepresented compared to men and hold fewer leadership positions. Additionally, the expectation for men to suppress their emotional expressions due to gender roles can lead to emotional difficulties.

Research and studies on gender roles have helped us understand how these roles are constructed and their impact. For example, West and Zimmerman, known for the term "Doing Gender," argued that gender is a performance and that individuals display this performance in their interactions. Their work emphasizes that gender is a social construct and that individuals perpetuate this construct by repeatedly engaging in specific behaviors (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Another important reference is Judith Butler's book "Gender Trouble." Butler argues that gender is not natural but socially constructed and suggests that gender roles should be questioned. According to her, it is important for individuals to freely choose their own gender identities and expressions instead of conforming to society's gender norms (Butler, 1990).

Research on gender roles has highlighted the complexity and multifaceted nature of this topic. To gain more insight into this area, it is recommended to consult academic studies from disciplines such as sociology, gender studies, psychology, and feminist theory.

## 4. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Awareness of Gender Discrimination among Participants

In this focus group discussion, participants unanimously agreed that Iranian culture and religious beliefs impose oppression on women. They perceived that laws are used as a tool to restrict women's freedoms. Participants believed that certain traditional practices, such as women covering themselves, undermine women's self-confidence and make communication more difficult.

Additionally, participants expressed feeling that men have certain rights while women face

restrictions in accessing these rights. Particularly, some participants mentioned that families demand high dowries for their daughters' marriages, which they believe limits women's freedoms. Participants also stated that women do not receive equal treatment as men in their professions and education. They pointed out that women are often pushed towards traditionally female-associated jobs such as handicrafts or makeup, while men are encouraged to pursue more "serious" occupations. As a result, participants indicated awareness of gender discrimination in Iran and expressed experiencing this discrimination within their families and society. They agreed that women should have equal rights but acknowledged that more effort is needed to achieve this goal.

#### **4.2. Gender Discrimination in the Iranian Education System**

In this focus group discussion, participants shared their experiences and views on gender discrimination in the education system in Iran. Male participants mentioned that in high school biology classes, there are separate sections for female and male anatomy, highlighting the continuation of societal pressures on women due to certain religious beliefs. They also expressed beliefs that those who do not pray or wear the headscarf should be punished. Some participants voiced opinions about certain departments being exclusively for either boys or girls, and they also mentioned restrictions such as girls not being able to become judges.

Female participants criticized the segregation of schools and expressed their belief that better communication could be achieved when people are together in society. They believed that the idea of discrimination is taught from elementary school onwards. They mentioned that in some regions, girls do not attend school and traveling to other countries is impossible for them. It was noted that in new textbooks, there are topics specifically for girls, but these mostly relate to home education and encouraging girls for marriage. Participants mentioned that religious books are taught in

schools, but they found the content to be toxic, containing messages that women should always submit to men. They also noted that in some universities, women are required to wear long hijabs, some departments have a low intake of female students, and there are separate dining halls for men and women.

In conclusion, participants provided several examples of gender discrimination in the education system in Iran. They highlighted different practices between men and women, limitations for women in certain professions, and the pressure exerted on women by religious beliefs. These views indicate the need for further research on gender discrimination in education in Iran.

#### **4.3 Gender Discrimination in Work and Employment in Iran**

There are different opinions regarding gender discrimination in work and employment in Iran. Male participants believe that women accept low-paying jobs and unskilled work instead of seeking positions that match their qualifications. It is also argued that this situation violates men's rights. However, it is noted that employers consider qualifications and productivity in hiring decisions.

The views of female participants indicate that women face numerous challenges and experience gender discrimination in hiring practices in Iran. These difficulties include not being hired for jobs or being dismissed from their positions, as well as being forced to leave work due to pregnancy and breastfeeding reasons. It is also mentioned that employers decide on hiring women based on their own interests. However, it has been noted that some women experience a sense of significant independence and empowerment even in low-paying jobs. The discussion also touched upon the need to consider individual circumstances in the hiring of women and emphasized the importance of treating everyone equally. It was mentioned that women should be encouraged to develop their skills and are capable of working in challenging jobs. However, the belief that women are still barred



from certain jobs due to their gender remains widely accepted.

There are different views on gender discrimination in employment in Iran, highlighting the importance of this issue. The challenges women face in finding employment and their exposure to gender discrimination emerge as significant issues. Therefore, employers should prefer qualified candidates in their hiring decisions and ensure that everyone is hired under equal conditions. Women should be encouraged to develop their skills, recognizing their capacity to work in challenging jobs.

#### 4.4. Age Inequalities and Gender Discrimination in Iran

In Iran, there are legal inequalities and gender discrimination issues as perceived by the participants. Their perspectives indicate a societal order where laws are discriminatory against women and men can exert control over women's lives. Many laws are seen to be biased against women, with men playing a decisive role in women's lives. For instance, it is mentioned that women need permission from men for matters such as marriage or leaving the country. Additionally, it is noted that laws such as the stoning law still exist, causing difficulties for women during divorce processes. While men are obligated to serve in the military, there is no such requirement for women.

Regarding child custody, it is noted that the situation is against women's interests. Inheritance laws also indicate that women do not have equal rights as men. In court, it is stated that the testimony of two women equals that of one man, which illustrates the lower social status of women. Moreover, the fact that a father who kills his child may receive only a few years of imprisonment indicates the inadequacy of the justice system in protecting women's rights. These situations highlight the need for more efforts to protect women's rights and achieve gender equality in Iran. It is important to update legal regulations to protect women from discrimination and to strengthen

women's rights in the social structure. There should be greater representation of women and equal opportunities in areas such as education, employment, and political life. Only through these measures can a more equitable social structure regarding gender equality be established in Iran.

#### 4.5. Participants' Suggestions for Achieving Gender Equality

Participants suggest various recommendations to reduce and cope with gender discrimination. Firstly, it is emphasized that families should empower both girls and boys to defend themselves. Additionally, raising children with self-confidence and belief in their own values is considered crucial. However, attention is drawn to the fact that some families still try to impart outdated beliefs to their children. Another suggestion is that girls should receive self-defense training. Developing self-confidence, enhancing skills, and striving for success are also seen as important steps. Furthermore, it is emphasized that the change in attitudes should start within families, and children need to be closely monitored.

Taking a stand against discrimination and advocating for our rights are crucial steps. It is highlighted that we need to teach these behaviors to the younger generations as well. It is emphasized that everyone can contribute something and each step can make a difference in the situation. These suggestions represent a few examples of individual and societal actions that can be taken to combat gender discrimination. However, achieving gender equality requires primarily changing legal regulations. In the process of societal change, raising children, family attitudes, the education system, media, and other factors are all crucial. Implementing these recommendations could be a significant step in combating gender discrimination.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that Iranian students studying at Erciyes University have a high level of awareness regarding gender discrimination. It is known that



women in Iran face discrimination in various aspects such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, custody, and travel. Furthermore, there is high awareness that women have lower social status and lack equal opportunities in the workplace compared to men. Women in Iran are engaged in various social movements to combat gender discrimination and inequality. These movements include organizing women's rights advocates, conducting campaigns on social media platforms, and advocating for increased opportunities in education and employment for women.

The legal regulations in Iran contribute to women facing gender discrimination. For instance, there are laws requiring women to obtain permission from men in matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, custody, and travel. Additionally, there are practices that indicate women have lower social status. These circumstances underscore the need to amend legal regulations in Iran to achieve gender equality. As a result, it is evident that women in Iran face gender discrimination, and there is a high level of awareness for combating it. Addressing the social, economic, and legal inequalities faced by women requires not only societal movements but also changes in legal regulations. The Iranian government should exert more effort to protect women's rights and promote gender equality. Furthermore, educational institutions can play a role in increasing awareness and addressing gender discrimination.

Key findings from the focus group discussions include:

**Awareness of gender discrimination:** Participants exhibited a heightened awareness of the pervasive nature of gender discrimination in Iran, acknowledging its detrimental effects on various aspects of women's lives.

**Discrimination in education:** Participants identified gender-based segregation within educational institutions, limited access to certain

academic programs, and discriminatory treatment within the classroom environment.

**Discrimination in employment:** Participants discussed the challenges faced by women in securing employment, discrimination in hiring practices, and unequal treatment within the workplace.

**Legal inequalities:** Participants highlighted discriminatory laws that restrict women's rights, such as those related to marriage, inheritance, and child custody.

**Societal biases:** Participants identified harmful gender stereotypes and cultural norms that perpetuate discrimination against women.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the urgent need to address gender discrimination in Iran. By raising awareness, challenging harmful stereotypes, and advocating for legal reforms, it is possible to create a more just and equitable society for all.

To achieve gender equality in Iran, several strategies must be implemented. First, education and awareness campaigns can help to challenge harmful stereotypes and foster a more inclusive society. Second, updating and reforming discriminatory laws is essential to ensure that women have equal rights and protections under the law. Third, supporting programs that empower women and girls can help them to overcome barriers and achieve their full potential. Fourth, promoting gender equality within institutions, such as schools, workplaces, and government agencies, is crucial for creating a more equitable environment. Finally, encouraging community-based initiatives and partnerships can help to address gender discrimination at the local level. By implementing these strategies, Iran can make significant progress towards achieving gender equality and creating a more just and equitable society for all its citizens.

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## TÜRKİYE'DE KIZ ÇOCUKLARININ K12 DÜZEYİNDE EĞİTİME ERİŞİMLERİNİN BÖLGE BİRİMLERİNE GÖRE İSTATİSTİKSEL OLARAK İNCELENMESİ

*Statistical Analysis of Access to K-12 Education for Girls in Turkey by Regional Units*

Berna ERDOĞAN YOLDAŞ<sup>1</sup> 

### Özet

Eğitimde fırsat eşitliği kavramı, bireylerin eğitim olanaklarına erişiminde ve bu olanaklardan yararlanmalarında yaşanan eşitsizlikleri ifade etmektedir. Eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanması bireysel gelişimin yanı sıra toplumsal gelişim adına da büyük önem taşımaktadır. Eğitime erişimde en önemli sorunlardan birisi fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanamamasıdır. Bireyin cinsiyeti, sosyo-ekonomik, politik, kültürel farklılık ve coğrafi etkenler gibi unsurlar eğitime erişimde farklılıklara neden olmaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışmada, bölgesel gelişimin kız çocukların eğitime erişimindeki etkisinin ortaya konulması amacıyla 2. Düzey bölge birimleri ele alınmaktadır. Bu çalışma, bölgesel farklılık ve cinsiyet değişkeni ele alınarak Türkiye'de kız çocuklarının erkek çocuklarına oranla eğitime erişimini ve kız çocuklarının eğitime erişimindeki bölgesel farklılıkları belirlemeyi amaçlar. Ayrıca, tarihsel süreç içerisinde kız çocuklarının farklı kademelerde eğitime erişimindeki oranların karşılaştırılması ve analizi üzerinde durulur. Araştırma, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden doküman incelemesi tekniği kullanılarak tasarlanmaktadır. Doküman incelemesi yoluyla kız çocuklarının eğitime erişiminin bölgesel olarak detaylı bir analizine başvurulur. Çalışmanın amacına uygun veri kaynağı olarak, 2006-2023 yılları arasındaki Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın resmi istatistikleri kullanılarak verilere detaylı bir şekilde yer verilir. Toplanan veriler, doküman incelemesi yöntemiyle analiz edilerek Türkiye'de kız çocuklarının eğitime erişimindeki artışın derecesi, erkek çocuklarına oranla eğitime erişimdeki bölgesel farklılıklar ve Türkiye'deki eğitim politikalarındaki değişimlerin sonuçları ele alınmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Düzey 2 bölgesindeki kız çocukların eğitime erişimlerin düşük olduğu coğrafyalarda kız çocuklarının eğitime erişimine yönelik farkındalığı artırmayı ve politika yapıcılarına rehberlik sunması nedeniyle önemli gelişim sağlamaktadır.

### Türkçe Araştırma Makalesi

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eğitim, fırsat eşitsizliği, okullaşma oranları.

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**Abstract**

The concept of equality of opportunity in education refers to the inequalities faced by individuals in accessing and benefiting from educational opportunities. Ensuring equality of opportunity in education is of great importance for both individual development and societal progress. One of the primary issues in accessing education is the inability to provide equal opportunities. Factors such as an individual's gender, socio-economic status, political and cultural differences, and geographical influences lead to disparities in educational access. In this context, the study aims to examine the impact of regional development on girls' access to education by focusing on Level 2 regional units. This research aims to identify the access of girls to education in Turkey compared to boys, considering regional differences and gender variables. Additionally, it emphasizes the comparison and analysis of the rates of girls' access to education at different educational levels throughout the historical process. The study is designed using the document analysis technique, a qualitative research method. Through document analysis, a detailed regional examination of girls' access to education is conducted. As a suitable data source for the study's objectives, official statistics from the Ministry of National Education covering the years 2006 to 2023 are utilized to provide detailed insights. The collected data are analyzed using the document analysis method, addressing the degree of increase in girls' access to education in Turkey, regional disparities in access compared to boys, and the implications of changes in educational policies in Turkey. This study significantly contributes to raising awareness about girls' access to education in regions where it is low, and it serves as a guide for policymakers.

**Keywords**

education, opportunity inequality, enrollment rates

## 1. GİRİŞ

Her bireyin en temel haklarından birisi olan eğitim, erişim noktasında tüm bireylere eşit hak yaratması açısından da önem kazanmaktadır. Eğitim hakkı, bireyin edinmiş olduğu bilgi ve becerinin yanında meslek edinme, yaşam şeklini geliştirme, bilinçli birey haline gelme gibi çeşitli etkenleri de beraberinde getirmektedir. Günümüzde eğitime erişimde önemli gelişmeler söz konusudur. Geçmişten itibaren eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanması adına çeşitli mücadeleler verilmiştir. Fakat mücadeleler tüm bireylerin eşitçe eğitime erişim sağlamasını mümkün kılmamaktadır. Bu noktada eğitime erişim hakkı bireylere sağlanma görevini teşkil eden sosyal devlet anlayışının eşitsizlikteki temel unsurları ele alarak çeşitli politika alanı yaratması eşitsizlikle mücadelede önemlidir.

Ülkelerin gelişme düzeylerinin eğitimin niteliğini ve niceliğini etkilerken aynı şekilde her ülkenin kendi iç mekanizmasındaki yapılar eğitime erişimde farklılaşmalar ortaya koymaktadır. Eğitimin eşit bir şekilde ifadesi olan eğitimde fırsat eşitliği, bireylerin içinde bulunduğu birtakım unsur tarafından belirleyici etken olmaktadır. Bireyin içerisinde bulunduğu toplumun ekonomik: sosyo-kültürel, bölgesel ve politik yapısı gibi değişkenler fırsat eşitliğinin önündeki en büyük engeller olmaktadır.

Bireylerin cinsiyetinden dolayı ayrımcı bakış açısına maruz kalması sonucu eğitime erişimde fırsat eşitsizliğine maruz kaldığı görülmektedir. Cinsiyet değişkeni bağlamında kız çocukların erkek çocuklarına oranla eşitsizlikle karşı karşıya kalma oranı çok daha fazladır. Toplumda hakim gücü barındıran ataerkil yapı eğitime erişimdeki eşitsizliği pekiştiren temel güç olmaktadır. Ataerkil yapının hakim olduğu bakış açısıyla kız çocukların eğitim almasından ziyade ev içi görevlerde sorumluluk almasına dayalı düşünce yapısı günümüzde zayıfladığı görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla kız çocuklarının eğitime erişiminde artışın temelinde bilinç artışı ve geliştirilen politikalar yer almaktadır. Eğitime erişimde önemli adımlar atılması gereken bir diğer değişken ise bölgesel gelişmişliğin eğitime erişim üzerindeki engelleyici gücüyle mücadeledir. Gelişmiş bölgeler olarak

tanımlanan bazı bölgelerde kız çocukların eğitime erişimi daha yüksek iken gelişmemiş bölgeler olarak ifade edilen bölgelerde kız çocukların eğitime erişimi diğer bölgelere göre çok daha düşük olduğu bilinmektedir. Bu bağlamda çalışmada ekonomik: sosyo-kültürel, politik ve nüfus büyüklüğüne göre sınıflandırmayı ifade eden Türkiye İstatistiksel Bölge Birimi kapsamında Düzey 2 bölgeleri ele alınarak eğitime erişimi engelleyici temel etkenlerin ele alınması eşitsizlikle mücadelede etkili olacaktır.

Bu çalışmada ilk olarak, kavramsal bağlamda eğitim hakkı, eğitimde fırsat eşitsizliği, kız çocuklarının eğitime erişim düzeylerini belirleyici etkenler, NUTS ve Düzey 2 kavramları üzerine durulacaktır. Daha sonra çalışmanın amacı, yöntemi ve bulguları paylaşılacaktır. Son olarak ise çalışma sonucunda elde edilen sonuç ve önerilere yer verilecektir.

## 2. ALANYAZIN TARAMASI

### 2.1. Eğitimde Fırsat Eşitliği

Eğitim, doğumla başlayıp ölümle son bulan yaşam boyu öğrenmeyi ifade eden, bireyin içinde bulunduğu topluma uyum sağlamak için gerekli bilgi, beceri ve değerler bütünü kazanılma sürecidir. Eğitim, bireysel gelişim adına mesleki edim için gerekli olan bilgi ve becerinin aktarımının yanında toplumsal gelişim için de hayatın önemli bir parçasıdır (Bilgin& Ertuğ, 2021: 232). Eğitimin temel amaçlarından birisini ifade eden fırsat eşitliği, cinsiyet, din, dil, ırk gözetmeksizin her bireye eşit imkanların sunulmasıdır. Devlet, her bireye eşit olarak eğitim hakkını sunması fırsat eşitliğini oluşturarak toplumsal refahın gelişimini de doğrudan etkilemektedir (Işık, 2021: 500).

“Fırsat eşitliği” her bireye karşı ayırım gözetilmeksizin eşit bir şekilde eğitim, güvenlik: ağılık, iş imkanı gibi toplumsal çaba ve gelişmelerin sunulmasını ifade etmektedir. Fırsat eşitliğinin sunulmasında önemli bir alan olan eğitimde fırsat eşitliği, ayırım gözetilmeksizin toplumun parçasını oluşturan her bireye ilgi ve yetenekleri doğrultusunda eğitim hizmetlerinin eşit biçimde sürdürülmesini ifade etmektedir. Eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin sunulması, eğitim politikaları doğrultusunda temel amaç olsa da fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanması hedeflenen doğrultuda gelişim



gösterdiği sonucunu ortaya koymamaktadır (İnan & Demir, 2018: 339-343).

Eğitime erişimde fırsat eşitliğini sağlayabilme her bireyin en temel hakkıdır. Eğitimin temel işlevleri ile bireylerin eğitime erişimde eşit hakka sahip olması arasında doğrusal yönden ilişki bulunmaktadır. Bireylerin eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinden faydalanabilmesi için eğitim hakkının sunulması öncelikli olarak devletin görevidir. Bireylere eğitim hakkının sunulması bireysel ve toplumsal açıdan gereklidir (Binbir & Arastaman, 2021: 570).

Eğitimde eşit hakların sunulması, yaş ve cinsiyet gözetmeksizin her öğrencinin nitelikli eğitim ve başarı oranına ulaşması için fırsat ve imkan eşitliğinin sağlanmasıdır (Akçay & Güngör, 2023: 177). Eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanması için eğitim kademesine erişim oranı kadar aktarılan eğitimin niteliği de önemlidir (Demirel & Kurt, 2021: 56). Dolayısıyla eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanmasında niceliksel ve niteliksel gelişim birbirini tamamlamalıdır.

“Eğitimde fırsat eşitliği” bireylerin eğitimden yararlanmalarında ve yeteneklerini en üst düzeye çıkarmalarında herkese eşit hakkın sunulması olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Bireylerin kendisini geliştirerek çeşitli yaşam hakkı sağlanması ve toplumsal refah için eğitimde fırsat eşitsizliğinin ortadan kaldırılması temel ihtiyaçtır. Eğitimdeki eşitsizlikle mücadele sağlamak için çeşitli politikalar geliştirilse de eğitim hakkının tüm bireylere sunulmasında fırsat eşitsizlikleri devam etmektedir. Eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanamamasındaki temel etken ise cinsiyete yönelik ayrımcı bakış açısı ve sosyo-ekonomik gelişmeyi kapsayan bölgesel gelişmedeki eşitsiz yapılanmadır (Akçay & Güngör, 2021: 176).

Eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanması doğrultusunda geliştirilen birtakım mevcut yasalar ve politikalar söz konusudur. İnsan hakları evrensel beyannamesinde yer alan 26. madde içeriği “Herkes, eğitim hakkına sahiptir. Eğitim, en azından ilk ve temel öğrenim aşamalarında parasızdır. İlköğretim zorunludur. Teknik ve mesleki eğitim herkese açıktır. Yükseköğretim, yeteneklerine göre herkese tam bir eşitlikle açık olmalıdır.” şeklindedir. Aynı zamanda 1982 Anayasasında yer alan 42. maddede “Kimse, eğitim ve öğrenim hakkından yoksun bırakılamaz.

İlköğretim, kız ve erkek bütün vatandaşlar için zorunludur ve devlet okullarında parasızdır. Devlet, maddî imkânlardan yoksun başarılı öğrencilerin, öğrenimlerini sürdürebilmeleri amacı ile burslar ve başka yollarla gerekli yardımları yapar. Devlet, durumları sebebiyle özel eğitime ihtiyacı olanları topluma yararlı kılacak tedbirleri alır” şeklinde aktarılmıştır (İnan & Demir, 2018: 344). Ülkemizde eğitim hizmetinin ücretsiz olarak sunulması, 4+4+4 eğitim sistemi ile birlikte eğitimin zorunlu hale getirilmesi gibi eğitim politikaları, eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanmasında önemli bir etkidir.

Toplumsal kurumlar, bireylerin temel ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması ve içinde bulunduğu topluma uyum sağlamasına katkıda bulunması açısından önem gösterir. Eğitim kurumu, bireylerin yaşam gereksinimlerini düzenleme ve topluma hazırlama görevini üstlenmektedir. Değişen toplumsal yapı, birtakım gelişme ve çözülmeyi beraberinde getirir. Yenileşme süreci, bireylerin bilgiye ulaşım ve eğitime erişimde etkili olan geleneksel bakış açısının değişimini sağlamasıyla eğitimin çağdaş bir yapı kazanmasına aracılık yapmaktadır. Eğitim kurumu, toplumun temel yapısını oluşturan kültürel öğelerin, genç nesillere aktarılmasını, bireylerin ileri ki yaşamını etkileyecek mesleki ve bilimsel bilgi kazanmasını, mantıksal düşünme becerisi gelişmesini sağlayarak toplumsal değişim ve gelişim oluşturmaktadır. Dolayısıyla eğitim, bireylerin gereksinimlerine karşılık olarak bilgi ve değer aktarımını kuşaktan kuşağa aktarım sağlamakla birlikte değişen toplum yapının ihtiyaçlarına yönelik bireylere fırsat ve imkan eşitliği oluşturabileceği sistem var etmeyi sağlar (Gökçe, 2013: 141-142).

Geleneksel düşüncenin yansıması olarak, geçmiş eğitime bakış açısı içerisinde kız ve erkek çocukların eğitime erişimi ve mevcut imkanlara erişim noktasında eşitsiz yapı oluşturmakta iken günümüz çağdaş toplumda daha hoşgörülü ve adil bakış açısının gelişmesi ile kız çocukların eğitim kurumu içerisinde ilerleme göstermesi sağlanır.

## 2.2. Kız Çocuklarının Eğitime Erişim Düzeyini Belirleyici Etkenler

Kız öğrencilerin, eğitime erişiminde engelleyici çeşitli etkenler bulunmaktadır. Bireylerin içinde bulunduğu ekonomik, toplumsal ve bölgesel unsurlar, eğitime erişimde temel etken olarak

eğitim hakkına erişimi kolaylaştırıcı ve zorlaştırıcı olmaktadır. Aynı zamanda belirtilen etkenler bölgesel gelişmişlik düzeyi sonucunda ortaya konulan Düzey 2 bölgelerinde kız çocukların eğitime erişimindeki farklılıkların nedenini teşkil etmektedir. Bu çerçevede gelişmiş bölge olarak ifade edilen bölgelerde eğitime erişim oranı yüksek iken gelişmekte olan bölge olarak tanımlanan bölgelerde eğitime erişim oranlarının düşük olması, eğitime erişimde etkili faktör olarak değerlendirilen unsurların bölgesel gelişme düzeyine göre farklılık oluşturması ile ilişkilidir.

### 2.2.1. Ailenin Demografik Yapısına Bağlı Etkenler

Bireylerin, ailelerin sahip olduğu maddi imkanlar ve ekonomik yapı öğrencilerin eğitime devamlılığını belirlemekle birlikte eğitimden almış olduğu bilgi ve beceri düzeyini de etkilemektedir (Bilgin & Ertuğ, 2021: 233). Ailelerin ekonomik yapısını da belirleyici faktör olan mesleki seçim ve eğitim düzeyi, kız öğrencilerin eğitime erişimlerinde önemli bir etkidir. Tarıma ve hayvancılığa dayalı insan iş gücüne ihtiyacın yoğun olduğu meslek gruplarında aileler, çocuklarının emek gücü olarak değerlendirmesi sonucunda erken yaşlarda çalışma hayatına dahil etmektedir. Kırsal bölgelerde yaşam süren ailelerin çalışma yapısının yanında dağlık bölgelerinin getirdiği ulaşım sorunuyla birlikte eğitime erişim daha da zor hale gelmesiyle kız çocukların eğitim sürecinden ayrılmasına veya nitelikli düzeyde katılım sağlamasına imkan yaratmamaktadır.

Ailelerin sahip olduğu ekonomik düzey, çocukların beslenme biçiminde: sağlıklı gelişim seyri göstermelerinde ve öğrenme düzeyi üzerinde belirleyici etkidir. Yaşam boyu eğitim sürecinin başlangıcını ifade eden aile içinde başlayan eğitim sürecindeki eşitsiz yapı, bireylerin eğitim-öğretim hayatı boyunca etkili olmaktadır (ERG, 2016: 2 ,3). Dolayısıyla ailelerin demografik yapısı, çocuklar arasında fırsat eşitsizliğinin eğitim-öğretim süreci öncesinde başlamasına neden olmaktadır. Çocukların yaşamış olduğu fırsat eşitsizliği sadece eğitim alanında değil diğer toplumsal alanlarda da eşitsizlik yaratmaktadır.

### 2.2.2. Toplumsal Etmenler

Eğitimde fırsat eşitsizliğinin ortadan kaldırılması için çeşitli mücadele alanları oluşturulmuş olsa da

bireylerin içerisinde bulunduğu toplumsal etmenler ve sınıfsal yapısını oluşturan kültürel öğeler, eğitime erişimde farklılaşmayla birlikte fırsat eşitsizliğinin sürdürülmesinde etken olmaktadır (Çelikkol & Avcı, 2017: 167).

İçinde yaşadığımız toplumsal yapı, bireylerin düşünme ve yaşama şeklini belirlemede önemli bir etkidir. Toplumsal bilincin oluşumuyla birlikte ortaya çıkan toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin sonucunda kız ve erkek çocuklarına bakış açısında ve beraberinde eğitime erişim oranlarının farklılaşmasında etkili olmaktadır. Ataerkil toplum yapısında kız çocukları, erkek çocuklarına oranla ikincil konumda kalmaktadır. Erkek çocuklarının soyun devamlılığını sağladığı, kız çocuklarına yüklenen mahremiyet bakış açısı ve erken yaşta evlendirme düşüncesinin yansımaları olarak toplumsal yapı eğitime erişimde eşitsizlik meydana getirmektedir.

Eğitimde eşitsizlikle mücadele alanını genişletmek için kız çocuklarının, kendilerine model alabilecekleri güçlü, eğitilmiş ve meslek sahibi kadın algısına dair toplumsal bilinç oluşturulması gerekmektedir. Toplumu ilgilendiren tüm mikro ve makro kararlarda kadınların da kendilerini ifade edebilme ve karar verici güç olma fırsatı sunulmalıdır.

### 2.2.3. Cinsiyet Değişkeni Bağlamında Eğitime Erişim

Bireylerin içinde bulunduğu bölgenin cinsiyete yönelik bakış açısı ve ekonomik gelişimi eğitime erişim olanağında temel belirleyici etkidir. Ataerkil toplum yapısının baskın olduğu bölgelerde kız çocukların ikincil planda kalması, ev ve tarımsal iş gücü olarak görülmesi, erken yaşta evlendirilmeleri söz konusu olabilmektedir. Diğer yandan aile içerisinde çok sayıda çocuğa sahip olma ve çevresi tarafından Türkçe konuşulmamasının getirmiş olduğu iletişim kurmadaki zorluklar bazı bölgelerde eğitime erişim oranlarının daha düşük olmasıyla sonuçlanmaktadır. Cinsiyet ve sosyo-ekonomik yapıya bağlı olarak ortaya konulan çeşitli engeller sonucunda bireylerin bölgesel sınıflandırmaya dayalı eğitime erişimde fırsat eşitsizliğiyle karşılaşmasıyla sonuçlanmaktadır (Bilgin & Ertuğ, 2021: 234-235).

Türkiye'nin eğitim sistemindeki eşitsizlikler, bir dizi faktörden etkilenir. Ailenin eğitim düzeyi, aile büyüklüğü: sosyo-ekonomik durum, yaşadığı coğrafi bölge ve kültürel farklılıklar belirleyiciyen bireyin cinsiyeti de eğitimde fırsat eşitliğini belirleyen önemli faktördür. Bu faktörler, eşitlik mücadelesinin "imkan eşitliği" boyutunu da içerebilir; çünkü bazı bireyler, diğerlerine kıyasla daha fazla kaynağa veya destekleyici bir çevreye erişime sahip olabilir (Kurtdaş, 2021: 116). Eğitimde fırsat eşitliği sadece akademik bir konu değildir; aynı zamanda toplumsal bir meseledir. Toplumun bu eşitsizliklerin farkında olması veya olmaması, eşitlik mücadelesinde önemli bir role sahiptir. Örneğin, 2019'da yapılan bir ankete göre, katılımcıların %14,4'ü Türkiye'de eğitimde fırsat eşitliği bulunmadığını düşünürken, %70,1'i bu eşitsizliğin var olduğunu belirtmiştir (Akgül, 2019: 134).

Cinsiyet, eğitimde fırsat eşitliği üzerinde belirleyici bir faktördür. Gürel ve Kartal'ın (2015: 603) yaptığı araştırmaya göre, Türkiye'nin doğu illerinde, özellikle ortaokuldan ortaöğretime geçişte düşüşler yaşanmaktadır. Bu düşüş oranları erkek çocuklarında da görülse de kız çocuklarında daha belirgindir.

#### 2.2.4. Bölge Değişkeni Bağlamında Eğitime Erişim

Türkiye'de eğitim alanında yaşanan en önemli mücadele alanlarından birisini oluşturan eğitime erişimde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanamamasında, cinsiyete dayalı ortaya çıkan eşitsizliğinin yanı sıra bölgesel farklılığın da eğitime erişimde önemli faktör olduğu görülmektedir. Bireylerin içinde bulunduğu bölgenin iletişim ağı, yerleşim ve ulaşım düzeyi gibi birtakım etkenler, eğitime erişim düzeyinde belirleyicidir.

Ilgar'ın (2023), Türkiye'deki okullaşma oranlarının analizine bakıldığında bölgesel farklılıkların eğitime erişimde belirleyici etken olduğu, Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi ve Doğu Anadolu Bölgesi diğer coğrafi bölgelere göre eğitime erişim oranlarına daha az sahip olduğu görülmektedir (s. 22). Gürel ve Kartal (2015: 596), eğitime erişimde bölgesel farklılığın etkisini vurgulayarak Marmara bölgesinin eğitime erişimde öncü olduğunu ifade etmekle birlikte bu noktaya dikkat çekmek için bölgedeki okur-yazar oranı, öğrencilerin ilkokul,

ortaokul ve lise kademesinde okullaşma oranı ve üniversiteyi tamamlama yaş-oranları değişkenlerini ele alarak yapmış olduğu analizinde, Marmara bölgesinin eğitime erişimin diğer bölgeler arasındaki önemli farklılığı ve eğitime erişimi İç Anadolu, Ege, Akdeniz, Karadeniz, Doğu Anadolu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgesi şeklinde bir sıralama izlediğini vurgulamaktadır.

Türkiye'de kız çocuklarının eğitime erişiminde batı ve doğu bölgelerinin oranlarının farklılık gösterdiğini, özellikle doğu bölgelerinde yaşayan kız çocuklarının eğitime erişimde önemli engellerle karşılaştıklarını ortaya koyarak kız çocuklarının eğitime erişiminde bölgesel eşitsizliğinin önemli bir faktör olduğunu göstermektedir (Gürel ve Kartal, 2015: 596). Tezcan (1985), coğrafi bölgelerde eğitime erişimde ortaya çıkan farklılaşmada yerleşme düzenlerinin de belirleyici etken olduğunu, kırsal bölgelerde yaşayan kız çocuklarının eğitime erişimde ciddi sorunlar yaşadığını belirtmektedir. Derslere katılım sağlama durumlarının azlığı, okul ve öğretmen sayısındaki yetersizlik, ailelerin ekonomik düzeylerinin düşüklüğü ve öğrencilerin iş gücü olarak tarım sektörüne katılımını ifade eden ekonomik yetersizlikler ve sosyokültürel normlar tarafından kız çocuklarının eğitime erişimindeki güçlükler eğitime erişimde farklılaşmayı pekiştirerek arttırmaktadır. Dolayısıyla elde edilen bu bulgu kırsal ve kentsel bölgelerde yaşayan kız çocukları arasındaki eğitime erişim farklılıklarını gözler önüne sermektedir (Tezcan, 1985: 110).

Kız çocuklarının eğitime erişimindeki fırsat eşitsizliğinin doğru bir şekilde ele alınabilmesi için Türkiye'deki coğrafi bölgelerin kültürel, bölgesel ve ekonomik yapısının da ele alınması gerektiğini belirtmektedir. Türkiye eğitim niteliğinin yanında eğitime sunulan imkan ve dağıtımında da diğer ülkelerin gerisinde kalmaktadır. Türkiye'de öğrencilerin eğitimde göstermiş olduğu başarı, cinsiyet ve bölgesel olarak farklılık göstermektedir. Eğitim kademesinde artış oldukça kız çocukların eğitime katılımı daha az olmaktadır. Öğretmen başına düşen öğrenci sayısının fazlalığı ve eğitim kademelerinde yükselişte sınavın belirleyici olduğu ülkemizde öğrencilerin okul dışında destek sağlayan kurumlara yöneldiği görülmektedir. Bunun sonucunda ise öğrencilerin eğitime erişimindeki eşitsizliğin devamında ulaşılmış oldukları sosyokültürel ve ekonomik etkenler farklı kademedeki gelişimlerdeki eşitsizliği coğrafi

bölge açısından daha da eşitsiz bir şekilde farklı kılmaktadır. Bu kıyas Türkiye’de kız çocuklarının eğitime erişiminin ve kalitesinin cinsiyet ve bölgesel farklılığa göre değişkenlik gösterdiğini kanıtlamaktadır (Uysal ve Gelbal, 2018: 1197).

Eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanması için, toplumsal bilincin artırılması ve eğitim politikalarının yeniden gözden geçirilmesi gerekmektedir. Bu: sadece eğitim sistemi içinde değil, aynı zamanda toplumun diğer alanlarında da eşitsizlikle mücadele etmeyi gerektirir. Bu şekilde her bireyin potansiyelini en üst düzeyde gerçekleştirebileceği bir ortam sağlanabilir. Sonuç olarak, bölgelerin yerleşme düzeni, ekonomik ve kültürel yapısının bütüncül olarak ele alınması sonucu oluşan bölgesel gelişim eğitime erişimde fırsat eşitliğini belirleyici önemli bir faktördür. Bu açıdan bölgesel değerlendirme İstatistikî Bölge Birimleri bağlamında ele alınmalıdır.

### 2.3.İstatistikî Bölge Birimleri Bağlamında Düzey 2

Ekonomik: sosyo-kültürel ve politik yapı bütünü kapsayan bölgesel gelişmenin oluşturulabilmesi için az gelişmiş bölgelerin desteklenerek bölgeye özgü yerel politikaların geliştirilmesi adına önemli teşviklerin oluşturulması gerekmektedir. Bölgenin temel yapısını oluşturan unsurlar incelenerek olumlu yönlerinin daha ileri taşınmasıyla birlikte olumsuz durumdaki yönleri üzerine geliştirici çözümler ortaya konulmalıdır (Yiğiter, 2019: 2).

AB tarafından geliştirilen *NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics)* olarak ifade edilen İstatistikî Bölge Sistemi’nin oluşturulmasındaki temel etken, AB’de yer alan ülkelerin idari ve istatistiksel olarak bölgelere ayrılması ve bölgelerin gelişim düzeylerinin karşılaştırılması amacıyla verilerin toplanması, karşılaştırılması ve geliştirilmesi amacını taşımaktadır. Türkiye’nin Avrupa Birliğine üye olma süreciyle birlikte bölgesel sınıflandırmada İstatistikî Bölge Birimi Sınıflandırması olarak dahil olmuştur. Türkiye, bölgesel gelişme açısından farklılık yaratan etkenlerin ortadan kaldırılması ve Avrupa Birliği tarafından geliştirilen bölgesel sisteme uyum sağlama adına İstatistikî Bölge Birimleri sınıflandırmasına 2002 tarihinde dahil olmuştur (Kayalık & Kiper, 2015: 45). Üç bölge şeklinde oluşturulan İstatistikî Bölge Birimleri Sınıflandırmasında yer alan Düzey 1 bölgelerinden

ele edilen verilen AB politikalarında yer verilmektedir. Ele alınan çalışmanın temelini oluşturan Düzey 2 bölgelerinde bölgesel olarak ele alınan politikalara yer verilmektedir. Düzey 3 bölgesi 81 ili kapsayan sınıflandırmayı ifade etmektedir (Yiğiter, 2019: 3).

İstatistikî Bölge Birimi Sistemi bağlamında Düzey 2 bölgelerinin ele alınma nedeni bölgelerin özelliklerin ortaya konularak çözüm getirici teşvik politikaların geliştirilmesidir. Bölgelerin eksik yönlerinin iyileştirilmesi ve iyi yönlerinin ise geliştirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda bölgelerin sosyo-ekonomik yapısı incelenerek gelişmişlik düzeyleri çerçevesince uygun politikalar ortaya konulması bölgesel gelişmedeki eşitsizliklerin ortadan kaldırılmasında önemli etkindir (Yiğiter, 2019: 4). Bölgesel gelişmedeki eşitsizliklerin ortadan kaldırılmasıyla birlikte az gelişmiş bölgelerde sosyo-ekonomik açıdan yerel politikalar geliştirilerek kalkınma adına önemli destek çalışmaları oluşturulmalıdır (Kayalık& Kiper, 2015: 46).

Düzey 2 sınıflandırması çerçevesinde ele alınan bölgesel politikalar bölgelerin temel ihtiyaçlarına yönelerek gelişme adına teşvik çalışmalarında bulunmaktadır. Bölgenin istihdam oranlarını arttırılması, ulaşımda erişim sağlama olanağı, maddi imkanların geliştirilmesi: ağılık faaliyetlerinden yararlanma, çevre ve toplum bilincini arttırmaya yönelik uygulamalar, eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin yaratılması ve eğitimde yaşam boyu öğrenme adına politikalar geliştirilmesi ve bölgelerin çeşitli ihtiyaçlarına yönelik ortaya konulan politikaların geliştirilmesi için Düzey 2 bölgeleri incelenmesidir (Yiğiter, 2019: 4).

Bölgenin sosyo-ekonomik gelişmişlik düzeyi eğitime erişimde fırsat eşitsizliğini oluşturan temel etkindir. Gelişmiş bölgelerde kız öğrenciler daha fazla eğitime erişim sağlamakta iken az gelişmiş bölgelerde kız öğrenciler daha az eğitime erişim sağlamaktadır. Kız öğrencilerin eğitime erişiminde fırsat eşitliğine ulaşmalarındaki temel engellerin ortadan kaldırılması için mücadele alanı oluşturmaktadır.

## 3. YÖNTEM

### 3.1. Çalışmanın Amacı



Bu çalışmada, bölgesel farklılık ve cinsiyet değişkeni ele alınarak Türkiye’de kız çocuklarının erkek çocuklarına oranla eğitime erişimini ve kız çocuklarının eğitime erişimindeki bölgesel farklılıkları belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, tarihsel süreç içerisinde kız çocuklarının farklı kademelerde eğitime erişimindeki oranların karşılaştırılması ve analizi üzerinde durulmaktadır. Bölgesel gelişimin kız çocukların eğitime erişimindeki etkisinin ortaya konulması amacıyla 2. Düzey bölge birimleri ele alınmaktadır.

### 3.2. Araştırma Modeli

Bu çalışma nitel araştırma yöntemi çerçevesinde doküman incelemesi tekniği kullanılarak tasarlanmaktadır. Doküman incelemesi “Doküman analizi, araştırma verilerinin birincil kaynağı olarak çeşitli dokümanların toplanması, gözden geçirilmesi: sorgulanması ve analizi olarak tanımlanabilen bilimsel bir araştırma yöntemidir. Bu yöntem, alan yazında çoğunlukla diğer araştırma yöntemlerinin tamamlayıcısı olarak hizmet ederken, tek başına bir yöntem olarak da kullanılmaktadır” (Sak vd., 2021: 228). Bu çalışmada doküman incelemesinin kullanılmasının nedeni, eğitimdeki fırsat eşitsizliğinin bölgesel ve cinsiyet değişkenine göre yıllar içerisindeki farklılaşma oranlarının derinlemesine ele alınmasıdır. Çalışmasının konusuna ve alanına uygun görüldüğü için doküman incelemesi tercih edilecektir.

### 3.3. Veri Toplama Aracı

Bu çalışmada tespit edilmeye çalışılan K12 düzeyinde eğitim gören kız çocuklarının eğitime erişimindeki fırsat eşitliğinin önündeki cinsiyet ve bölgesel farklılığın detaylı ele alınması için doküman/kayıt incelemesi veri toplama aracı kullanılmaktadır.

### 3.4. Verilerin Toplanması ve Analizi

Çalışmada öncelikli olarak 2006-2023 eğitim yılları arasında kız ve erkek çocuklarının okul öncesi, ilköğretim ve ortaöğretim eğitim kademesine erişim oranları karşılaştırılmalı olarak ele alınmaktadır. İkinci aşama olarak ise, kız öğrencilerin Düzey 2 bölgelerinde eğitime erişim oranlarının incelenmesi amacıyla 2007-2023 eğitim yılları arasındaki okul öncesi, ilköğretim ve

ortaöğretim kademelerine erişim oranları karşılaştırılmalı olarak ele alınmaktadır.

MEB Resmi İstatistiği ele alınarak çalışmanın konusu ve alanına uygun olarak cinsiyet ve bölge bağlamındaki veriler incelenerek elde edilen sonuçlar, Excel’de tablo haline getirilmesi sonucunda elde edilen grafikler aracılığıyla ortaya konulmaktadır.

### 3.5. Çalışmanın Grubu

Çalışma grubunu, 2006-2023 yılları arasında MEB Resmi İstatistiğindeki K12 düzeyinde eğitim gören kız ve erkek öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada MEB Resmi İstatistiğinin seçilme nedeni, çalışmanın amacına uygun olarak geçmiş yıllardaki eğitime erişim oranlarının ulaşılabilir olmasıdır.

Çalışmanın sınırlılığını ise, Türkiye’de K12 düzeyinde eğitim gören öğrencilerin eğitime katılımların niteliksel bağlamına zaman ve maliyet açısından ulaşmanın imkansızlığı oluşturmaktadır.

## 4. BULGULAR & TARTIŞMA

Bu bölümde, MEB resmi istatistiklerinden elde edilen verilerin incelenmesi sonucunda oluşturulan tablo aracılığıyla grafikler oluşturularak ortaya konulan veriler analiz edilmektedir.

Grafik 1’de Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı’nun 2009-2023 yıllarındaki resmi istatistiklerine göre kız ve erkek çocuklarının okul öncesi eğitime erişim oranları incelendiğinde; okul öncesi eğitime toplam katılım oranı %38,6’dan %68,8 oranına yükselerek yıllar içerisinde %30,2 oranında artış olduğu görülmektedir. Ayrıca ele alınan yıllar içerisinde, COVID-19 salgını nedeniyle 2020-2021 yılında %36,8 oranıyla birlikte okul öncesi eğitime erişim en düşük orana sahiptir.

Okul öncesi eğitime erişiminin cinsiyet değişkeni bağlamında ele alındığında ise; erkek çocukların kız çocuklara oranla daha fazla katılım sağladığı görülmekte olmakla birlikte yıllar içerisindeki farkın %1-2 oranında olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır.

Grafik 2’de Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı’nun 2006-2023 yıllarındaki resmi istatistiklerine göre kız ve erkek çocuklarının ilköğretime erişim oranları incelendiğinde; ilköğretime katılım oranı %90,1’den

%93,8 oranına yükselerek yıllar içerisinde %3,7 oranında artış olduğu görülmektedir. Ayrıca 2006-2007 eğitim yılından 2013-2014'e kadar eğitime erişimde düzenli artış gösteren bir seyir izlerken 2014-2015 eğitim yılından itibaren %6 oranına kadar azalış gösterdiği sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır.

İlköğretim kademesine erişiminin cinsiyet değişkeni bağlamında ele alındığında ise; erkek çocukların kız çocuklara oranla 2012-2013 eğitim yılına kadar daha fazla erişim sağladığı görülmekte olmakla birlikte 2006-2007 eğitim yılındaki %4,3 farkın bu yıllar içinde %1-2 oranına düştüğü sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. 2012-2013 yılından itibaren eğitime erişim oranında kız ve erkek öğrencilerin eğitimine erişimde artış olması ve eşitlenmesini 12 yıllık zorunlu eğitim sisteminin etkilerini görmektedir. 2012-2013'ten itibaren kız öğrencilerin eğitime erişimindeki artışın yanı sıra erkek öğrencilere göre daha fazla katılım sağladığı yılların olduğu bu sonucu desteklemektedir. Sonuç olarak, ilköğretim kademesine erişimden toplamda bir artış olduğu fakat yıllar içerisinde artış ve azalış olarak değişkenlik görülmektedir. Ayrıca kız ve erkek çocuklara ilköğretim kademesine erişimde eşit fırsat sunulduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır.

Grafik 3'te Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın 2006-2023 yıllarındaki resmi istatistiklerine göre kız ve erkek çocuklarının ortaöğretim kademesine erişim oranları incelendiğinde; ortaöğretim kademesine erişim oranı %56,5'ten %91,2 oranına yükselerek yıllar içerisinde %34,7 oranında artış olduğu görülmektedir.

Ortaöğretim kademesine erişiminin cinsiyet değişkeni bağlamında ele alındığında ise; 2006-2007 eğitim yılında erkek çocukların kız çocuklarına göre %8,5 oranında ortaöğretim kademesine daha fazla katılım sağladığı görülmekte iken 2022-2023 eğitim yılında kız ve erkek çocukların ortaöğretim eğitim kademesine erişim oranları eşitlendiği görülmektedir. Sonuç olarak, ortaöğretim kademesine erişime toplamda artış olduğu fakat yıllar içerisinde Ayrıca kız ve erkek çocuklara ortaöğretim kademesine erişimde eşit fırsat sunulduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır.

Grafik 4'te Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın 2017-2023 yıllarındaki resmi istatistiklerine göre kız çocuklarının okul öncesi eğitim kademesine 2. düzey bağlamında erişim oranları incelendiğinde;

genel erişim oranlarında 2020-2021 yılı haricinde genel bir artış olduğu görülmektedir. Bu durumun nedeni ele alındığında ise covid-19 salgınıyla birlikte eğitime erişiminde düşme olup ülkenin içinde bulunduğu sosyo-ekonomik: ağılık vb. unsurlar eğitime erişim oranına etkisiyle ilişkili olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. 2022-2023 eğitim yılı içerisinde katılım oranının artış gösterdiği görülmektedir. Fakat Ağrı, Kars, Iğdır, Ardahan, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, Elazığ, Bingöl, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Van, Muş, Bitlis ve Hakkari'de kız çocukların eğitime erişim oranlarının düştüğü görülmektedir. Antalya, Isparta ve Burdur illerini kapsayan bölgede kız çocuklarının okul öncesi eğitime katılım oranı %97,62 ile en fazla iken, Şanlıurfa ve Diyarbakır %72,19 oranı ile en az katılım sağlanan bölge olmuştur. %76,88 oranıyla Malatya, Elazığ ve Bingöl kız çocuklarının okul öncesi eğitime erişiminin az olduğu bölge olarak devam etmektedir.

Grafik 5'te Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın 2017-2023 yıllarındaki resmi istatistiklerine göre kız çocuklarının ilköğretim kademesine Düzey 2 bağlamında erişim oranları incelendiğinde; 2017-2020 yılları arasında artış gösteren bir seyir izlemekte iken 2020-2021 eğitim yılında pandemi süreciyle birlikte eğitime erişim oranının düştüğü fakat 2022-2023 yılına doğru tekrar artış gösterdiği görülmektedir. Kız çocuklarının okul öncesi eğitime erişim oranlarında düzey 2. bağlamında bölgesel gelişim açısından farklılık olmadığı sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır.

Grafik 6'da Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın 2017-2023 yıllarındaki resmi istatistiklerine göre kız çocuklarının ortaöğretim kademesine 2.düzye bağlamında erişim oranları incelendiğinde; son yıllarda genel olarak tüm bölgelerde artış olduğu görülmektedir. Fakat kız çocukların ortaöğretim kademesine erişim oranları %93,67 Ankara, %93,47 oranı ile Zonguldak, Karabük ve Bartın bölgeleri en fazla fırsat eşitliği sunduğunu göstermektedir. Bu sıralamayı 91,37 oranıyla Trabzon, Ordu, Giresun %91,11 oranıyla Kocaeli: akarya, Düzce ve Bolu bölgesi %90,1 oranıyla ise Bursa, Eskişehir ve Bilecik bölgeleri izlemektedir. Kız çocuklarının ortaöğretime erişim düzeyi en az olan 2. Düzey bölgesi ise %58,11 oranıyla Van, Muş, Bitlis ve Hakkari bulunmaktadır. Sıralamayı %60,84 oranla Şanlıurfa ve Diyarbakır, %64,47 oranıyla Ağrı, Kars, Iğdır ve Ardahan gelirken %65,29 oran ile Mardin,



Batman, Şırnak ve Siirt gelmektedir. Kız çocukların ortaöğretim kademesine erişim oranları bölgesel olarak farklılık göstererek eğitimde bölgesel anlamda fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanmadığı sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır.

## 5. SONUÇ

Eğitim ve öğretim hakkı, bireylerin en temel sosyal ve ekonomik haklarından birini oluşturmaktadır. Eğitime erişimde yıllardır verilen mücadeleler sonucunda önemli gelişim sağlanmış olsa da günümüzde belli eğitim kademelerinde ve bölgelerde kız çocukların eğitime erişimleri aynı oranda bulunmamaktadır. Kız çocuklarının eğitime erişim oranındaki eşitsizliğin ele alınması amacıyla bölgesel gelişmişlik ve cinsiyet değişkeni bağlamında Türkiye’de kız çocuklarının erkek çocuklarına oranla eğitime erişimini ve kız çocuklarının, eğitime erişim oranlarının farklılık gösterdiği bölgelerin sosyo-ekonomik yapısının etkisi izlenmiştir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, İBBS dahilinde yer alan Düzey 2 bölgelerine göre bulgular ele alınmaktadır.

Bu çalışmada, cinsiyet değişkeni bağlamında elde edilen bulgular ele alındığında; okul öncesi kademesinde kız ve erkek çocukların %30,2 oranında eğitime katılım oranı artış gösterirken erkek çocukların kız öğrencilerine göre tarihsel süreç içerisinde %1-2 değişken oranda daha fazla katılım sağladığı görülmektedir. İlköğretim kademesi incelendiğinde yıllar içerisinde erkek öğrenciler ile kız öğrencilerin eğitime erişimdeki fark azalarak %1-2 oranında olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. Türkiye’deki son 20 yıllık değişim sonuçları incelendiğinde, eğitim hizmetlerinde önemli oranda gelişim sağlandığı görülmektedir. Okul öncesi, ilköğretim ve ortaöğretim kademelerinde ilk kez %99 ve üzerinde okullaşma oranlarına ulaşılmaktadır. Değişimin beraberinde gelişen eğitim politikaları, eğitim hizmetlerinde gelişme sağlayarak fırsat eşitliğinin güçlenmesinde etkin olmaktadır. Eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin önemli ölçüde sağlanmasında, okul öncesinde eğitime erişim seferberliği, köy yaşam merkezleri, ortaöğretim kademesinde ve temel eğitimde 10.000 okul projesi, okulların ihtiyaçlarına göre bütçe temini, Fatih projesi ile eğitimde dijitalleşme gibi önemli eğitim politikaları etkilidir (Özer, 2023: 159). Ortaöğretim kademesinde ise genel olarak eğitimde %34,7 oranında artış bulunurken kız ve erkek

öğrencilerin eğitime erişim oranlarında cinsiyet bağlamında farklılık olmadığı görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla kız ve erkek çocukların toplam eğitime katılımı incelendiğinde K12 düzeyinde eğitime erişimlerdeki fırsat eşitsizliğinin ortadan kalktığı ve cinsiyet bağlamında önemli gelişme olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. Özer, çalışmasında ele aldığı üzere, 2022-2023 eğitim yılında 190 milyon ücretsiz olarak yardımcı kaynak desteği ve taşınmalı eğitim sisteminin öğrencilere sunulması eşitsizliğin ortadan kaldırılmasında veya azaltılmasında önemli etkidir (2023: 152). Özyıldırım’ın çalışmasında ise, kız öğrencilerin erkek öğrencilere oranla ilköğretim kademesine daha az oranda devam ettiği sonucuna ulaşmakta birlikte yıllar içerisinde okullaşma oranında artış söz konusu olmasına rağmen cinsiyete dayalı eşitsizliğin halen söz konusu olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. Aynı şekilde kırsal bölgelerde eğitime erişim hızla artış gösterirken gelişmiş bölgelere oranla öğrencilerin halen fırsat eşitsizliği yaşadığı görülmektedir (2014: 98-101).

Kız öğrencilerin eğitime erişiminin bölgesel gelişmişlik bağlamında ele alındığında; sosyo-ekonomik bağlamda bölgesel gelişmenin eğitim üzerindeki etkisi ele alınması amacıyla geliştirilen Düzey 2 bölgelerinde okul öncesi eğitim kademesinde kız öğrencilerin eğitime erişim oranları arasında fırsat eşitsizliği olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. Az gelişmiş bölge olarak ifade edilen Ağrı, Kars, Iğdır, Ardahan, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, Elazığ, Bingöl, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Van, Muş, Bitlis ve Hakkari bölgelerinde eğitime erişim düşükken gelişmiş bölge olarak ifade edilen Antalya, Isparta ve Burdur örneği ve benzerindeki bölgelerde eğitime erişim yüksekken İstanbul bölgesinde bölgesel gelişim düzeyiyle eğitime erişim arasında doğrusal ilişki bulunmamaktadır. İlköğretim kademesinde 2012-2013 yılında eğitime katılımın zorunlu olmasının etkisiyle ilköğretim kademesine erişimde katılım oranındaki artışın yanında Düzey 2 bağlamında kız öğrencilerin eğitime erişimlerinde farklılık olmadığı sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. Ortaöğretim eğitim kademesinde az gelişmiş bölge içerisinde ele alınan bölgelerde kız öğrencilerin eğitime katılımı en düşük Düzey 2 bölgeleri olduğu görülmektedir. Bölgesel gelişim sonucunda kız öğrencilerin eğitime katılım oranları arasında %35,56 oranında fark olduğu sonucu elde edilmiştir. Ayrıca bu bölgelerde kız ve erkek öğrencilerin eğitime erişim

oranlarında farklılığın diğer 2.düzyer bölgelerine göre arttığı ortaya konulmaktadır. A. Güngür & Güngör'ün (2023: 184) çalışmaları incelendiğinde, kız ve erkek öğrencilerin okullaşma oranındaki farkın en az olduğu ilköğretim kademesi iken farklılaşmanın en fazla olduğu kademe ortaöğretim olduğu görülmektedir. Eğitim kademesine genel katılım oranında kız öğrenciler, erkek öğrencilere oranla daha az erişim sağlamakla birlikte Doğu Anadolu, Güneydoğu Anadolu ve Ortadoğu Anadolu bölgelerinde eğitime erişim daha az orandadır. Bölgeler arasında kız ve erkek öğrencilerin eğitime erişim oranlarındaki en büyük farkı ise kız öğrencilerin daha az katılımıyla Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgesinde (%3.7) olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, İstanbul ve Kuzeydoğu bölgesinde kız öğrencilerin eğitime erişimde lehine durum söz konusu iken Batı Karadeniz bölgesinde kız ve erkek öğrenciler arasında herhangi bir farklılaşmaya ulaşılmamaktadır.

Bu çalışma, 2. Düzey bölgesindeki kız çocukların eğitime erişimlerin düşük olduğu coğrafyalarda kız çocuklarının eğitime erişimine yönelik farkındalığı artırmayı ve politika yapıcılara rehberlik sunmasına yönelik önemli gelişim sağlamaktadır.

## 6. ARAŞTIRMA ÖNERMELERİ

Çalışma bağlamında eğitime fırsat eşitliğinin sunulması amacıyla birtakım öneriler ortaya konulmaktadır.

Türkiye'de eğitime erişimdeki eşitsizlikle mücadele etmek için cinsiyet ve bölgesel farklılıkların ele

alınması gerekmektedir. Bu bağlamda her bölgeye özgü yerel politikaların geliştirilmesi önerilmektedir.

Ortaöğretime erişim oranlarının düşük olduğu Düzey 2 bölgelerinde, kız öğrencilerin yükseköğretime erişimin oranlarının izlenerek aradaki bağlamın ele alınması önerilmektedir. Eğitimin birey ve toplumlara sağladığı işlevlerin aktarılmasının yanında eğitime devam etmenin gerekliliği üzerine bilinç oluşturulmalıdır. Eğitime erişim oranlarının düşük olduğu bölgelerde öğrenci ve velilere bilgilendirici eğitimler verilmelidir. Ayrıca bu süreçte veli ile iş birliği içerisinde olunmalıdır.

Eğitime erişimin düşük olduğu Düzey 2 bölgelerinde derinlemesine görüşme yapılarak eğitime engel teşkil eden temel nedenlerin ortaya konulmasıyla birlikte yerel çözümler geliştirilmesi, eğitimde erişimde fırsat eşitsizliğinin ortadan kaldırılması için önemli adımlar atılmasını sağlayacaktır. Ayrıca her bölgesel yapının, kendi içerisinde varlığını oluşturan temel etkenlerin detaylı bir şekilde ele alınmasıyla birlikte, gelişme içerisinde olan veya gelişmeyi engelleyici etkenlerin ortaya konulması eğitime erişimde fırsat ve imkan eşitliğinin sağlanmasında önemli bir adım olacağı gibi eğitime erişim oranının yüksek olduğu bölgelerinde, daha ileri yönde gelişim göstermesi sağlayarak eğitimin niceliğinin yanında niteliğini de artırılması ile sonuçlanabilecektir.

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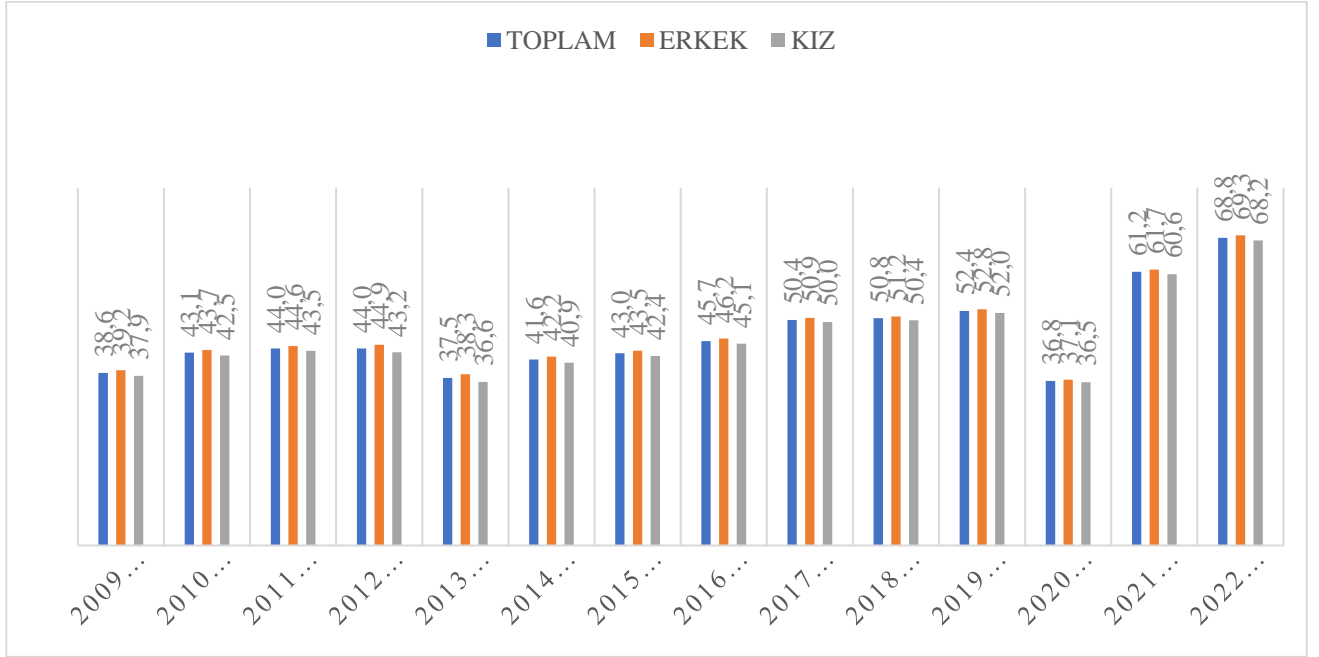
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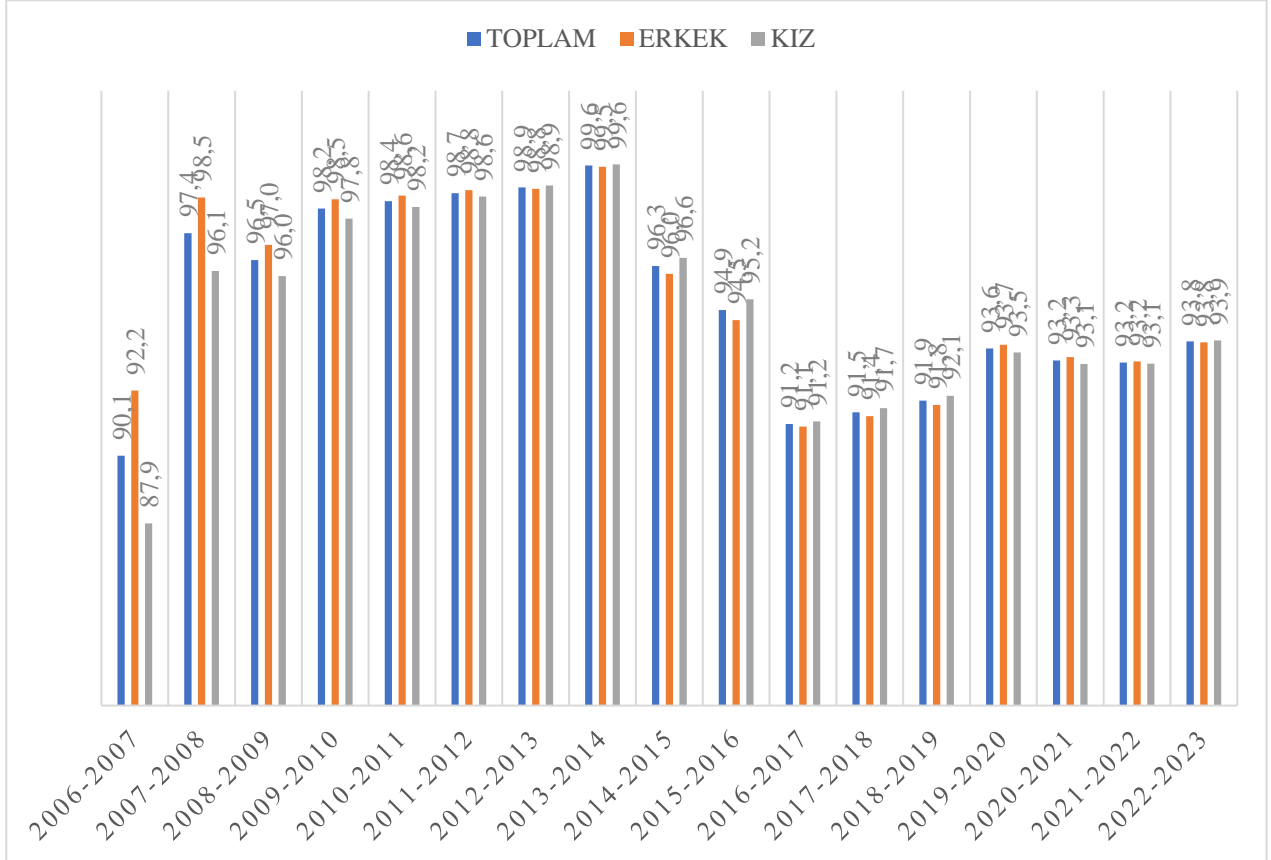
## TABLOLAR &amp; ŞEKİLLER

Şekil 1: Kız ve Erkek Çocuklarının Okul Öncesi Eğitimine Net Erişim Oranlarının İzlenmesi



**Kaynak:** MEB, 2009-2023 Yılları Arasındaki Resmi Eğitim İstatistikleri . <https://www.meb.gov.tr> adresinden alınmıştır.

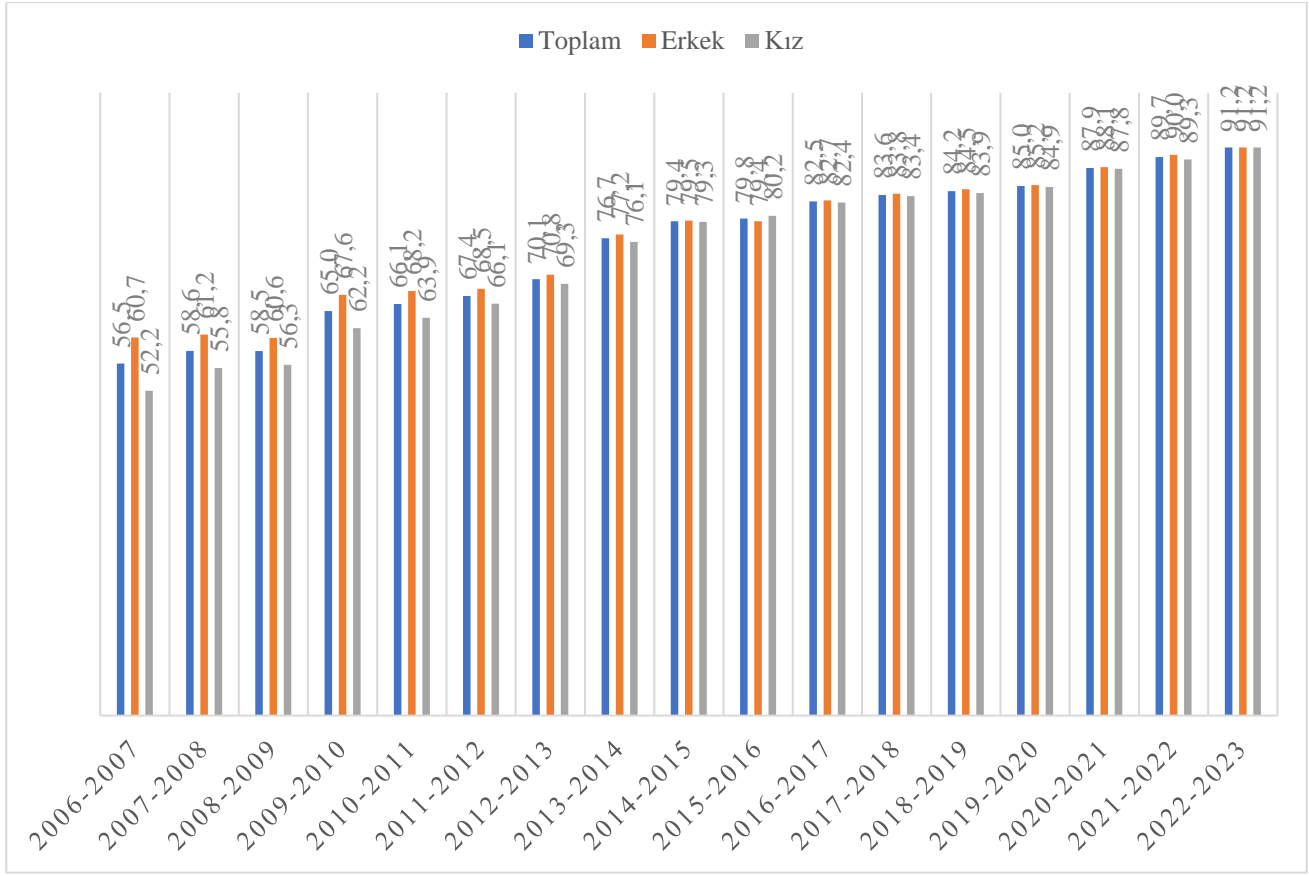
Şekil 2: Kız ve Erkek Çocuklarının İlköğretim Eğitimine Net Erişim Oranlarının İzlenmesi



**Kaynak:** MEB, 2006-2023 Yılları Arasındaki Resmi Eğitim İstatistikleri . <https://www.meb.gov.tr> adresinden alınmıştır.

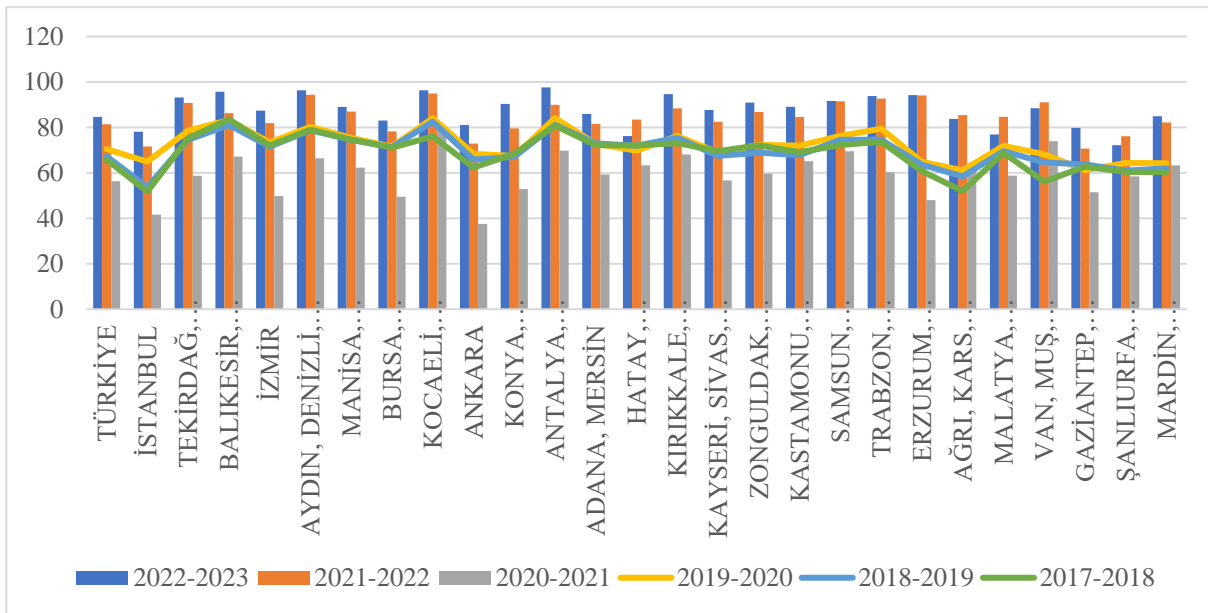


Grafik 3. Kız ve Erkek Çocuklarının Ortaöğretim Eğitimine Net Erişim Oranlarının İzlenmesi



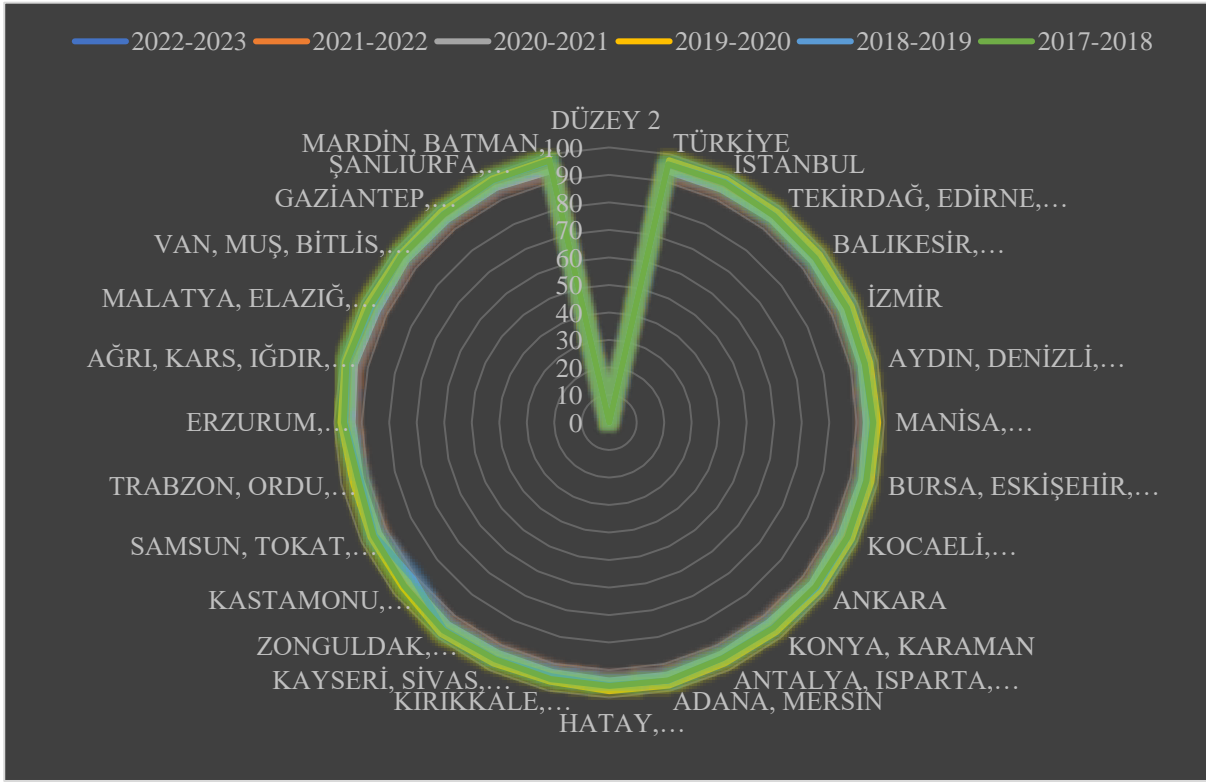
**Kaynak:** MEB, 2006-2023 Yılları Arasındaki Resmi Eğitim İstatistikleri . <https://www.meb.gov.tr> adresinden alınmıştır.

Grafik 4. Okul Öncesi Eğitime Erişimde Kız Öğrencilerin Net Okullaşma Oranları



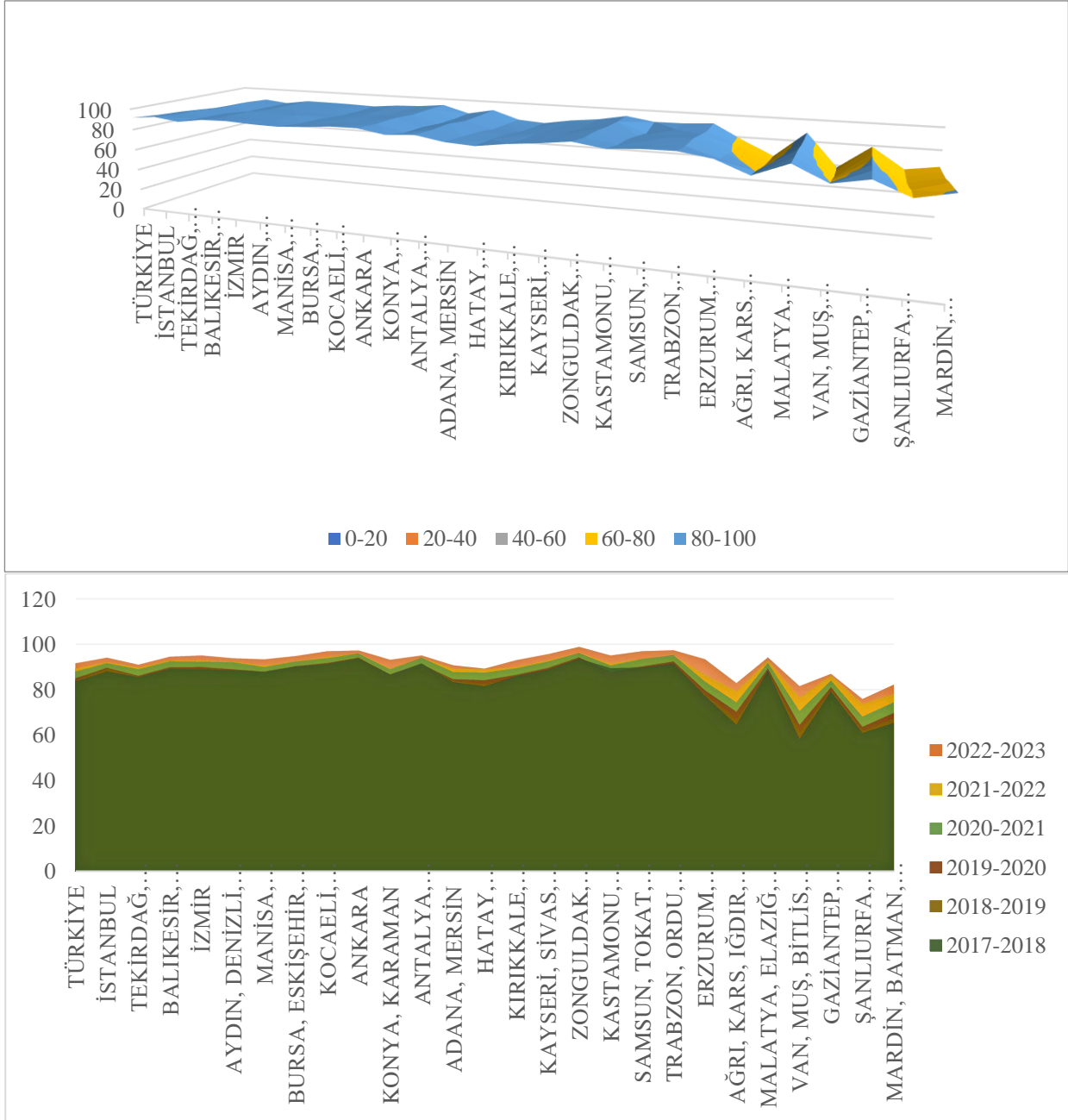
**Kaynak:** MEB, 2017-2023 Yılları Arasındaki Resmi Eğitim İstatistikleri . <https://www.meb.gov.tr> adresinden alınmıştır.

Grafik 5. İlköğretim Eğitime Erişimde Kız Öğrencilerin Net Okullaşma Oranları



**Kaynak:** MEB, 2017-2023 Yılları Arasındaki Resmi Eğitim İstatistikleri . <https://www.meb.gov.tr> adresinden alınmıştır.

GRAFİK 6. Ortaöğretim Eğitime Erişimde Kız Öğrencilerin Net Okullaşma Oranları



**Kaynak:** MEB, 2006-2023 Yılları Arasındaki Resmi Eğitim İstatistikleri . <https://www.meb.gov.tr> adresinden alınmıştır.