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WOMEN IN TURKEY AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S CONDITION IN POLITICAL PARTY PROGRAMS

Abstract:

If the condition of women in Turkey is evaluated in terms of education, violence, employment, and the like variables from the most general point of view, it will be right to start with an evaluation on the literacy condition according to gender above all because the results are striking. For example, as the year 2014, out of 2.663.096 illiterate people 2.208.336 are women (TUIK, 2014). This data is important as it refers to a huge gap between genders in terms of the level of education. Moreover, women's employment in Turkey is another important problematic area. For example, as of 2014 in Turkey the ratio of contribution of women to the labor force is 30.3%, the ratio of women's employment is 26.7%. (TUIK, 2014). Another problematic area shows itself in political representation. Although the ratio of women deputies in Turkey has increased over the years, the share of women deputies in the parliament has increased to 14.7% with the 2015 elections. Another problematic area that has been talked about and discussed most nowadays is violence against women. In the 2014 Domestic Violence Against Women in Turkey Research, across the country, the ratio of women who have experienced physical violence in any period of their lives by their husbands or ex-husbands is 36%. The ratio of women who have experienced emotional violence in any period of their lives is 44%; the ratio of physical or sexual violence experienced together is 38%.

As seen, women in Turkey are in a disadvantaged position in terms of social, economic, political, and the like variables compared to men. The purpose of this study is to uncover how political parties deal with this disadvantaged position women are experiencing and the problems it creates and what kind of an approach they have to solve the problems determined. In other words, programs of political parties in the parliament will be content analyzed in terms of violence, education, employment, discrimination, equality, freedom, and the like and the results will be compared in the line with their respective parties. The basic reason why this study is conducted on examining political parties and their party programs is that political parties are the main incentive means that force the government to fulfill the desires and needs of the majority of the society and that party programs are a reference text that covers political party's ideology, priorities, and suggested solutions for the problematic areas.

Keywords:

Women in Turkey, Political Party Programs, Content Analysis, Domestic Violence, Women in Work Life, Political Decision Mechanisms and Woman

JEL Classification: D63, I00, J16

Introduction

Political parties are establishments that are shaped according to its priorities, ideology, and solutions and goals suggested for the issues considered problematic, that gather around a “political party program”, that aim to seize or share political power, and that have a permanent organization (Heywood, 2006; Kapani, 1998; Tezic, 1998). Every political party has a party program to implement as long as it has political power after seizing it. Actually, a party program is a set of methods and principles. These methods and principles are about how the political party will evaluate and deal with internal and foreign affairs and the issues the country might face by paying attention to the conditions and sensitivities of the time and society and how it will implement the solution. In other words, political parties are the main incentive means that insure the government to pay the required attention to the desires and needs of the majority of the society and party programs are a reference text that covers political party's ideology, priorities, and suggested solutions for the problematic areas.

It will help political parties to gain a more advantageous position compared to their opponents if there is an overlap between their party programs and the expectations of the voters (Okumus, 2007). The possibility of examining the party program and making a decision based on that might be expected more when the society's political awareness and level of education get higher. Therefore, the party program should be seen as an important reference text. On the other hand, the opponents attack the weak parts of the program of a political party to destabilize its position. To prepare a party program requires serious and scientific research. Because the party program is a directive that shows the identification of issues, their importance and level of priority, and how and with what kind of resources they will be solved (Islamoglu, 2002, p. 123).

In this study, party programs of current political parties in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey which is the legislative organ of the Republic of Turkey. These parties are AKP (Justice and Development Party), CHP (Republican People's Party), HDP (People's Democratic Party), and MHP (Nationalist Movement Party). In 1 November 2015 general election, AKP formed the government on its own with 49,48% of the vote and had the chance of representation in the parliament with 317 deputies. Following AKP, CHP is represented in the parliament with 133 deputies, HDP with 59, and MHP is with 40¹.

At this point, when the programs of political parties dealt with in this study are examined it is seen that all parties emphasize “women” or “women issues” under different headings or classifications. Therefore, seeing a heading² about “women” in the political party programs examined in this study might be taken as the reason why we claim that there is a problem or issue regarding women's position, status, or socio-

¹ There are 550 deputies in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, one of them is an independent deputy.

² The issue of “women” is discussed under the main heading “Social Politics” and subheading “Woman” in AKP's program, under the main heading “Reinforcing Democracy-Democracy, Human Rights and Freedoms” and subheading “Our Goal is Equal Turkey in Every Aspect with Men and Women” in CHP's program, under the main heading “Party's Goals” and subheading “Equality for Women and Struggle for Freedom” in HDP's program, and under the main heading “Social Objective and Politics” and subheading “Family, Woman, and Children” in MHP's program.

economic condition in Turkey. Because political parties make general evaluations and draw a route map for the areas or issues that are problematic, in need of improvement or need to be fixed or regulated.

In this context, in this study, firstly an evaluation is done on the indicators under the main heading “Women in Turkey”. Then, the method of the study is discussed and findings are presented. Finally, findings are discussed and a general evaluation is given.

Basic Indicators: Women in Turkey³

To understand the women’s status in Turkey it is proper to make a general evaluation by examining the indicators on education, participation in work life, participation in politics and decision-making mechanisms, and violence.

The basic picture regarding **education** is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Literacy and Population Based on Gender (Ages 6 and Older) 2014 Turkey

Literacy	Women		Men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Illiterate	2.208.336	6,35	454.760	1,30	2.663.096	3,82
Literate	32.098.958	92,29	33.967.372	97,39	66.066.330	94,84
Not known	472.278	1,36	456.027	1,31	928.305	1,33
Total	34.779.572	100,00	34.878.159	100	69.657.731	100,00

Source: TUIK National Education Statistics Database 2014 Results

Within the population ages 6 and older, women’s illiteracy ratio is 6,4% while men’s illiteracy ratio is 1,3%. Out of 10 illiterate people, 8 is women. Within the adult women population (ages 15 and older), women’s illiteracy ratio is 7,4%. In general, the ratio of illiteracy for both genders increases when moving from early ages to older ages, from urban population to rural population, and from western regions to eastern regions. However, these variables have a greater impact on women than on men under all circumstances.

According to the “National Education Statistics” prepared by Turkish Statistical Institute, data regarding the level of education completed in the age group 6 and older is given in Table 2 below.

³ The indicators discussed under this heading are taken from the August 2015 “Women in Turkey” report of the **Ministry of Family and Social Politics, Status of Women General Directorate.**

Table 2: Level of Education Completed and Population Based on Gender (Ages 6 and Older)

Level of Education Completed	Women		Men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Illiterate	2.208.336	6,35	454.760	1,30	2.663.096	3,82
Literate but not finished any school	5.107.529	14,69	3.812.082	10,93	8.919.611	12,80
Elementary school graduate	10.849.690	31,20	8.862.205	25,41	19.711.895	28,30
Primary school graduate	4.641.034	13,34	6.049.410	17,34	10.690.444	15,35
Secondary school or its equivalent graduate	2.556.852	7,35	3.397.197	9,74	5.954.049	8,55
High school or its equivalent graduate	5.334.164	15,34	7.268.758	20,84	12.602.922	18,09
College or University graduate	3.306.335	9,51	4.140.934	11,87	7.447.269	10,69
MA graduate	239.834	0,69	339.896	0,97	579.730	0,83
PhD graduate	63.520	0,18	96.890	0,28	160.410	0,23
Not known	472.278	1,36	456.027	1,31	928.305	1,33
Total	34.779.572	100,00	34.878.159	100,00	69.657.731	100

Source: TUIK ADNKS Education, Culture, and Sports Database 2014 Results

It is reported that there are more female students in the Dentistry, Pharmacy, Literature, Language, History and Geography, Science, Education, Fine Arts, Theology, and Architecture faculties than there are male students while there are more male students in the Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, and Economics and Administrative Sciences faculties than there are female students.

When it comes to *participation in work life*, the results regarding women's status in Turkey are quite intriguing.

While the ratio of women participating in work life in Turkey was 23,3% in 2004, it increased to 26% in 2009 and to 30,3% in 2014. Moreover, women's employment ratio increased to 22,3% in 2009 and to 26,7% in 2014 while it was 20,8% in 2004 (TUIK). It is quite clear that the numbers are not on the desired level yet but significant improvement has been recorded when the statistics regarding women's participation in the labor market in our country is considered.

At this point, women's issues in employment are as following in summary:

- As women's level of education increases, possibility of their participation in the labor force also increases. In this context, besides formal training, non-formal training to improve knowledge and skills is needed to help women qualify their efforts.

- There is no discrimination between genders under the law regarding women's entering work life or pursuing working after getting employed. However, certain examples of discrimination are seen such as certain work or professions being not socially acceptable for women to do, unfair distribution of work, employment termination of women before men in times of economic crisis, and low wages especially in the informal sector.
- As work and professions are differentiated and socially accepted as "women's job" and "men's job" in the labor market, women are focused on traditional female professions and agree to accept jobs with low status and low wages. These jobs bring together working periodically and temporarily and social insecurity.
- Women's labor force, as cheap labor, is focused on the industrial branches such as textile, food, ready wear, and tobacco that are labor-intensive line or works. However, the ratio of women's labor force is low in these sectors compared to the agriculture sector.
- Despite the fact that there is no legal barrier, women in the agriculture sector are not within the scope of social security to a great extent as they are not paid because they are working for their own family or as they have very little income.
- The basic reason why women end their career in a short period of time after entering work life and/or why they cannot put their full potential to step up in their career is the problems they encounter to balance their life between home and work. Women, in their family life, are to share the obligations such as taking care of the children, elders, and sick with their husbands and/or the state. However, social support institutions such as kindergartens and daycare centers have not reached the desired numbers despite all efforts.

It is possible to summarize the status of women in Turkey under the heading of ***participation in politics and decision making mechanisms*** as below.

Although women, as equal to men, gained the right to vote and stand for election in local elections in 1930 and in parliamentary elections in 1934 in the Republic of Turkey, before in many countries of the world; they have not reached a high level of political participation yet.

While the number of female deputies was 24 and the ratio of female representation in the parliament was 4,4% after the 2002 general elections, it raised to 50 seats and ratio of 9,1% in 2007. The number of female deputies in the parliament raised to 79 after the 12 June 2011 general elections. This number equals to the ratio of 14,4%. The number of female deputies after the 7 June 2015 general elections was 98. The ratio of female representation in the parliament was the highest in the history of the Republic as 17,82%. After the 1 November 2015 general elections, the number of female deputies was 81 and the ratio of female representation was 14,73%. Moreover, the number of female ministers raised to 2

(https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/milletvekillerimiz_sd.dagilim).

As of 2016, when we look at the number of female deputies of the political parties that are represented in the current parliament and subject of this study, it is seen that the Justice and Development Party has 34 female deputies out of 317 deputies (10,73%), the Republican People's Party has 21 female deputies out of 134 deputies (15,76%), the People's Democratic Party has 23 female deputies out of 59 deputies (38,98%), and the Nationalist Movement Party has 3 female deputies out of 40 deputies (7,5%).

Moreover, the representation of women in local administrations is limited. According to the results of the local elections held on 30 March 2014, 3 out of 30 metropolitan mayors and 40 out of 1381 mayors are women. 2198 out of 20498 city councilors are women (10,7%). It is not different when we look at the number of members of the provincial councils. Out of 1251 provincial council members, only 60 are women (4,8%).

Finally, the status of women in Turkey regarding **violence** can be summarized as follows:

According to the results of the Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey 2014 Research⁴, some data are as follows:

- According to 2014 research, the ratio of women who have been subject to physical violence by their husbands or ex-husbands in any period of their lives is 36%.
- The ratio of women who have been subject to emotional abuse in any period of their lives is 44%.
- The ratio of women who have been subject to sexual abuse in any period of their lives is 12%.
- The ratio of physical violence in cities is 35% while it is 37,5% in rural parts.
- 43% percent of the women who have been subject to physical or sexual abuse at least once are uneducated while 21% have an undergraduate or graduate degree.
- The ratio of women who cannot tell anyone about the violence they have been subject to is 44%.
- Husbands of women who got married at an early age are 5-9 and 10 years older than themselves.
- The danger of being subject to sexual abuse increases as the age of the women grows older. The danger of being subject to sexual abuse also increases as the women's level of education gets lower. Moreover, divorced or women who live alone have a high risk of being subject to sexual abuse.

⁴ In order to determine indicators to monitor domestic violence against women and to fight against domestic violence, a large scale "Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey Research" was first conducted in 2008 to answer the question "What are the sources and types of violence against women?". The second one was conducted in 2014.

The basic situation revealed in the evaluation we have done under the heading of “Women in Turkey by Basic Indicators” and on basic indicators of education, health, participation in work life, participation in politics and decision making mechanisms, and violence is that women in Turkey are in a disadvantaged position for many times in the public space and most of the time in their private space, regarding the indicators discussed above, and that they face the problem or reality of being and staying in the secondary position compared to men. The status of women in all indicators was given by comparing them with those of men and thus women’s secondary position against men was verified by solid data. Moreover, Domestic Violence against Women research is an indirect statement of the reality that women are subject to violence and especially domestic violence more than men do. As this research was not conducted as Domestic Violence against Men proves that it is women who face the basic problem of violence.

Method and Data

In this study, party programs of political parties currently represented in the parliament and given in the introductory section are studied to analyze the status of women in Turkey. In other words, related to the indicators given under the heading of Women in Turkey by Basic Indicators, what is written under the heading of “women” in political party programs represented in the current parliament and how each heading related to the indicators in question is dealt with are analyzed. Therefore, “content analysis” is used to collect data in this study because content analysis “is rather an analysis method than an observation method. In this method, rather than observing the behaviors of participants or asking them structured questions, the researcher takes and examines the communication materials the participants put forth” (Crano & Brewer, 1973). The communication material of this study is political party programs. Moreover, content analysis is putting together similar data under certain notions and themes and interpreting these by organizing them in a way that the reader can understand (Yildirim & Simsek, 2006). Thus, content analysis is considered as the appropriate method for the purposes of this study.

The analysis method used for the content analysis in this study is “frequency analysis” and “chi square analysis”. Frequency analysis is used to find out how often determined elements are repeated in the content being analyzed and to measure the repetition frequency in quantity, percentage, and proportion (Boke, 2011). In this context, frequency of the notions “education”, “work life”, “politics”, and “violence” under the main or subheadings of “women” –no matter it is named differently- in the political party programs is determined. In addition, findings on the basic indicators are tested by Chi Square analysis to reveal if there is any meaningful statistical difference among their distribution in political parties.

Findings

In this section, the frequency grades regarding the determined elements under the main or subheading of “women” in each political party’s program are given.

In this study, first of all, the distribution of notion of “women” in each political party program is examined and the findings are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of the Notion of “Women” in Political Party Programs⁵

Political Parties	Women	
	Frequency (n)	%
AKP	18	11.69
CHP	81	52.60
HDP	39	25.32
MHP	13	8.44
Total	154	100.00
Mean of four parties	38,50	
Chi Square Test	$\chi^2=76,15$ P=0,00	

According to the data given in Table 3, it is seen that the notion of women is found 154 times in four political party programs. 52,6% of the notion of women is found in CHP’s, 25,32% in HDP’s, 11,69% in AKP’s, and 8,44% in MHP’s party programs. In addition, according to the Chi Square test results, the mathematical difference between the distributions of the notion of “women” across parties is statistically meaningful at 1% level. Thus, it is proven statistically that the notion of women is emphasized most in CHP’s program which is followed by, in order, HDP, AKP, and MHP.

The distributions of the notions “education”, “work life”, “politics”, and “violence”, used by the Women’s Status General Directorate of the Ministry of Family and Social Politics to explain the status of women in Turkey, in the political party programs’ main or subheadings of “women” are given in Table 4.

⁵ The seats of the political parties are taken into consideration when the parties are ordered for discussion.

Table 4: Distribution of Education, Work Life, Politics, and Violence Notions under the Heading of Women in Political Party Programs

Political Parties	Education		Work Life		Politics		Violence		Total	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	N	%	N	%
AKP	2	9.52	4	26.67	1	20.00	2	10.00	9	14.75
CHP	18	85.71	6	40.00	3	60.00	13	65.00	40	65.57
HDP	0	0.00	3	20.00	1	20.00	4	20.00	8	13.11
MHP	1	4.76	2	13.33	0	0.00	1	5.00	4	6.56
Total	21	100.00	15	100.00	5	100.00	20	100.00	61	100.00
Mean of four parties	5,25		3,75		1,25		5		15,25	
Chi Square Test	$\chi^2=26.00$ (p=0,00)		$\chi^2=2,80$ (p=0,24)		3 cells (100,0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 1,7.		$\chi^2=18.00$ (p=0,00)		$\chi^2=63,78$ P=0,00	

According to the results given in Table 4, the notion of Education is found 21 times, the notion of Work Life is found 15 times, the notion of Politics is found 5 times and the notion of Violence is found 20 times in the political party programs' headings of "women". According to this;

85,71% of the notion of **Education** is found in CHP's, 9,52% in AKP's, and 4,76% in MHP's party program. 40% of the notion of **Work Life** is located in CHP's, 26,67% in AKP's, 20% in HDP's, and 13,33% in MHP's program. 60% of the notion of **Politics** is determined in CHP's, 20% in AKP's, and 20% in HDP's program. 65% of the notion of **Violence** is found in CHP's, 20% in HDP's, 10% in AKP's, and 5% in MHP's program.

According to the Chi Square test results, the mathematical difference between the distributions of the notions "education" and "violence" across parties is statistically meaningful at 1% level. Thus, it is statistically verified that the notion of "education" is emphasized most in CHP's program which is followed by, in order, AKP and MHP. It is also confirmed that the notion of "violence" is emphasized most in CHP's program which is followed by, in order, HDP, AKP, and MHP.

In addition, difference between the distributions of the notion “work life” across parties is not found statistically meaningful according to the chi square test. Therefore, it is not logical to order the political party programs based on the distribution of the notion of “work life” across parties. On the other hand, chi square value cannot be calculated as the expected mean values regarding the notion of “politics” are below 5. Thus, it is not possible to claim that there is a meaningful difference between the distributions of the notion of “politics” across parties.

Discussion and Conclusion

As stated in the findings section, it is seen that the notion of “women” is emphasized more in the CHP and HDP’s party programs among the other political parties in question. This result requires differentiating the parties based on their ideologies first. In this context, it can be claimed that CHP and HDP is on the left-wing of the ideological spectrum⁶ and, from this point, that left-wing parties are more sensitive about the issue of women. However, the frequent mention of the notion of “women” in the party program, especially regarding the notions (education, work life, politics, and violence) central to this study, does not mean anything if only it is discussed based on the parties’ ideologies. Therefore, it would be best to scrutinize how each party approach the issue of women by analyzing each notion.

It has been stated in the previous section that the distributions of the notions “work life” and “politics” across parties are not found statistically meaningful so that it is not possible to order them from more to less. An order can be presented among parties based on only education and violence notions as these are found statistically meaningful. According to this, it can be stated that the notion of education is emphasized most in CHP’s program, then in AKP’s and MHP’s respectively and the notion of violence is emphasized most in CHP’s program, then in HDP’s, AKP’s, and MHP’s respectively. Therefore, it is hard to state that there is a direct relation between the parties’ ideological position and who they approach the issue of women. Because despite the fact that there is an emphasis on education under the heading of women in AKP’s and MHP’s programs, there is none in HDP’s program.

Accordingly, a comparison among parties can only be made on the notions of “education” and “violence” under the heading of women in the party programs but a differentiation among parties cannot be made on the notions of “participation in politics and decision making mechanisms” and “work life” which are considered as the

⁶ Republican People’s Party defines itself in its party program as “a social democratic party that embraces universal values and principles of social democracy and aims to actualize them”. HDP defines itself in its party program as “a political party for all the oppressed and exploited people; for all the excluded and ignored communities and belief groups; for the women, workers, laborers, peasantry, youth, unemployed, retired, disabled, LGBT people and immigrants; for the ones whose living spaces are destroyed; for the intellectuals, writers, artists, and scientists; and for the forces that fight alongside with these groups to eradicate all sources of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination and for all those who come together to start a life proper for human dignity, and a political party that aims at democratic rulership of people”.

significant problematic areas regarding the issue of women. In this context, the basic result revealed is that political parties are not in question for comparison, based on how much they care about the issue and how comprehensively they deal with it, especially about women's participation in work life and politics and that political parties approach these two basic issues superficially.

Besides, under the heading of women in party programs, the notion of education was repeated 21 times, the notion of work life was repeated 15 times, the notion of politics was repeated 5 times, and the notion of violence was repeated 20 times as a result of the content analysis. As seen, the least emphasized notions under the heading of women in party programs were politics and work life. Moreover, existing statements in the party programs about women's work life and their participation in politics is rather superficial compared to the issues of violence and education. For example, the notion of politics is emphasized in CHP's program most and it is stated that the ratio of women in public administration and politics, in decision-making processes will be aimed to increase, that women who are members of the party will be encouraged to stand as candidates in local and parliamentary elections, that special importance will be given to provide the women with the opportunity to be more effective in domestic and foreign policy. It is stated in AKP's program that women will be encouraged to become a member of the party and take an active role in politics while it is stated in HDP's program that the party has made regulations to ensure women's equal participation and right of representation in party's all councils and areas of work. On the other hand, there is no evaluation on women's participation in politics and decision-making processes in MHP's program. It is once again reminded here that a comparison among parties on work life and participation in politics cannot be made statistically. Moreover, it is seen that, without touching the basis of the issue, these two notions is mentioned superficially under the heading of women in the party programs by using tentative statements such as "encouragement", "giving importance" and "making regulations".

When it comes to the issue of education, CHP is the one that uses the notion of education in the explanations under the heading of women. In other parties, the issue of education is dealt with rather superficially. For example, under the heading of women in the AKP party program, it is stated that education projects suitable for the conditions of the region where they live will be developed for the girls living in rural areas, that non-governmental organizations working on this issue will be supported, that political measures will be taken to increase the ratio of girls going to school, that obstacles preventing "them" from going to school will be eliminated, and that efforts will be spent to raise awareness of families regarding the issue especially in rural areas. In MHP's party program, there is only one statement which says women's level of education will be raised. Under the heading of women in the CHP's party program, the issue of education is dealt with more comprehensively as opposed to other parties and it is emphasized that education is the starting point to create a Turkey where women and men are equals. Moreover, it is stated that the issue of women is actually

an issue of education and that education is the most significant factor to increase women's level of self-respect and social consciousness to eradicate discrimination against women and to solve the problems regarding women. It is also stated that materials used in education will be cleared of all kinds of discourse and prejudice against women-men equality principle, that all kinds of measures will be taken to increase the ratio of girls going to school at any level of education, that women's professional training opportunities will be improved, that women-men equality and protection of the respect of family members will be included in education programs as basic social goals.

Violence against women is mentioned in all party programs in question –although the frequency of the issue differs- and all parties make an evaluation with different statements and approaches and state that violence against women is unacceptable and should be eliminated.

Finally, it is hard to state that the political parties represented in the current parliament have a detailed, comprehensive, and solution-oriented approach regarding the status of women in Turkey, especially about the issues of education, violence, work life, and participation in politics. Therefore, it is not quite possible to affirm the socio-economic condition of women in Turkey and to examine the solutions proposed to deal with the problematic areas through political party programs because all parties take the issue of women as something needs to be mentioned and do not go beyond superficial explanations.

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