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Measuring the Level of Party Institutionalization in Turkey

Türkiye’de Parti Kurumsallaşma Düzeyinin Ölçülmesi

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Abstract

The main aim of this research is to combine theoretical approaches to party institutionalization with empirical operationalization. This study provides a systematic operationalization of the concept of party institutionalization using different indicators in the case of Turkish democracy. Although there has been extensive literature on the Turkish party system, there has been little discussion on party institutionalization in Turkey. The main weakness of most research is the failure to address how to quantify and measure party institutionalization. To overcome this problem, this paper offers the Party Institutionalization Index (PII). The PII is produced by the systematic operationalization of four dimensions of party institutionalization: stability, systemness, reification, and rootedness. The research shows that a political party may have significantly different scores in each dimension. This study argues that political parties with higher membership strength, geographically large-scale units, higher chronological age, more leadership changes, lower electoral volatility, and greater electoral success will become more institutionalized and survive longer. The results indicate that the CHP is the most institutionalized party in Turkey. This study also shows that political parties in Turkey, except for the HDP, display a relatively high level of institutionalization.

Keywords

Party institutionalization, Party organization, Turkish politics, Political parties in Turkey

Öz

Bu araştırmanın temel amacı, parti kurumsallaşmasına yönelik kuramsal yaklaşımları, ampirik operasyonelleştirmeye bir araya getirmektir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye demokrasisi örneğinde, farklı göstergeler kullanarak parti kurumsallaşması kavramının sistematik bir operasyonelleştirmesini sunmaktadır. Türk parti sistemi hakkında oldukça geniş bir literatür bulunmasına rağmen, Türkiye’de parti kurumsallaşması hakkında çok az tartışma yapılmıştır. Çoğu araştırmanın en zayıf noktası, parti kurumsallaşmasının nasıl ölçüleceği sorusuna yeterli bir cevap verememesidir. Bu sorunun üstesinden gelebilmek için, bu makale Parti Kurumsallaşma Endeksi’ni (PII) önermektedir. PII, parti kurumsallaşmasının dört boyutunun sistematik olarak operasyonelleştirilmesiyle elde edilmektedir: istikrar, sistemlilik, somutlaştırma ve kökleşme. Bu araştırma, bir siyasi partinin her bir boyutta önemli ölçüde farklı puanlara sahip olabileceğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, daha yüksek üyelik gücüne, coğrafi olarak yaygın büyük ölçekli örgütlere, daha yüksek kronolojik yaşa, daha fazla sayıda lider değişimine, daha düşük düzeyde seçim oynaklığına ve daha büyük seçim başarısına sahip siyasi partilerin daha fazla kurumsallaşacağını ve daha uzun süre varlığını sürdüreceğini öne sürmektedir. Bu araştırmanın bulguları, kurumsallaşma düzeyi en yüksek olan partinin CHP olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda HDP dışındaki siyasi partilerin görece yüksek düzeyde kurumsallaşma sergilediğine işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Parti kurumsallaşması, Parti örgütlenmesi, Türk siyaseti, Türkiye’de siyasi partiler

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Introduction

Party institutionalization is a major area of interest within the field of political science (Harmel, Svåsand, & Mjelde, 2018). There is, however, no agreement on what party institutionalization implies. In the literature on political organizations, institutionalization has different interpretations. As a result, the argument over how to scientifically quantify institutionalization is still ongoing (Musella & Vercesi, 2019: 226).

Party institutionalization has been linked to different properties, such as autonomy, adaptability, complexity, and coherence (Huntington, 1968), electoral continuity (Rose & Mackie, 1988), reification (Janda, 1980), systemness and autonomy (Panebianco, 1988), behavioral routinization and value infusion (Levitsky, 1998), rootedness, routinization, and reification (Harmel & Svåsand, 1993), systemness, decisional autonomy, reification, and value infusion (Randall & Svåsand, 2002), and autonomy, internal coherence, roots in society, and level of organization (Basedau & Stroh, 2008).

As a concept, party institutionalization has largely emerged in the context of Western industrialized countries (Randall & Svåsand, 2002: 6). Recently, however, there has been a growing body of literature that examines party institutionalization in different regions such as Eastern Europe (Travits, 2013), Latin America (Dix, 1992; Mainwaring & Scully, 1995), Asia (Manacra & Tan, 2005; Ufen, 2007; Hicken & Kuchonta, 2014), and Africa (Kuenzi & Lambright, 2001; Basedau & Stroh, 2008; Weghorst & Bernhard, 2014). The concept has significantly improved, as it has moved across the world (Bolleyer & Ruth-Lovell, 2019: 176).

Although there has been extensive literature on the Turkish party system (Bölükbaşı, 2021; Arslantaş, Arslantaş, & Kaiser, 2020; Sayarı, 2016; Gümüşçü, 2013; Çarkoğlu, 2011; Sayarı, 2007; Sayarı, 2002; Özbudun, 2000; Çarkoğlu, 1998), there has been little discussion on party institutionalization in Turkey. In a comparative analysis of party institutionalization in Turkey and Southern Europe, Yardımçı-Geyikçi (2015) examined party institutionalization in terms of roots in society and organizational development and found that political parties in Turkey are somewhat institutionalized. In a recent study, Kumbaracıbaşı offered an alternative model (the trade-off model) to explain party institutionalization in Turkey and concluded that autonomy and systemness, two important dimensions of institutionalization, are “not always positively correlated” (2020: 240). Such studies, however, have failed to operationalize institutionalization and could not provide a single measurement or index of party institutionalization by combining different dimensions. Öney and Selck (2017), on the other hand, provided indicators to measure different dimensions of institutionalization such as the strength of party organization, the party roots in society, and the legitimacy of parties, yet they treated the institutionalization of individual parties as a subcomponent of the whole party system. However, party institutionalization and party system institutionalization are not always “mutually compatible” (Randall & Svåsand, 2002: 6). Whereas individual parties become organizationally institutionalized, the system they function in can be deinstitutionalized (Bértoa, 2017: 3).

This study broadens the understanding of party institutionalization by moving beyond developed Western democracies. This paper investigates the factors determining party

institutionalization. By proposing viable indicators, the main aim of this research is to combine theoretical approaches to party institutionalization with empirical operationalization. This paper has been divided into three main parts. The first part deals with the conceptualization of party institutionalization. It presents a review of the interpretations of party institutionalization as well as a multidimensional definition of the concept. The second part gives an overview of the history and characteristics of the political parties in Turkey. The third part provides a systematic operationalization of the concept of party institutionalization using different indicators in the case of Turkish democracy.

Conceptualizing Party Institutionalization

Research into institutionalization in political science has a long history. However, it was Huntington (1968) who first systematically investigated the stability of political parties and applied the notion of institutionalization to political party analysis (Bértoa, 2017). For Huntington (1968: 12), institutionalization means “the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability.” He maintains that a political party becomes institutionalized when it manages to develop mechanisms to prevent excessive personalization and survive a longer period after the founding fathers leave office. For this to happen, party members must weaken their commitment to the goals of the organization but strengthen their commitment to the maintenance of the organization itself (Levitsky, 1998).

Huntington identifies adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence as the major dimensions of institutionalization. Adaptability refers to longevity, namely, the capacity to survive the first generation of party leadership. Organizational complexity involves the multiplication and differentiation of internal sub-units. Autonomy can be broadly defined as the extent to which political institutions have interests and values distinct from those of other institutions and social groupings. Coherence is the degree of agreement on procedures for resolving conflict in the organization. Randal and Svasand (2002: 10) suggest that while autonomy and coherence are separate attributes in theory, they are often interconnected in practice. Huntington’s concept has been widely used in studies on political change in general, as well as studies on party politics (Weissenbach & Bukow, 2019: 162).

Like Huntington, Panebianco also emphasizes the importance of organizational characteristics in his conceptualization. For Panebianco, autonomy and systemness are two correlated dimensions of institutionalization. He argues that institutionalization means “a process by which followers develop an interest in the survival of a party independent of its current leadership” (1988: 53). In other words, the party’s survival becomes valuable in and of itself rather than a tool to achieve other goals. This will require the development of a useful internal incentive structure that provides both selective rewards for people interested in leadership and more collective incentives that create a diffuse commitment to the party (Randall & Svasand, 2002: 10). It is worth noting that his definition is similar to Huntington’s conceptualization. Huntington and Panebianco both stress the importance of autonomy. Panebianco’s dimension of systemness integrates Huntington’s dimensions of coherence and complexity. On the other hand, Panebianco’s approach does

not include adaptability because he claims that a high level of institutionalization lowers an organization's adaptability and flexibility (Weissenbach & Bukow, 2019: 162).

In another major study, Steven Levitsky (1998) mentions behavioral routinization and value infusion as the major dimensions of institutionalization but suggests that these two dimensions do not always change together empirically. According to Levitsky, value infusion occurs "when actors' goals shift from the pursuit of particular objectives through an organization to the goal of perpetuating the organization per se" (1998: 79). He gives the Justicialist Party in Argentina as an example, and maintains that notwithstanding major changes in the organization's goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics, Peronist leaders have remained loyal to the party, and by these means, the party has managed to survive after Juan's death. Behavioral routinization, on the other hand, occurs when rules, procedures, or roles become routine and accepted, and predictable sets of expectations develop around them. However, he argues that according to the criterion of behavioral routinization, the Justicialist Party is not well institutionalized since organizational processes within the party leadership structure are not routinized.

Kenneth Janda (1980) also adopts the term "value infusion," but his approach recognizes not only an internal or organizational dimension of institutionalization but also an external dimension of it (Harmel, Svåsand, & Mjelde, 2019: 10). Janda believes that an institutionalized party seems to have a corresponding image in public awareness, indicating that it is externally objectified (Weissenbach & Bukow, 2019: 163). He suggests that "an institutionalized party is one that is reified in the public mind so that "the party" exists as a social organization apart from its momentary leaders, and this organization demonstrates recurring patterns of behavior valued by those who identify with it" (1980: 19). Moreover, he offers six variables to operationalize the concept of institutionalization: name changes, year of origin, organizational discontinuity, leadership competition, electoral instability, and legislative instability. Richard Rose and Thomas Mackie propose a rather minimalistic approach to measuring party institutionalization and suggest that a political party becomes established "if it fights more than three national elections" (1988: 536). This will require creating subunits across the country, being able to nominate candidates for elections, and continuing to participate in successive elections. As noted by Harmel, Svåsand, and Mjelde (2019: 11), while Huntington and Panebianco emphasize the internal dimension of institutionalization, Rose and Mackie emphasize the external aspect of institutionalization.

More recent studies combine some of those classical components with new ones. For example, Veugeliers's analysis (1995) includes the criteria of national scope and perceived relevance by other parties, as well as the typical element of persistence. According to Veugeliers (1995: 4), institutionalization is a process that incorporates three factors: systemic, temporal, and spatial factors. 1-) A party has systemic relevance if it has coalition or blackmail potential (as in Sartori's definition of the relevant party). 2-) A party has temporal relevance if it exists without interruption and nominates candidates for successive national elections. 3-) A party has spatial relevance if it pervades the political institutions and is represented in the parliament. On the other hand, Pedahzur and Brichta (2002), following Rose and Mackie's conceptualization, underline persistence. The more elections a party fights, the more institutionalized it becomes. They also broaden the

concept by adding the elements of legislative and electoral stability which are included in Janda's definition.

Randall and Svåsand (2002) are possibly among the first researchers to distinguish between the institutionalization of party systems and individual parties and criticize the direct transfer of the European perspective on party institutionalization to new democracies (Weissenbach & Bukow, 2019: 164). Their approach does not equate institutionalization with the party's organizational development. Rather, they argue that a party becomes institutionalized in terms of integrated patterns of behavior and attitudes. They offer "an analytic model that distinguishes between internal and external dimensions, and within these between structural and attitudinal aspects to yield four key elements: systemness, value infusion, decisional autonomy, and reification" (Randall & Svåsand, 2002: 24).

Lastly, Arter and Kestilä-Kekkonen (2014) present a composite definition and the systematic operationalization of the concept of party institutionalization in the case of a populist entrepreneur party. They argue that "an institutionalized party will have a stable electoral base, will be served by an organizational structure involving a core membership, an effective candidate supply and a de facto dispersal of roles and authority, and its body of elected representatives will function as a coherent legislative actor" (2014: 937). They also identify adaptability as an essential element of party institutionalization. As a result, their approach includes a "stable support base, persistent electoral participation, internal routinization, legislative cohesion and adaptability" (Harmel, Svåsand, & Mjelde, 2019: 12).

Given all that has been mentioned so far, this study defines institutionalization as the process by which parties become stabilized, organizationally developed, reified in the public mind, and deeply rooted within society. Thus, this definition connects party institutionalization with four dimensions of stability, systemness, reification, and rootedness. Stability and systemness are internal dimensions of party institutionalization, while reification and rootedness are external dimensions of that. The fourth part of this paper will operationalize these variables in view of the empirical analysis.

Political Parties in Turkey

The history of Turkish political parties¹ goes back to the early twentieth century. Political parties played a significant role during the late Ottoman Empire and the founding of modern Turkey. The period from 1923 to 1946 was characterized by a non-competitive, one-party system controlled by the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP, Republican People's Party). Following the transition to democratic politics in the late 1940s, however, the number of parties and their influence in Turkish politics increased significantly (Sayarı, 2002: 10). Among them, the Demokrat Parti (DP, Democrat Party) took over in 1950 and held the majority for a decade until it was closed by the 1960 military intervention. The state attempted to regulate political parties through constitutional provisions in the 1960s. The Political Parties Law (No. 648) was first adopted in 1965, considerably changed in 1983, and has been revised multiple times since then (Sayarı, 2012: 185).

¹ This section gives a brief overview of the history of political parties, party competition, electoral rules, and regulations on party organizations in Turkey. For a detailed discussion of Turkish political parties, see Tunaya (1952); Sayarı (1976); Özbudun (1979); Heper & Landau (1991); Kabasakal (1991); Sarıbay (2001); Özbudun (2011); Sayarı (2012).

Due to the absence of mass support, political competition in the early republican era was mainly limited to intra-elite competition (Sayarı, 2012: 183). The CHP, for example, was a typical cadre party with members from the army commanders, bureaucrats, and local notables, aiming at building a modern nation through socio-economic reforms in a top-down manner. The DP was a cadre party as well. It was founded by former deputies who resigned from the CHP during the political liberalization process after WWII, and its party elite consisted of mostly notables and landlords (Arslantaş & Arslantaş, 2021: 7). Consequently, the competition between political parties was hardly a political reflection of class conflict.

The competition between the CHP and the DP in the 1950s and the closure of the DP by the 1960 military coup had a significant impact on the Turkish party system in the following years. On the one hand, party closure, which is one of the major obstacles to party institutionalization in Turkey, has become normalized. The Constitutional Court has closed 25 political parties since then. Major reasons for closing political parties were violating “the constitutional provisions protecting the indivisible national and territorial integrity of the state” (Özbudun, 2011: 24). On the other hand, the competition between the CHP and the DP has constituted the origins of the center-left and center-right traditions in Turkey. The parliament was mainly dominated by the CHP and the Adalet Partisi (AP, Justice Party), the successor of the DP, during the 1960s and 1970s.

The early 1960s saw “intense competition occurred among several parties for the DP’s votes” (Sayarı, 2002: 13). Eventually, the AP succeeded in replacing the DP. It is worth noting that with the dominance of the AP, a predominant party system was likely to emerge (Ayan-Musil, 2015: 6) but this did not happen because of the electoral volatility, high fragmentation, and ideological polarization in the 1970s (Özbudun, 2000: 74). To illustrate, parliamentary fragmentation increased from 0.57 in 1969 to 0.70 in 1973. The emergence of new right-wing parties such as the Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP, Nationalist Action Party) and the Milli Selamet Partisi (MSP, National Salvation Party) was a key factor in high fragmentation. High fragmentation and ideological polarization contributed to increasing political instability, which was one of the main justifications for the military coup of 1980. Military elites closed down all existing political parties and governed the country without any official party until 1983. As a result, it has undermined continuity in party organization, which is the typical element of party institutionalization.

The military elite intended to turn the party system into a “more manageable two- or three-party system” and stop anti-system parties from having seats in the parliament by interventions in electoral institutions such as the introduction of a 10% national electoral threshold and high constituency thresholds (Özbudun, 2000: 75). They also sought to standardize political parties’ organizations by promulgating the new Political Parties Law (no. 2820). This law, still in force, provides detailed regulations governing party structures and intraparty processes such as membership and funding. It also defines the conditions under which political parties may be prohibited (Sayarı, 2012: 185). Consequently, it is fair to say that it is one of the most detailed and comprehensive laws on political parties in Europe (Arslantaş & Arslantaş, 2021: 9).

Electoral rules have always had a major impact on party institutionalization in Turkey. Following the transition to multiparty politics, Turkey used the simple majority

system with party lists in multi-member districts. The electoral system produced a two-party system as well as great disproportionality during the 1950s. For instance, the DP achieved an average of 54% of votes but 82.6% of seats. The simple majority system was never used again in Turkey after the 1950s. Following the 1960 military intervention, proportional representation with the *d'Hondt* method was applied. Turkey has been using the proportional representation system with various variants of the *d'Hondt* method since 1961. Although the electoral system produces relatively lower disproportionality, major parties tend to get a bigger share of seats than their share of votes, whereas smaller parties tend to achieve a share of seats less than their share of votes. The introduction of a 10% national electoral threshold following the 1980 military intervention had a huge impact on smaller parties. One of the primary goals of the high electoral threshold was “to prevent the entry of the smaller parties into parliament, especially those representing religious, sectarian, and ethnic interests” (Sayarı, 2012: 187).

Despite the 1980 military regime's restrictions and political engineering, political parties began to proliferate in the 1990s, and electoral volatility and fragmentation increased. For example, five out of six parties that participated in the 1991 general election passed the electoral threshold and obtained seats in the parliament. Furthermore, anti-system parties such as the pro-Kurdish Halkın Demokrasi Partisi (HADEP, People's Democracy Party) and the pro-Islamist Refah Partisi (RP, Welfare Party) have grown stronger, whereas centrist parties have become weaker and weaker (Sayarı, 2002: 19). However, since the 2002 electoral earthquake, party competition has seen a series of radical changes, including the decline of electoral volatility and political fragmentation, and the emergence of the predominant party system.

There are a number of important differences between the 1990s and the post-2002 period. First, the number of parties in the parliament has decreased. The number of parties with at least three percent of the seats was four in 1991, five in 1995 and 1999 but two in 2002, three in 2007 and 2011, and four in 2015. It could reach five only in 2018. There has also been a dramatic decline in the effective number of parliamentary parties. It decreased from 4.87 in 1999 to 1.85 in 2002. Although the political fragmentation appeared to increase in the 2010s, it was 3.07 in 2018, which was still lower than that of the 1990s. Second, compared with the 1990s, the largest party became stronger in the 2000s. For example, the first party's vote share was 27% in 1991, 21% in 1995, 22.2% in 1999, 34.3% in 2002, 46% in 2007, and 49.8% in 2011. Also, the seat ratio between the first and second parties increased from 1.1 in 1999 to 2.4 in 2011. Despite the relative loss of power, the AKP still has twice as many seats as the CHP even in 2018. Third, in contrast to the 1990s, the post-2002 period saw single-party governments. This strengthened the durability of governments as well as the centrality of the cabinet in the decision-making process. Fourth, the 1990s saw a high level of electoral volatility. By contrast, parties tend to have a relatively more stable voter base since 2002. There was almost no change in the party competition in the 2010s. Thus, the competition between political parties became ineffective – at least until local elections in 2019.

Although Turkish political parties are relatively stable, the issue of party (system) institutionalization in Turkey has been a controversial subject. On the one hand, compared to new democracies, Turkey shows a relatively high level of party institutionalization and

party system institutionalization (Özbudun, 2000: 73; Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu, 2007). For example, since the coup of 1980, only two different party systems have emerged. On the other hand, Turkish democracy, throughout its history, has suffered from problems hindering institutionalization, such as military interventions (Hale, 1994), lack of intra-party democracy (Celep, 2021), political polarization (Aydın Düzgit, 2019), clientelistic relationships between parties and their supporters (Yıldırım, 2020), and personalization of politics (Selçuk, Hekimci, & Erpul, 2019). While parties are somewhat institutionalized, since the Political Parties Law demands a standard organizational form, party leaders have a tremendous grip over central executive committees, and thus leadership change rarely occurs (Özbudun, 2000: 84).

Research Design

Measuring party institutionalization is not an easy task as it is “multifaceted, difficult to operationalize, and sometimes conducive to the tautological argument” (Gunther & Hopkin, 2002: 193). The main weakness of most research is the failure to address how to quantify and measure party institutionalization (Randall & Svåsand, 2002). To overcome this problem, this paper offers the Party Institutionalization Index (PII). The PII is produced by the systematic operationalization of four dimensions of party institutionalization: stability, systemness, reification, and rootedness. It is based on the indicators and ranking orders of each variable. It should be noted that political parties may display different levels of institutionalization in each dimension. For example, a party may be strong in terms of stability, but weak in terms of reification. Therefore, one should measure all dimensions separately to show a general level of institutionalization. The PII is provided according to the procedure used by Musella and Vercesi (2019). The first step in this process is to calculate the sum of all relevant scores for each dimension. The sum is then divided by the highest possible outcome in the best case. The scores range from 0 to 1, where 0 represents no institutionalization and 1 represents the highest level of institutionalization. The mean score of the four dimensions provides the final index of the institutionalization of parties.

Stability seems to be included in all definitions of institutionalization (Bértoa, 2017: 4). It can broadly be defined as durability, longevity, or persistence. It encompasses 1-) Huntington’s adaptability and 2-) Levitsky’s behavioral routinization. Political parties become more institutionalized when they manage to survive the disappearance of their founders (Panebianco, 1988: 162). The ability to survive and stabilize is a matter of time (Harmel, Svåsand, & Mjelde, 2019: 9). The longer a political party exists, the more institutionalized it becomes. Therefore, stability can be measured by the party’s chronological age and the number of changes in party leadership.²

2 Since short-term changes in party leadership do not contribute to institutionalization, changes can only be counted if a leader held the office for at least a congressional term (about two years) and left.

Table 1
Dimensions and indicators of party institutionalization index

	Stability		Systemness		Reification	Rootedness
	Leadership changes	Chronological age	Membership strength (M/E ratio)	No. of provinces parties organized		
0	No change	-	<1%	≤40	<1%	≥10%
1	1 change	≤5 years	1-5%	40-49	1-5%	7-9%
2	2 changes	6-10 years	6-10%	50-59	6-10%	4-6%
3	≥3 changes	11-15 years	11-15%	60-69	11-15%	1-3%
4	-	16-20 years	≥16%	≥70	16-20%	≤1%
5	-	≥21 years	-	-	≥21%	-

The term “systemness” is used here to refer to structural development, organizational strength, or Huntington’s concept of organizational complexity. Systemness may be defined as the increasing “scale, scope and regularity of the interactions that constitute the party as a structure” (Randall & Svåsand, 2002: 13). Institutionalized parties will have proliferated and differentiated party branches, stable financial resources, a large number of members, geographically large-scale party organizations, and strong coordination between party leadership and party committees. Therefore, systemness can be operationalized using two different indicators: membership strength (membership/electorate ratio) and the number of provinces where parties are organized.

Reification may be defined as the degree to which a political party’s existence is established in the public mind (Randall & Svåsand, 2002: 14). The broad use of the term is sometimes equated with institutionalization (Janda, 1980). Reification refers to the

party's influence over voters' perceptions. Electoral success may be used as an indicator to measure reification. A higher average vote signifies a greater level of institutionalization.

Rootedness broadly refers to the stable relationship between parties and their supporters. Institutionalized parties manage to link representatives and the represented, and send clear and consistent messages to their voters. For stronger societal roots, value-infusion is crucial. As noted by Levitsky (1998: 82), an institutionalized party becomes valued for itself rather than a simple tool to achieve other goals. Value-infusion seems to be stronger when a political party is identified with broader social groups such as urban working-class or religious communities (Randall & Svåsand, 2002: 21). This results in electoral stability. Therefore, political parties deeply rooted within the society will have regular voters identified with the party (Arter & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2014: 5). Rootedness can be operationalized by electoral volatility. The lower the average volatility a party has, the more institutionalized it becomes.

Empirical Findings

A constitutional referendum in 2017 replaced the parliamentary system in Turkey with a presidential system. Several important constitutional changes were approved, such as the abolition of the office of the prime minister, the separation of the legislative and executive powers, and the introduction of the presidency as the head of both the state and the executive. While the parliament preserved its legislative power, its oversight over the executive was reduced (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017: 306). Additionally, the number of seats in the parliament was increased from 550 to 600, and the age limit for MPs was lowered from 25 to 18. Parliamentary terms were extended from four to five years. Parliamentary and presidential elections would be held on the same day every five years, and the president would be elected using a two-round system.

Table 2
Turkish Parliamentary Election Results, 2018

Party	Domestic votes	Election results of foreign and custom gates' ballot boxes	Total votes	%	Seats
AKP	20,559,732	778,961	21,338,693	42.56	295
CHP	11,086,897	267,293	11,354,190	22.65	146
HDP	5,606,622	260,680	5,867,302	11.7	67
MHP	5,444,728	120,603	5,565,331	11.1	49
IYI	4,932,510	60,969	4,993,479	9.96	43
SP	660,749	11,390	672,139	1.34	0
HÜDA PAR	153,649	1,890	155,539	0.31	0
VP	110,849	4,023	114,872	0.23	0

Source: <https://www.ysk.gov.tr/en/past-elections/1852>.

Notes: AKP = Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (The Justice and Development Party), CHP = Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (The Republican People's Party), HDP = Halkların Demokratik Partisi (The Peoples' Democratic Party), MHP = Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (The Nationalist Movement Party), IYI = İyi Parti (The Good Party), SP = Saadet Partisi (The Felicity Party), HÜDA PAR = Hür Dava Partisi (The Free Cause Party), VP = Vatan Partisi (The Patriotic Party).

One year after constitutional amendments, Turkey held a snap election in June 2018. Erdoğan, the candidate of the People's Alliance, got almost 53% of the total votes and was elected president. In the parliamentary elections, whereas the People's Alliance (the AKP and the MHP) gained more than 53% of the total votes, the Nation Alliance (the CHP, the IYI, and the SP) obtained about 34%. The HDP did not participate in any of the alliances and received 11.7% of the total votes. Parliamentary election results by party level are presented in Table 2. The PII is applied to the political parties with a minimum of 1% of the total votes in the 2018 election, except for the IYI. Despite having remarkable support, the IYI is a young party and provides very little data. Therefore, it was not reported in the findings.

The first dimension of party institutionalization, *stability*, broadly refers to persistence. However, as noted before, the institutionalization of Turkish political parties has frequently been interrupted by either military interventions or the Constitutional Court. For example, despite being first founded in 1923, the CHP, along with other parties, was closed by the military coup of 1980 and could be reestablished only in the 1990s. Similarly, although the history of the SP can be traced back to pro-Islamist parties having been formed by Erbakan in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, all of them were closed by the Constitutional Court, and the SP was only established as a new party in the 2000s. Thus, the parties' chronological age is generally lower than their "biological age." As shown in Table 3, the CHP was organized in 1992, the MHP in 1993, the AKP and the SP in 2001, and the HDP in 2014.

Table 3
Party Age, Territorial Comprehensiveness, and Party Membership

Party	Founding Year	No. of provinces where parties are organized (2021)	No. of party members (2021)	No. of the electorate (2018)	Membership / electorate ratio
CHP	1992 (29 years)	81 (100%)	1,288,226	11,354,190	11.3%
MHP	1993 (28 years)	78 (96%)	475,338	5,565,331	8.5%
AKP	2001 (20 years)	81 (100%)	11,589,000	21,338,693	54.3%
SP	2001 (20 years)	72 (89%)	270,979	672,139	8.2%
HDP	2012 (9 years)	44 (54%)	40,678	5,867,302	0.7%

Source: Author's calculations based on official parties', Constitutional Court's, and YSK's data.

Additionally, Turkish political culture is generally shaped by strong leadership. Change in leadership is very rare since party leaders have powerful authority over delegates. Even if most Turkish political parties cannot be categorized as "charismatic parties" (Panebianco, 1988: 143), they are identified with their leaders, and the power of party leaders is reinforced by the Political Parties Law. Parties are too centralized, and central executive committees have the authority to expel recalcitrant local committees. The law also leaves the candidate selection method entirely to the parties themselves, which increases the power of party leaders. Consequently, Turkish political parties exhibit "strong oligarchical tendencies" (Özbudun, 2000: 83). Political leaders' personal appeals also play a significant role in influencing voting behavior, and as a general trend, the personalization of politics has strengthened the personal appeal of political leaders. Thus, political parties are unlikely to stay in power after the leader leaves office.

Moreover, party leaders fail to resolve intra-party conflicts because factions are completely excluded from power and treated as separate parties (Türsan, 1995: 183). Thus, competition over leadership within parties mostly results in the emergence of new parties. For example, the AKP was founded by the former reformist members of the Fazilet Partisi (FP, Virtue Party) after their candidate, Abdullah Gül, lost the election for Chairmanship of the FP in 2000. Recently, the İYİ was founded as a result of splitting from the MHP, while the Gelecek Partisi (GP, Future Party), and the Demokrasi ve Atılım Partisi (DEVA, Democracy and Progress Party) were established by former ministers of the AKP. The Memleket Partisi (MP, Homeland Party), on the other hand, was formed by Muharrem İnce, the former candidate of the CHP in the 2018 presidential elections. Consequently, the AKP, the CHP, and the MHP had only one change in leadership, while the HDP and the SP had two.

Regarding *systemness*, Turkish political parties generally demonstrate a high level of organizational strength because legal regulations in Turkey promote geographically large-scale party organizations. Parties have local units at the province (*il*) and the subprovince (*ilçe*) levels, but they were prohibited from forming organizational networks below the sub-provincial level (*ocak* and *bucak*) following the 1960 military intervention (Sayarı, 1976: 195). Parties must be organized in at least half of the provinces and one-third of all subprovinces within these provinces to be able to run in elections. Consequently, the major parties in Turkey inevitably maintain a strong organizational presence across the country. In other words, their territorial comprehensiveness is quite high. According to Yardımcı-Geyikçi (2015: 531), territorial comprehensiveness means “a nationwide organizational presence, which demonstrates the spatial organizational expansion of political parties.” For example, as shown in Table 3, parties in the parliament, except the HDP, have local organizations in almost all provinces throughout the country. Even the SP, which obtains only 1.3% of votes, has 89% of territorial comprehensiveness.

On the other hand, most of the parties' local bodies are weak in terms of financing and staff. Party organizations in more urbanized, industrialized, and developed regions are complex and active. By contrast, parties' local bodies in less developed cities are relatively weak and work “only as intermittent structures, with little or no organizational activity between elections” (Sayarı, 1976: 198). Nevertheless, local bodies perform some important tasks like “electoral campaigning and candidate selection, which in turn inevitably makes them more than ‘paper’ organizations” (Yardımcı-Geyikçi, 2015: 531).

Furthermore, in contrast to contemporary Europe (Van Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012), party membership in Turkey is considerably high. Almost a quarter of the electorate in Turkey has a party membership. Özbudun believes that the high membership/electorate ratio in Turkey may be explained by the “clientelistic nature of Turkish political parties” (Özbudun, 2006: 553). Party membership is considered a means to gain personal benefits when the party comes to power. For example, the Anavatan Partisi (ANAP, Motherland Party), which held the majority of seats from 1983 to 1991, had more than six million party members but obtained only 1.6 million votes in the 2002 election. Incumbent parties are seen as useful tools for networking because party members have almost no obligations but certain rights. Consequently, as shown in Table 3, the ruling AKP has the highest membership/electorate ratio today (54.3%).

The last two dimensions are *reification* and *rootedness*. The former refers to the party's influence over voters' perceptions, while the latter implies a stable voter base. Since 2002, the AKP has successfully managed to mobilize right-wing voters and become a predominant party. It has won all six elections since 2002 with an average of 44% of the votes. Despite having lost a lot of support in recent elections, it is still the largest party in Turkey in terms of both the number of votes and members. Thus, the AKP's electoral volatility is higher than that of other parties. Concerning the CHP, it was a minor party in the 1990s and even failed to have seats in 1999 because of the high level of fragmentation. In the election of 2002, however, it won 32% of the seats. Having a consistent performance, the CHP has been the second-largest party in Turkey since 2002.

The MHP, on the other hand, has a more volatile voter base. It won 8.2% of the votes in 1995 and could not enter parliament. With the rise of nationalist tendencies in the late 1990s, it managed to obtain 18% of the votes in 1999 but failed to get seats in 2002. It won 14.3% of the votes in 2007, and 13.0% in 2011. Despite increasing to 16.3% in June 2015, the MHP's votes decreased to 11.1% in 2018. With 5.8 million votes, the HDP is similar to the MHP in terms of voter size but has a more stable support base. In the 2000s, the HDP elites sought various strategies to pass the high electoral threshold.³ For example, since there are no national thresholds for independents, by nominating independent candidates, Kurdish nationalists were able to bypass the electoral threshold in 2007 and 2011 (Sayarı, 2012: 187). The HDP was officially established in 2012 and successfully managed to get 13.1% of the votes in its very first election. It won 11.9% of the votes in November 2015, and 11.1% in 2018.

Table 4 provides the political parties' scores on each dimension. It also presents the general score of party institutionalization, namely the PII. From this data, it can be seen that the CHP has the highest PII score (0.80), whereas the HDP has the lowest PII score (0.50). The SP's score is 0.74, the AKP's score is 0.72, and the MHP's score is 0.65. Along with a relatively stable voter base and successful leadership changes, higher chronological age, membership strength and territorial comprehensiveness are key factors to determine the high level of institutionalization of the CHP.

Table 4
Political Parties' Institutionalization Scores by Dimensions

Dimension of institutionalization	AKP	CHP	MHP	HDP	SP
Stability	0.63	0.75	0.75	0.50	0.75
Systemness	1.00	0.88	0.75	0.13	1.00
Reification	1.00	0.80	0.60	0.60	0.20
Rootedness	0.25	0.75	0.50	0.75	1.00
<i>The PII</i>	<i>0.72</i>	<i>0.80</i>	<i>0.65</i>	<i>0.50</i>	<i>0.74</i>

These results suggest that Turkish political parties' institutionalization scores, except the HDP's, are relatively high. A possible explanation for this might be the length of the democratic experience. Turkey's transition to competitive politics was developed in the

3 The high electoral threshold continues to be one of the major obstacles to party institutionalization in Turkey. While the electoral threshold was not abolished by the 2017 Constitutional Referendum, it was transformed into a bloc threshold as the electoral system led to pre-election alliances.

1950s, long before most new democracies (Öney & Selck, 2017: 2). Another explanation for this is the institutional rules (Yardımcı-Geyikçi, 2015: 535). The Political Parties Law demands a relatively standard organizational model that is composed of party congresses and elected executive committees at the national and local levels (Özbudun, 2000: 83). Parties in young democracies, however, are more like personalistic parties than party organizations with a fixed program (Amundsen, 1997; Bedelski, 1994).

The HDP's low score may be explained by its limited local units throughout the country and its lower membership strength. Despite its attempt to develop a nationwide organizational presence, the HDP has local party organizations in only 44 cities. It is possible to argue that the HDP is still a regional party. The party's voter support and organizational capacity are much stronger in the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey. The HDP is also the party with the fewest party members among the parties having a political group in the parliament. The party has almost 6 million votes but 40,678 members. To conclude, it is possible to say that pro-Kurdish parties have long suffered from party closures and national thresholds, which have a detrimental effect on party institutionalization.

The results also indicate that a political party may have significantly different scores on each dimension. For example, the AKP is very strong in terms of systemness and reification but relatively weak in terms of stability and rootedness. Because it has the highest score among parties on the dimension of reification, electoral success seems to play a more important role in determining the AKP's level of institutionalization. On the contrary, the SP displays a lower level of institutionalization on the dimension of reification but a higher general level of party institutionalization.

Although the AKP has a strong organizational presence across the country and the highest membership/electorate ratio, it has a lower PII score than the CHP and the SP. There are several possible explanations for this result. First, the AKP is a relatively younger party than the CHP or the MHP. Second, except for the short period of Davutoğlu, the AKP did not have any successful leadership changes. Third, it is still unclear whether the party will survive a longer period after Erdoğan leaves office. Fourth, the AKP has been the ruling party since 2002 but if it loses in 2023, then it would become more difficult to maintain internal coherence. As a result, the AKP appears to be more dependent on electoral success than other parties.

Conclusion

The present study was designed to examine the factors determining party institutionalization. The main goal of the current study was to combine theoretical approaches to party institutionalization with empirical operationalization. This article provided an overview of party institutionalization in Turkey.

The major shortcoming of most studies on party institutionalization in Turkey is the failure to operationalize and measure party institutionalization. This study appears to be the first study to provide a single measurement of party institutionalization by proposing viable indicators. Thus, this work contributes to existing knowledge of party institutionalization not only by providing empirical findings but also by establishing a

quantitative framework. The major advantage of the PII is that it measures four dimensions separately and provides a final index of the institutionalization to range parties from 0 to 1.

This study has argued that political parties with higher membership strength, geographically large-scale units, higher chronological age, more leadership changes, lower electoral volatility, and greater electoral success will become more institutionalized and survive longer. The findings of this study suggest that the CHP appears to be a well-institutionalized party.

A limitation of this study is that it did not deal with the relationship between party models and party institutionalization. Party institutionalization was very much associated with the mass party model that originated in established democracies (Panebianco, 1988). Unlike mass parties (Duverger, 1964), electoral-professional parties (Panebianco, 1988), entrepreneurial parties (Harmel & Svåsand, 1993), business-firm parties (Hopkin & Paolucci, 1999) or charismatic parties (Pedahzur & Brichta, 2002) rely heavily on the personal charisma of their leaders, which appears to be a major obstacle to institutionalization. Thus, further studies should be undertaken to explore how personal parties can be durable.

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