

A Comparative Analysis of the Approaches of Political Parties and Women's Organizations in Turkey on Gender Equality and Women's Issues

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Abstract

This paper deals with how gender inequality and the major issues facing women are represented in the policy texts of political parties and within the strategies of women's organizations in Turkey. Thus, it attempts to reveal different and similar perspectives on the gender regime in the political and civic sphere. For this purpose, it utilizes the content analysis method to look for answers to the following questions: What are the main foci of political parties and women's organizations on women's issues? What are the policies of political parties and women's organizations about the issues that women face in modern society? This paper compares political parties and women's organizations in terms of their objectives on gender equality and women's rights. Thus, it will be possible to understand the approaches of the political parties and women's organizations on women's issues and the main themes of their discourses on women's rights and to provide a holistic view of the inadequacies of policies on women's rights and gender equality. The study concluded that political parties deal with women's issues on the basis of ideological priorities while the women's civil society organizations and women's rights activists aim at advancing women's rights.

Keywords: *Gender equality, women's organizations, gender regime, women's issues, political parties*

Türkiye'deki Siyasi Partilerin ve Kadın Örgütlerinin Cinsiyet Eřitlięi ve Kadın Sorunları Konusundaki Yaklařımlarının Karşılařtırılmalı Bir Analizi

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Öz

Bu makale, cinsiyet eřitilsizlięinin ve kadınların karşı karşıya olduęu temel sorunların siyasi partilerin politika metinlerinde ve Türkiye'deki kadın örgütlerinin stratejileri içinde nasıl temsil edildięini ele almakta, böylelikle siyasi ve sivil alanda cinsiyet rejimine iliřkin farklı ve benzer bakıř açılarını ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla, siyasi partilerin ve kadın örgütlerinin kadın meselelerindeki ana odaklarının ne olduęu ve modern toplumda kadınların karşılařtıęı sorunlarla ilgili siyasi partilerin ve kadın örgütlerinin konuyu nasıl ele aldıkları sorularına yanıt aranmıřtır. Bu makale, siyasi partileri ve kadın örgütlerini cinsiyet eřitlięi ve kadın hakları konusundaki hedefleri ačíısından karşılařtırmakta, siyasi partilerin ve kadın örgütlerinin kadın sorunlarına yaklařımlarını ve kadın hakları konusundaki söylemlerinin ana temalarını anlamak ve kadın hakları ve toplumsal cinsiyet eřitlięi politikalarının yetersizlięine bütüncül bir bakıř sağlamaktadır. Çalışma, siyasi partilerin kadın sorunlarını ideolojik öncelikler temelinde ele alırken, kadın sivil toplum örgütleri ve kadın hakları aktivistlerinin kadın haklarını ilerletmeyi amaçladıęı sonucuna ulařmıřtır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Cinsiyet eřitlięi, kadın örgütleri, cinsiyet rejimi, kadın sorunları, siyasi partiler*

Introduction

The first wave of feminism appeared in the early 20th century when women's organizations aimed at equality in civic and political rights in Turkey. The idea of becoming a Westernized society required legal equality between all citizens irrespective of gender. The first wave of feminism rose along with the establishment of the Republic in 1923 as a part of the legal, educational, and social reforms that targeted rapid modernization, urbanization, and Westernization (Diner and Toktaş, 2010). The roots of the feminist movement of Turkey go back to the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. During the first decade of the Republic, many steps were taken to enable women to get involved in public, political, and professional life and encourage more equality in family matters. Women's emancipation became a significant symbol of modernity. Then, the movement of women almost disappeared in nationalist and socialist movements in the 1970s. Following the military intervention in 1980, new female identities (such as Islamist, Kurdish, Alevite) became appeared changing the feminist movement in Turkey. All the modernist reforms brought along women's participation in the public sphere (Merçil and Senemoğlu, 2014).

The women's movement in Turkey is not homogeny. It exists a distinction between secular feminists and Islamist women in Turkey's increasingly polarized political realm along the ideological axes of secularism and Islamism. The impact of this polarization on the women's movement in Turkey may be identified as the "gender equality versus gender justice" debate between feminists and Islamists (Simga and Goker, 2017). The ideological divergence in Turkey has been reflected in women's movements such as Kemalist feminists, Islamist feminists, Kurdish feminists (Coşar and Özkan-Kerestecioglu, 2017). In Turkey, the women's movement has constructed a self-identity independent from existing political ideologies and achieved a high level of institutionalization and led to the increase in WROs' political influence (Coşar and Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2008).

The policy of strengthening civil society in the 1990s and good governance agenda led to the expansion of the public sphere through fostering the creation of social actors who would both serve as representatives of diverse interest groups and work to hold the state to account. Hence, the

growth of 'civil society organizations' has offered women's organizations and movements the possibility of exerting influence on the policy process from outside formal political institutions (Cornwall and Goetz, 2005, p. 789). From past to present, the political discourse on women's rights has changed, ranging from ignoring women to addressing women's issues from a feminist perspective. Women's rights and issues have gained attention during the last few decades, but both the type and level of attention have varied according to the ideology of the party (Kabasakal Arat, 2017, p.240). In this respect, it is important to comparatively analyze the discourses of both WROs and political parties to understand the current state of women's rights.

In this paper, I have addressed how gender inequality and the major issues facing women are evaluated in the policy texts of political parties and within the strategies of women's organizations. Thus, I have attempted to identify their approach to gender and women's rights and the limitations of the policies on women's issues. For this purpose, I employed content analysis to explore the main characteristics of the approaches of the political parties and women's organizations towards gender and women's rights, and looked for answers to the following questions: What are the main foci of political parties and women's organizations on women's issues? What are the policies of the political parties and women's organizations on the problems that women face in modern society? What is the meaning of the differences and similarities between them?

This paper aims to compare political parties and women's organizations in terms of their objectives on gender equality and women's rights. The study has two major goals: First, to identify the gender discourse of the political parties and women's organizations, second, to explore the inadequacies of policies on women's issues based on ideological distinctions. Thus, it will be possible to understand the approaches of the political parties and women's organizations on women's issues and the major themes of their discourses on women's rights. This research on the strategies of political parties and women's organizations presents a holistic view of whether policies on women's rights and gender equality are adequate.

A Brief History of the Women's Movement in Turkey

Feminist history writing in Turkey dates back to the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. While the Ottoman modernization process involved certain reforms against subordination of women, a more comprehensive transformation was observed in the early republican era (1923-1945). State feminism represents the process of recognizing women's demands for liberal equal rights on the one hand and silencing down feminist voices with potential for the independent organization on the other hand. Thus, women's roles have been defined over the dual identity of de-feminized citizens and national mothers. Turkish women have been portrayed as educated and skilled individuals who would contribute to the republican patriarchy as wives and mothers (Coşar and Özkan-Kerestecioğlu, 2017). Women's struggles during the late imperial period (1869-1923) were begun to rise and named 'Ottoman feminism' for the first time within feminist political discourse. The Republican reforms brought about major changes and transformations in women's status and led them to enter the public sphere. The achievements of women's right to vote in municipal elections (1930) and national elections (1934) were seen as a step of the democratization process under the early period of the Republic of Turkey (Çakır, 2007, pp. 61-63).

The women's movement emerged in the nineteenth century and the women's organizations were developments being peculiar to the upper strata of society. The activities of these organizations pre-dominantly covered charity work and demands for women's education. The second stage started with the foundation of the Republic (1923), lasted until the 1980s and was framed by discourses on nation-state building (Coşar and Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2008). The first wave of feminism occurred in Turkey in the early 20th century, when women's organizations targeted equality in civic and political rights. The Kemalist idea of becoming a Westernized society required legal equality between all citizens irrespective of gender. In the environment of 1920s and 1930s, at a time when a modern state was institutionalized by civil and political rights that were constitutionally protected, feminists were suffragettes, similar to their counterparts in the West, who encouraged women's political participation. The second wave of feminism in Turkey was a latecomer in comparison to its counterpart in

the West. The 1980s' second-wave feminist movement focused on the elimination of violence against women and referred to a more intense 'gendered' worldview in comparison to the first wave. This 1980s' feminism directly targeted patriarchy, criticized male hegemony and demanded improvement of women's status. In the 1990s, third-wave feminism was identity-oriented, diversified, differentiated, and fragmented in accordance with the ethnic, religious, or sexual identity of the women who made these demands. With the rise of identity politics on the one hand and the rising criticism of Kemalism on the other, polarization and fragmentation emerged within Turkish feminism (Diner and Toktaş, 2010). The third stage also appeared in the late 1980s. To sum up, the first phase of the movement demanding equality with men regardless of differences started in the nineteenth century and continued until the 1980s. Today, the movement is in its second phase demands "equality despite differences" (Coşar and Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2008).

Furthermore, the international community and the rising importance of NGOs have influenced politics as well as the activities of feminists in Turkey in various ways. The number of organizations working to enhance women's rights and status has increased. More women work actively in civil society organizations and have become active participants in politics and decision-making processes. These developments have directed governments to formulate policies to advance women's rights and reduce discrimination against women (Diner and Toktaş, 2010). During the 1980s, feminists had a negative attitude toward the state because of being the guardian of the patriarchal system. Throughout the 1990s, this attitude was gradually replaced by a tendency to establish a constructive relationship with the state. The increased interest of state authorities in acting together with WROs is associated with a rising tide of civil society activism in the past two decades (Coşar and Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2008).

In Turkey, feminist organizing gained momentum in the post-1980 period and made a claim for an alternative public sphere. In the 1980s, an independent feminist movement emerged, as well as the first phase of the neoliberal transformation process in Turkey. The post-1980 period is characterized by neoliberal policies. Women began to voice their demands from an independent feminist perspective in such a political context. The post-1980 feminist movement gained widespread publicity in a short time.

In this respect, it focused on identity rights and social rights to challenge the patriarchy in neoliberal frames rather than the anti-capitalist struggle. Within the scope of the neo-liberalization process in Turkey, identity-based politics were instrumentalized as a means of depoliticization. This depoliticization dealt with women's issues as either private or administrative matters rather than as a mobilizing force for an alternative political stance. In this respect, the distinctiveness of the post-1980 feminist movement in Turkey lies in its ability to construct its own political agenda as differently from the women's rights discourses in the late Ottoman Empire and early republican era in Turkey and to struggle with patriarchy (Coşar and Özkan-Kerestecioglu, 2017).

The efforts of feminists to amend existing policies and create new policies to further women's rights sped up in the late 1990s and 2000s as the country took serious steps to align its laws with the laws of the EU. Besides EU pressure, women's organizations, most of which are run by secular feminist women, have been influential actors in highlighting which policies should be fore fronted (Aldikaçti Marshall, 2013). By the end of the 1990s, the feminist struggle against patriarchy transformed into an issue-based specialization rather than ideological concerns. Throughout the 2000s, and especially after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power (2002-), the neoliberal structural transformation reached its last stage. Besides neoliberalism, conservatism (political Islamism) has gained momentum in political discourse and practice. Likewise, throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, the need to make gender-sensitive legal and institutional reforms occupied an important place in governmental discourse (Coşar and Özkan-Kerestecioglu, 2017). On the other hand, Arat (2010) claims that the gendered implications of the intertwining of Islam and politics reproduce restrictive sex roles for women, and the propagation of patriarchal religious values promotes gender inequality.

Coşar and Gençoğlu Onbaşı (2008, p. 331) point out three dimensions that have had both strategic and essential implications for the women's movement in the last two decades. The first dimension concerns the changing sociopolitical structure in Turkey in the aftermath of the 1980 coup d'état. The second dimension concerns the rise of transnational feminism, which has provided the means and methods for cooperation among WROs on national and international levels. The third dimension concerns

the shifts in Turkish politics since 1980 and the coming to power of AKP in 2002.

The Kemalist and Islamist political identities within contemporary Turkish women's movement bring about the crystallization of the division between Islamist 'feminists' and Kemalist feminists (Coşar, 2007, p.128). Güneş-Ayata and Doğangün (2017) point out that with the loss of momentum in EU membership and the alliance between the ruling party's conservatism and neo-liberalism, a religious-conservative gender regime has emerged. This gender regime relies on the reconceptualization of the family and motherhood regarding religion, tradition, and customs. In Turkey's traditional society, these references have led to underestimating the gender equality notion, unleashing underlying traditional norms and limiting the social absorption of legal changes.

In the early 2000s, while the AKP government had promoted women's rights, after 2011, its policies regarding gender equality altered, and the government-WRO relationship transformed into an ideological polarization. The gender regime in Turkey during the post-2011 period has been framed by the gender justice approach formulated concerning Islam. For example, violence against women is one of the critical issues pointing to the polarization between opponents and pro-government WROs on the gender equality versus gender justice debate. While opponent groups do problematize violence against women within the contours of gender inequality, pro-government WROs and the state deal with this problem on the individual level by completely ignoring the patriarchal norms (Koyuncu and Özman, 2018).

These narratives have focused on the ideological analysis and key points of the women's movement in Turkey. This study points out the need for further analysis of the main actors in the political realm and examines the policies of the political parties and women's civil society organizations to identify the ideological differentiate and gaps in women's policies.

Method

This study is based on combination of textual analysis and content analysis. New school content analysis moves towards a merger with textual analysis techniques as it begins to search out themes (Anderson, 2012). The

analysis was conducted on data generated through policy documents. In this study, the sample consisted of the election declarations of political parties and the declarations and principles of women's organizations. Women's policies of the political parties that have seats in the Parliament and the discourse of women's organizations representing different political dispositions were examined in order to reveal the current situation and approaches on women's issues. The attitudes of political parties towards women are important in terms of construction of a societal projection and the future. On the other hand, women's organizations have a key role in influencing policymakers and advancing women's rights. Thus, this study is based on a thematic analysis of the discourse of these organizations. The thematic analysis was conducted in the context of the founding texts of women's organizations where they define their objectives and principles. For the analysis, the websites of women's organizations were utilized.

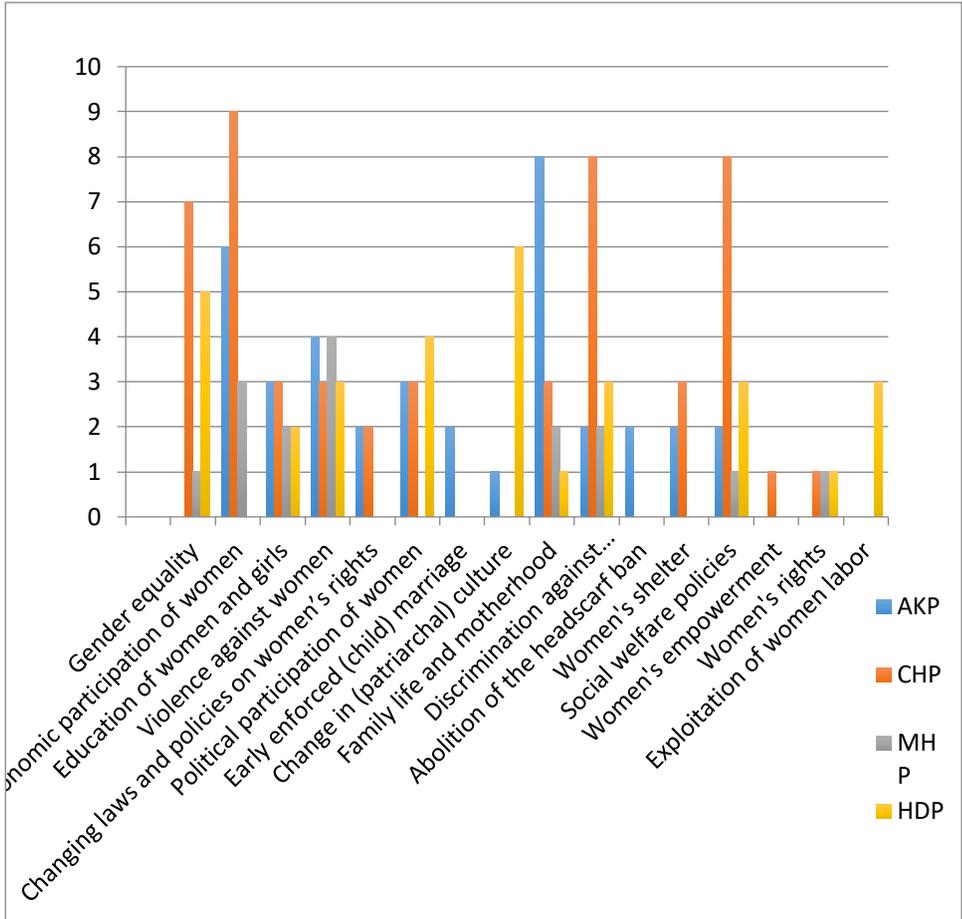
Thematic analysis is a commonly used approach to the analysis of qualitative data. It includes searching and reviewing themes. The aim of analysis is to develop a rich description of the dataset and account for one particular aspect. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to describe the approaches of political parties and women's organizations on women's rights and present a clear picture of "what is going on." The study is expected to have results that will clarify problem situations and highlight differences.

I analyzed the key themes relevant to women's rights within the policy texts of political parties and women's organizations by using the content analysis method and measured the frequency of distribution of themes. To reveal the ideological perspective and differences within the texts, I used Doyle's (2015) analysis categories on women's issues in this way:

- Gender equality
- Economic participation of women
- Education of women and girls
- Violence against women and domestic abuse
- Changing laws and policies on women's rights
- Political participation of women
- Early enforced (child) marriage
- Change in (patriarchal) culture

Analysis of Political Parties

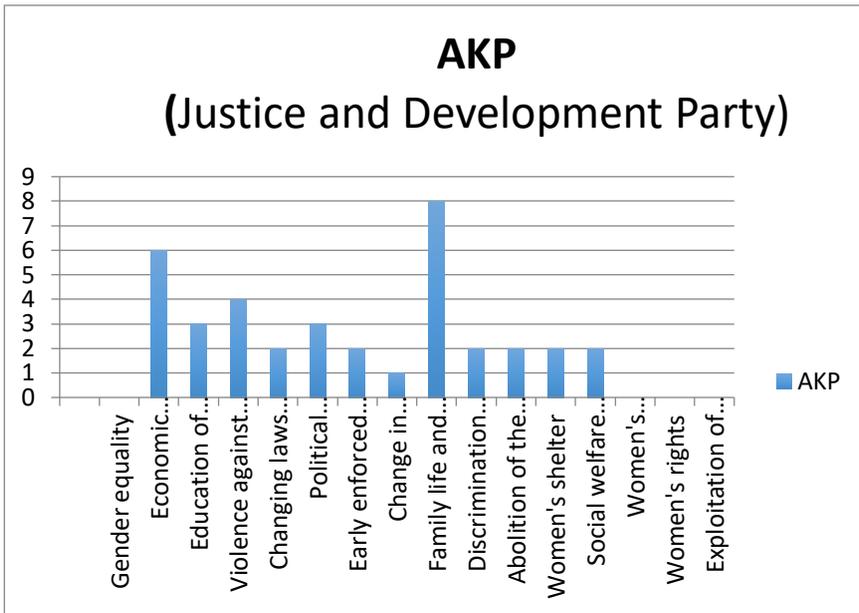
The graphs below go into detail about the approaches of political parties and show the frequency distribution of themes. Looking at the themes with the highest frequencies divided by political parties, it is seen that AKP (Justice and Development Party) gave priority to the themes of family life and motherhood, while CHP (Republican People's Party) pointed out the economic participation of women in the meaning of women's employment and entrepreneurship. The second most mentioned theme was the social welfare rights of women and preventing discrimination against women. On the other hand, right-wing nationalist MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) touched less on women's structural issues and put violence against women at the forefront. It may be stated that pro-Kurdish HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) is the most pro-women political party since it has a specific declaration for women. It aims at the struggle with patriarchy and empowering the political participation of women. Gender equality is more emphasized by CHP and HDP than AKP and MHP. That AKP prefers not using the notion of gender equality means it does not accept gender equality and reproduces the traditional roles of women in family life (see Graph 1).



Graph 1. Distribution of themes (Frequency)

The most highlighted themes of AKP are family life and motherhood, as well as economic participation of women. In the 2019 local election declaration of AKP, women were depicted as fragile like aggrieved and oppressed communities and mentioned with elder people and children. It may be stated that this frame implies as if women are in a secondary and needy position. Furthermore, in the 2018 presidential election declaration of AKP, women were presented along with family and children policies, and it underlined the family structure specifically for the survival of the society. In the party program of AKP, women's principal roles in rising healthy generations are mentioned. This approach highlights motherhood.

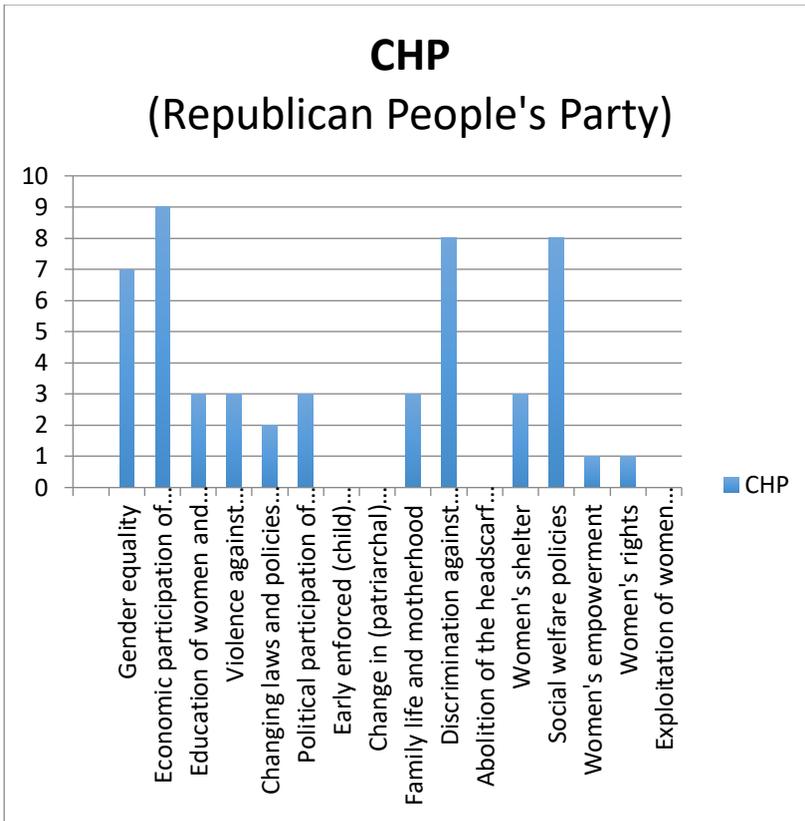
Furthermore, in the 2018 election declaration, equal opportunities for men and women, female entrepreneurship and the amendments in favor of women in the penal code were mentioned. However, the party did not prefer to use the term gender equality. Women were framed in the same context as children, the elderly and the disabled as a fragile and disadvantaged group and also with their key roles in family life (see Graph 2).



Graph 2. The themes of AKP on women's issues

CHP pointed out three themes: the economic participation of women in the meaning of women's employment and entrepreneurship, social welfare rights of women and preventing discrimination against women. In the party program of CHP, gender equality, women's liberation, women's participation, education of women and girls, discrimination against women and violence against women appear as the most powerful themes. Gender equality has been highlighted frequently under different subjects. Furthermore, women's employment, eliminating discrimination against women in working life, social welfare rights and women's political participation are important themes. In the 2018 election declaration of CHP,

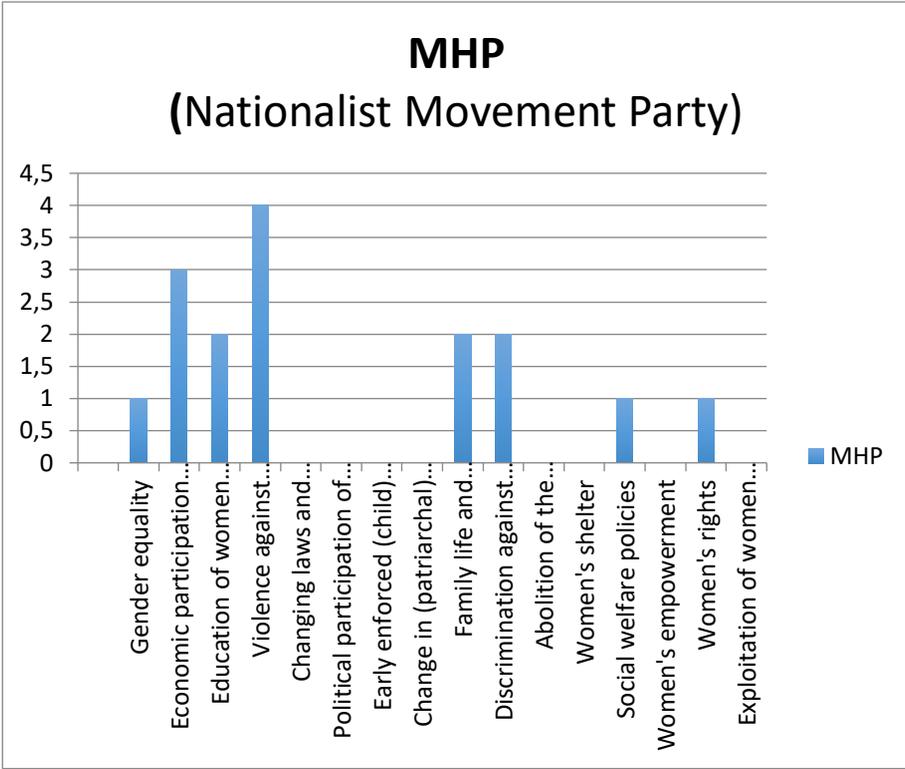
women's issues were collected under different topics such as economy, gender equality, education, social and political participation. This classification included detailed policies and indicated powerful social welfare regulations to improve women's economic conditions and positions in the society, protection of equality and combating discrimination in working life. The party also emphasized that barriers to women's decision-making on their own bodies, such as childbirth and abortion would be removed (see Graph 3).



Graph 3. The themes of CHP on women's issues

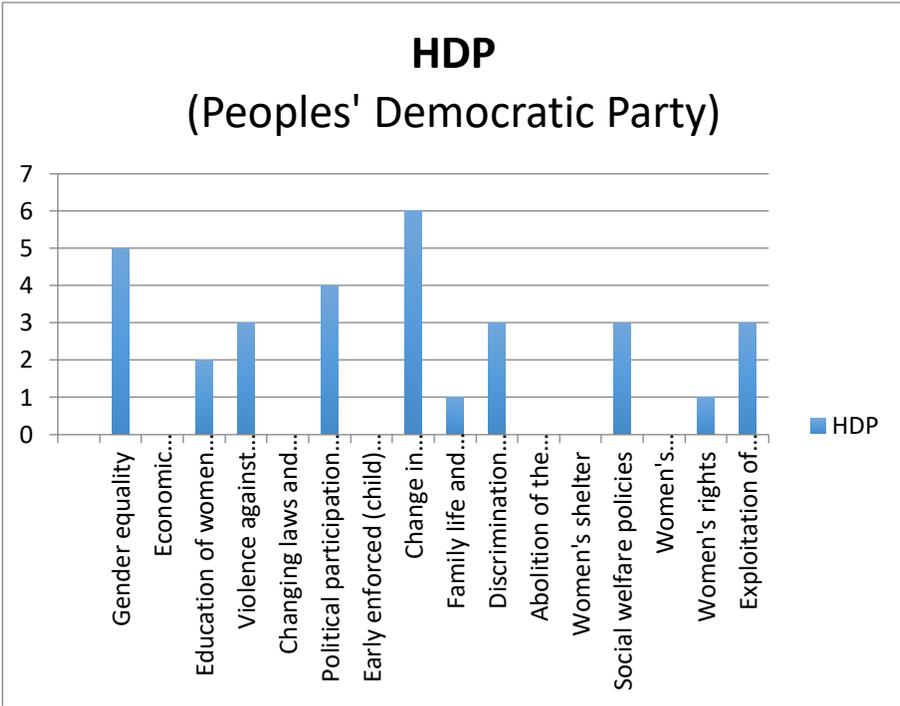
In the party program of MHP, topics such as women's participation in the labor market, women's education and violence against women are dealt with, and women are framed within the family and child topics in

particular. While gender equality is mentioned only once, political participation of women was not emphasized (see Graph 4).



Graph 4. The themes of MHP on women's issues

HDP's priorities are the struggle with patriarchy, gender equality and exploitation of women's labor. In the party program of HDP, it is highlighted that consolidation of the patriarchal system under the name of "morality" is unacceptable, and HDP is a non-sexist political party (see Graph 5).



Graph 5. The themes of HDP on women's issues

Furthermore, it is indicated that women's participation will be provided directly in local governments through women's assemblies composed of women in local, the struggles will be supported against the unequal positions of female workers, laborers in the production process and for women's social rights. It is also noted that HDP will take an attitude in favor of women in all kinds of oppression and exploitation that women are socially exposed to. It is also the first and sole political party that draws attention to LGBT rights. In order to strengthen solidarity among women, HDP released a declaration in the 2018 election on women's assembly and drew attention to the struggle against patriarchy and malestream values and for women's having an active role in the political area, as well as gender equality.

Analysis of Women's Organizations

The research includes five women's organizations representing different political dispositions: Kemalist, socialist, liberal, Islamic, and feminist.

Association for Assisting and Training Woman Candidates (KA.DER) is a women's organization that advocates equal representation of women and men in all fields of life. KADEM (Women and Democracy Association) aims at providing equal opportunities for balancing the domestic and social roles of women. The Turkish Women's Union (TKB) aims to achieve women's political rights and equal participation in social life. The Progressive Women's Association (İKD) aims to improve the rights of women in the social, political and economic spheres and ensure equality between women and men. KİH-YÇ (Women's Human Rights - New Ways Association) is an independent women's organization that aims to defend women's human rights. It works on local, national, regional and international levels to promote full implementation of women's human rights and women's participation in all spheres of life as free individuals and equal citizens (see Table 1).

Table 1. Women's Organizations

	Ideological position
KADER (Association for Assisting and Training Woman Candidates)	Liberal
KADEM (Women and Democracy Association)	Islamist /Pro-government
TKB (Turkish Women's Union)	Kemalist
İKD (The Progressive Women's Association)	Socialist
KİH-YÇ (Women's Human Rights - New Ways Association)	Feminist

Women's organizations do aim at advancing gender equality and women's rights by activities to raise societal awareness on women's issues, including legal rights, education, employment, gender discrimination and violence against women. In general, organizations are seen to work on a wide variety of different issues, and most organizations focus on more than one issue, but the themes that are highlighted may be differentiated from each other. These differences stem from these organizations' ideological positions.

In the 1980s and 1990s, women's movements arose and began to mature in Turkey. Women's organizations representing diverse positions began to engage in a dialogue with the Turkish state. The gender dis-

course ranges from socialist feminism and radical feminism to Islamic feminism. Socialist feminists argue that gender equality would come with a socialist order accompanied by dismantling of patriarchal practices, while radical feminists indicate how tradition and culture have perpetuated patriarchy and relegated all women to the status of second-class citizens. The women in the Islamist sphere maintain that women do not need to insist on equality. Instead of equality, they aim to improve women's situation. Islamic women's groups defend turning to Turkish society's traditions instead of Western norms. Finally, Kemalist women's organizations have underlined secularism to uphold rights that Atatürk gave women against religious conservatism (Kardam and Ertürk, 1999). Since 1980s and 1990s, women's organizations have expanded their spheres of influence and produced solutions toward women's empowerment, gender sensitiveness of public opinion and gender-sensitive policymaking within state institutions.

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution of the key themes. Accordingly, the first-three themes most mentioned were political participation of women, gender equality and violence against women (see Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency distribution of key themes

	KA.DER	KADEM	TKB	İKD	KİH-YÇ	Total
Gender equality	1	-	3	3	6	13
Economic participation of women	1	1	1	1	1	5
Education of women and girls	-	-	3	4	1	8
Violence against women	1	1	5	3	1	11
Changing laws and policies on women's rights	2	-	4	-	1	7
Political participation of women	9	1	4	1	-	15
Early enforced (child) marriage	-	-	-	-	2	2
Change in (patriarchal) culture	1	-	-	1	-	2
Family life, motherhood, traditional roles	-	6	-	1	-	7
Discrimination against women/ Disadvantaged group	3	1	1	2	2	9
Women's liberation	1	-	-	4	1	5
Social welfare policies	-	-	-	6	1	7
Women's empowerment	2	-	-	-	-	2
Women's rights	-	-	-	-	4	4
Exploitation of women's labor	-	-	-	7	-	7
Secularism	1	-	-	-	-	1
Equality of opportunity	-	1	-	-	-	1

KA.DER (Association for Assisting and Training Woman Candidates) is a women's organization that advocates equal representation of women

and men in all fields of life. Its prominence lies not only in its broadly based membership but also in its success in raising public consciousness regarding the gender quota. KA.DER sees equality between women and men in all elected and appointed decision-making bodies, where decisions concerning society and the individuals are made, as a matter of democracy. Considering the political arena's determinative characteristic on social life, KA.DER defines ensuring equal representation, primarily in politics, as its main objective (KA. DER, 2020). In addition to ensuring equal representation, the other themes that KA.DER emphasized were as follows:

- To eliminate economic, social, cultural and legal obstacles
- To remove discriminatory statements directed at women from laws and regulations.
- To have laws which secure women's rights and liberation.
- To empower women in general and encourage them to use, defend and expand their rights. KA.DER has declared support for female candidates embracing a secular republic, respecting human rights, full democracy and the rule of law.

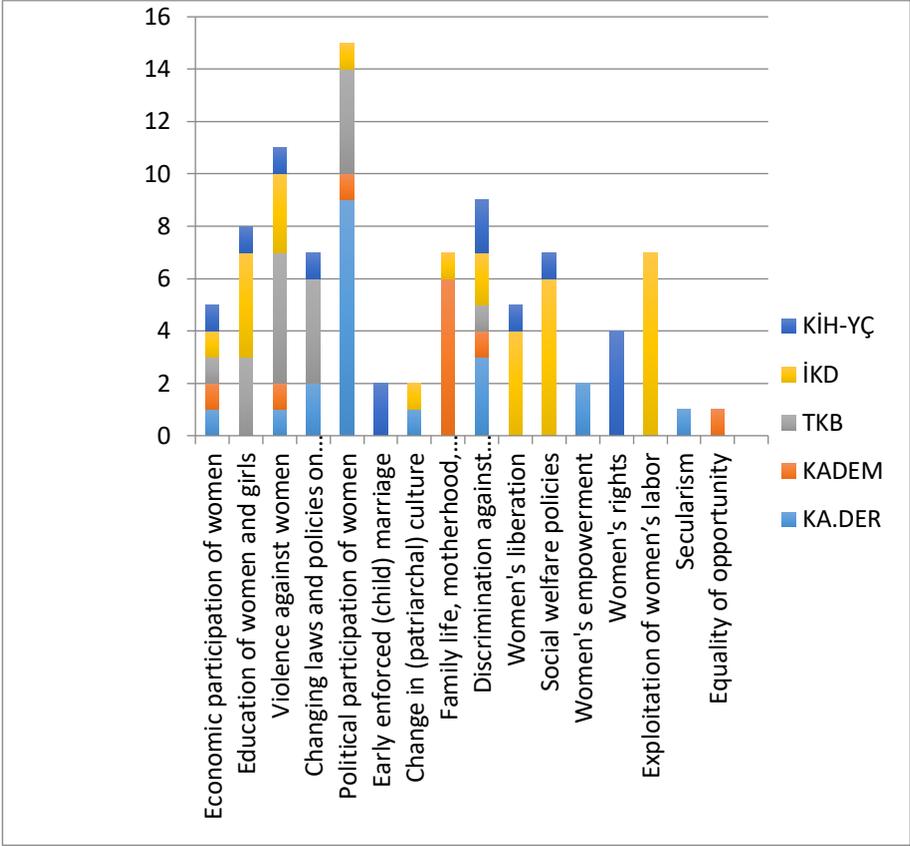
KADEM (Women and Democracy Association) aims to disseminate socio-cultural values and establish a collective consciousness in the society on women's rights and equal opportunities for balancing the domestic and social roles of women (KADEM, 2020). KADEM is a women's organization representing religious conservative values. It points out reviving cultural values in order to strengthen family unity and adopts the concept of "gender justice" instead of gender equality. It also identifies women and men as complementing each other rather than positioned to the opposite of each other. KADEM gives priority to the traditional roles of women in family life.

TKB (Turkish Women's Union) has carried out effective work toward raising the level of education, organization and awareness of contemporary women, as Atatürk envisaged. TKB gives particular importance to elimination of provisions being contrary to equality between men and women in legislation. It has supported the "Equality Before the Law" campaign and contributed to the amendment of the Civil Code and the Penal Code. TKB hosts the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Civil Society Executive Committee and maintains the secretariat of CEDAW. The background of the

Turkish Women's Union dates back to 1924, so it carries the modernist values of the founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey (TKB, 2020). While it targets equality in civics and political rights, it does not touch on other women's issues such as a change in the patriarchal culture, exploitation of women's labor and identity politics. The Turkish Women's Union represents the first wave of feminism in Turkey.

IKD (The Progressive Women's Association) represents 'socialist feminism'. IKD, which dates back to 1970s, was re-established in 2012 as an association for women's demands for equality, freedom and justice, and put the struggle against capitalism at the center of its aims (IKD, 2020). Especially, exploitation of female labor, female workers' rights and social policies are the most emphasized issues. Furthermore, it also struggles against violence towards women, refers to the family as a unit of society in which the relations of social sovereignty are reproduced and also aims to ensure housework and childcare are conducted as a public service.

KIH-YÇ (Women's Human Rights - New Ways Association) is an independent women's organization founded in 1993 to defend women's human rights around the world and Turkey. It works on local, national, regional and international levels to promote full implementation of women's human rights and women's participation in all spheres of life as free individuals and equal citizens. In this framework, it works with a holistic approach on women's human rights issues such as violence against women, education, economic and legal rights, sexuality, fertility rights, girls' rights and gender equality. It is actively involved in coalitions aiming to improve the national legislation related to women (KIH-YÇ, 2020). KIH-YÇ draws attention to the concepts of gender equality and women's rights and uses them as umbrella terms for specific issues (see Graph 6).



Graph 6. The themes of WROs on women's issues

Graph 6 shows which themes are predominantly emphasized by which women's organizations. Accordingly, economic participation of women, violence against women and discrimination against women have been joint themes. Even though the ideological positions of women's organizations have shaped their priority issues, their differences have contributed to advancing the women's rights regime in Turkey.

Discussion/Conclusion

The political atmosphere has shaped the women's movement in Turkey. For instance, the 1920s' movement was closely affiliated with the Kemalist ideology and the reform process, whereas in the 1990s, Kurdish and Islamist groups opposed to the Kemalist ideology. The women in the 1920s who

struggled for women's rights were from higher classes with high education levels. The second wave of feminists also had urban backgrounds, but they had more professionals amongst them who had university educations, and they were already politicized by way of other ideological movements. They had a more middle- and upper-middle-class outlook. The third wave of feminism in Turkey integrated with women in the periphery. Women from the eastern and southeastern women of Kurdish origin and women politicized by way of Islamism have involved in gender politics (Diner and Toktaş, 2010). Since the 1990s, the discourse on gender is no longer under the hegemony of the state, and Turkish women's NGOs have engaged in a dialogue with governments. The Turkish state has negotiated with women's organizations on various levels (Kardam and Ertürk, 1999). However, it may be stated that gender norms in a conservative context have been re-established in the post-2011 period. Furthermore, the gender justice debate produces a family-centered gender regime and leads to the instrumentalization of women's rights in a neoliberal-conservative setting (Koyuncu and Özman, 2018, p. 20).

AKP has dealt with gender issues within the ideological debates of Islam, modernization, and westernization. The legal reforms have not created a critical debate about the patriarchy around a more liberal interpretation of Islam. AKP has addressed women's issues, rights, and liberties in the context of family and motherhood and promoted the establishment of its own NGOs. These organizations try to restrict women's activism to charity work and exclude the struggle for strengthening women's rights (Güneş-Ayata and Doğangün, 2017). In such a political atmosphere, women's rights organizations representing different feminist perspectives, in particular, first and second-wave feminism and socialist feminism seem to have lost their visibility and power.

Women's organizations have the power to influence the reshaping of gender equality policies. Although they have had limited success, feminist groups have used a strategy of sustained pressure on the state in 1980s and 1990s, while at the same time, they increasingly constructed transnational linkages to put pressure on the state from the outside. Notwithstanding their success in the amendment of crucial laws, the ideological stances of politicians have determined the degree to which feminists have been influential (Aldikaçtı Marshall, 2013). Women's organizations repre-

senting different ideologies have put forward diverse gender policies. This means a pluralist atmosphere has been formed on the gender regime and women's rights. The important thing in a democratic society is that women's organizations are involved in the policymaking process. Another indicator displaying the power of women's organizations is increasing their visibility in the public sphere by holding street protests, press conferences and lobbying to parliamentarians to change certain laws.

As for the gender policies of the political parties in the Parliament, CHP combines liberal feminist approaches with social welfare rights. While MHP sustains the patriarchal culture, HDP focuses on the demands of the third wave and identity politics. However, improving women's rights and providing gender equality may be realized by the contributions of women's organizations. It is important to have strengthened women's organizations to benefit from global trends while taking action to reframe gender policies for a gender regime. The gender regime of political parties is an inseparable part of their macro policies. While right-wing political parties try to solve women's issues by ignoring the crisis of capitalism and economic inequalities, left-wing political parties create solutions from a class-based perspective and focus on social welfare rights in gender equality. A similar approach is observed in women's organizations as well. Women's organizations consist of a range of very different organized women's groups, so they focus on different aspects of gender-based issues and investigate problems women experience in the sphere of human rights and aims at influencing decision-making mechanisms. A civil sphere where provided gender equality requires expanding democratic politics.

This study also reveals a similar perspective. Political parties deal with women's issues on the basis of ideological priorities. Therefore, the woman issue is a tool for politics and a part of the political discourse. On the other hand, the women's civil society organizations and women's rights activists aim at advancing women's rights and affect the public discourses for this purpose. In a healthy democratic regime, the women's movement can improve by a public dialog between the very different political and ideological orientations within the political and public sphere. The important thing is to build gender equality irreversibly by developing collaboration between women's organizations and governments.

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