



The Problem of Women's 'Absence' and Women's Representation in Local Government Assemblies: A Study On the Central Anatolia Region

Kadının 'Yokluk' Sorunsalı ve Yerel Yönetim Meclislerinde Kadın Temsiliyeti: İç Anadolu Bölgesi Üzerine Bir İnceleme

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ABSTRACT

Half of the world population consists of women. Women are underrepresented in international, national, and local administrations since they are compressed into certain roles and moulds with general assumptions such as social, cultural, traditional, etc. In this study, the 'problematic of women's absence' in local governments is analysed through the Central Anatolia Region. The aim of the study, the data of which were accessed by using the descriptive analysis method and document analysis method based on the official data of the Supreme Electoral Council, is to describe the representation of women among the members of metropolitan, provincial and district municipal assemblies and provincial general assemblies in the Central Anatolia Region according to the results of the local elections held on 31 March 2024. In the study, the thesis that women's representation in local governments is low in metropolitan, provincial and district municipal assemblies and provincial general assemblies in the Central Anatolia Region has been tested and the data reveal that women are not adequately represented in these areas. Necessary suggestions are presented to solve the 'problematic of absence' of women.

ÖZ

Dünya nüfusunun yarısı kadınlardan oluşmaktadır. Kadınların toplumsal, kültürel, geleneksel vb. genel kabullerle belirli rol ve kalıplara sıkıştırılmış olmaları sebebiyle uluslararası, ulusal ve yerel yönetimlerde yeterince temsil edilemediği görülmektedir. Bu durumun birçok sebebi vardır ancak hiçbir sebep sadece cinsiyet ve o cinsiyete başkaları tarafından biçilen çerçeveler ve sınırlar nedeniyle kadınların "yok sayılmalarını" açıklayamaz. Bu çalışmada kadınların yerel yönetimlerde özelinde "yokluk sorunsalı" İç Anadolu Bölgesi üzerinden ele alınmaktadır. Verilerine betimsel analiz yöntemi ve doküman inceleme yöntemi kullanılarak Yüksek Seçim Kurulu resmi verileri esas alınması suretiyle erişilen çalışmanın amacı, 31 Mart 2024 tarihinde gerçekleştirilen yerel seçim sonuçlarına göre, İç Anadolu Bölgesinde yer alan büyükşehir, il ve ilçe belediye meclisleri ile il genel meclislerindeki üyeler arasında kadınların temsil durumlarının belirlenmesidir. Çalışmada, İç Anadolu Bölgesinde yer alan büyükşehir, il ve ilçe belediye meclisleri ile il genel meclislerinde kadınların yerel yönetimlerde temsili düşük seviyededir tezi sınanmış olup veriler, bu alanlarda kadınların yeterince temsil edilmediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Kadınların "yokluk sorunsalının" çözülmesi amacıyla gerekli öneriler sunulmaktadır.

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, women with varying social roles and statuses have faced challenges in securing prominent positions within their societies. The gender regime, rooted in male dominance, has led to economic and social inequalities that restrict women's roles in life (Pınarcıoğlu, 2017). Women have consistently encountered limited opportunities to achieve the status and roles they deserve in a male-dominated world, leaving them disadvantaged politically and unable to take the lead. As a result, they struggle to overcome the dominance of male figures in terms of gender equality and representation, which hinders their ability to fully benefit from economic, social, and political opportunities, relegating them to secondary positions (Türel & Çağlar, 2010, p. 38). While the recent visibility of women in traditionally male-dominated fields is viewed as progress, they still lag behind men in many respects.

When it comes to politics, this difference becomes even more apparent. The issue of women being underrepresented in politics is seen as a problem experienced all over the world (Ak, 2017). Despite the prioritization of women by official regulations, laws, and statutes in the political sense, it is seen that women, who make up almost half of the population, cannot find a place for themselves and are not represented in general politics or local politics at the same rates or even close to the population rates. There are many historical, social, economic, cultural etc. reasons for this situation. The fact that women are socially seen as “the woman of the house, the female bird that builds the nest, the mother of the children or the fertile object” can be given as an example. For these and similar reasons, women’s social status and roles have been diminished and pushed to the background, and they have not been given the opportunity to participate in life as an active actor and to be sufficiently included in social, economic, political etc. life.

As a reflection of this relegation or being left behind, male dominance has come to the forefront in general and local politics as in many other areas and women have always been left at a disadvantage in terms of opportunity and gender equality. It is seen that women's representation is a necessity for democracy to be achieved both nationally and locally (Belli, 2015). Although many equality-based regulations have been made in legal terms, especially in issues such as voting and being elected, with the abandonment of traditional lifestyles of the 20th century and the development of modern-contemporary life awareness, today's women's participation in political life is still very weak when compared to the rates of men (Gökçimen, 2008).

To carry out political activities, every political organization has women's organizations/ branches that are specially organized for and directed towards women. This is seen as one of the most important organs of almost every political organization. Because women's potential and numerical rates in society are not behind men. This potential and proportion of women is too large and effective for politicians to ignore. For this reason, as mentioned above, the fact that women are overshadowed and put in the background for many reasons is a phenomenon that the people of the modern world no longer accept. It is seen that more women's work in all areas of life is increasing, and this situation is supported by states and governments in a positive/privileged sense. In this sense, within the framework of the “Gender Inequality National Action Plan” (2008-2013), there are studies and regulations related to women in social life, especially equality and participation for women (Örtlek & Tekelioğlu, 2013, pp. 284-285).

In the decisions taken by many political organizations in their competent bodies and announced to the public, in party programs or in documents, meetings or activities under titles related to women, it is stated that women are important and that efforts are made or planned to be made to make them more visible, have a voice and be represented in political and social areas with a privileged protection method. Accordingly, it is stated that certain percentage quotas are allocated to increase the number of women members and to ensure women's representation in candidate profiles and decision-making bodies. Moves to open the field of politics, where the dominance of men is clearly felt, to women and to increase their political participation and representation do not seem to have had the expected effect so far. Finally, within the framework of the concept of positive discrimination applied by political organizations towards women, it is observed that what is written in party statutes to increase women's political activities and numerical proportions is lacking in practice.

In this study, to reveal women's visibility and representation in political life, especially in the context of local politics, women's representation in local governments and decision-making bodies is examined through the municipalities of the Central Anatolia Region based on the results of the local elections held on March 31, 2024. Accordingly, the presence/absence and proportional analysis of women members in the metropolitan municipalities of Ankara, Konya, Kayseri and Eskişehir, provincial municipalities of Sivas, Yozgat, Aksaray,

Niğde, Nevşehir, Kırıkkale, Karaman, Kırşehir and Çankırı, and mayorships, metropolitan municipalities, provincial-district municipal assemblies and provincial general assembly memberships, including the districts in all these cities, are analyzed. The data were obtained by literature review method from written and printed sources and by examining the documents obtained by accessing the institutional online pages of official institutions and organizations.

2. A Brief Overview of the Relationship between Women, Society and Politics

Approximately half of the people living in the world are women. In the historical process, women have played as much of a role as men in all developments and events in social, cultural, economic, religious, political, etc. fields. In this sense, societies owe their development to women as much as men. Because it is not possible to ignore women, who constitute an important half of the total population, in life. However, it is also a fact that women are forced to remain in the background at many points due to reasons such as the reflection of social life and culture and the foregrounding of a male-dominated understanding (Tunç et al., 2015, p. 7). Women's struggle to exist in the political sphere is one of the most researched and questioned issues by scholars around the world (Paxton, et al., 2007; Al-Ali, 2012; Broockman, 2014; Krook and Sanin, 2019; Yadav, 2023).

Women have been left behind and imprisoned in an invisible bubble with the social perceptions and practices, as well as the assumptions that have been taken for granted by society and have become traditional/normalized. The extent to which women who want to become visible by hitting the “glass ceilings” formed by the roles assigned to them by society can or can be successful remains a major problem (Nagl-Docekal, 2009, pp. 216-220). Although there are many reasons for this problem, perhaps one of the main reasons can be seen as the consequences and reflections of the roles attributed to women by society rather than the women themselves (Başçı, 2015).

As the most important subject of the family, which is the cornerstone of society, women have roles such as wife, mother, sister, and daughter, but they also assume important roles in social, economic, and societal areas such as education within/outside the family, interpersonal communication, professional or manual labour and production. If a long evaluation line is drawn over time, the social status of women has (mostly) fluctuated (rarely or on an individual basis) over the course of history. It can be said that this is the case not only in the structural analysis of a nation, but also in the case of nations and civilizations that have emerged in the history of almost the entire world. From past to present, the female figure has sometimes assumed the roles of housewife, mother; sometimes activist who provides social mobility, sometimes labourer or employer who has a role in economic production, and sometimes politician or state administrator who governs nations.

While the figure of the woman in politics has often remained in the background, there have been “strong” female actors in history who have played an active role in politics and state administration (but only on an individual level, rarely). Examples can be drawn from Turkish, European, Russian, Egyptian (and more) history. Tomris Hatun, Queen Elizabeth, Czarina Catherine, Pharaoh Hapshetsut, etc. are female figures who have served as rulers in many great states and have come to the forefront in the historical process. However, in the timeline of the entire human history, the ratio of women who have been able to take part in the field of state and politics and who have been at the forefront is incomparably lower than that of men. This situation is directly related to how women are positioned in society. For example, there is no mention of women rulers in Ancient Greece. Perhaps one of the main reasons for this is that women are identified with “Helen/Helena, who is seen as the cause of negativity” and considered only as a “fertile object” (Karaaslan, 2014).

In this respect, it is seen that women are subjected to gender categorization/discrimination and thus gender inequality. Gender-based role identification causes inequalities in the social life and dimension in which people interact (Zanden & Wilfrid, 1996, pp. 227-228). The phenomenon of gender classification and inequality causes women to exhibit negative behaviours in their political participation (Gökulu, 2013). As a result of gender-based role determination, it is seen that women are left behind/left behind in terms of their participation and representation in politics and governance as well as in the field of social and civil society or public administration. This has caused/is causing men to be far ahead of women in many areas, especially in political participation and representation, and to play a more dominant role despite/compared to them (Dursun, 2010). When the number of women candidates in both general and local elections and the candidate lists prepared according to the possibility of being elected are evaluated, it is seen that women are positioned more symbolically in politics (Bozatay & Kutlu, 2014, pp. 132-133). Women's lack of political representation and

being left behind are similar not only in national or local politics but also in international politics. For example, in 2002, the rate of women's representation in national/international parliaments, especially national parliaments, was only around 14% worldwide. Accordingly, women remain weak and underrepresented in both national and international politics and bureaucracy (Misra & King, 2013, p. 684)

3. The Relationship between Women and Local Politics in Türkiye

In democratic societies, it is important for women to take part in political systems at an adequate level (Nergiz & Üçer, 2012, p. 1). In this sense, one of the important issues emphasized by the young Republic, which prioritized and attached importance to democracy, was to ensure that women could take part and be represented in the world of politics. Steps were taken to raise the social status of women and make it possible for them to reach their deserved positions. For this purpose, the first official steps were taken through legal regulations to enable women to participate in political activities. Accordingly, on April 3, 1930, the "Municipal Law" No. 1580 was adopted by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) as the first legal regulation enabling women to both be voters-elected and candidates-elected in municipal elections. This law paved the way for women to be represented in the decision-making bodies of local governments through municipalities and to engage in politics. The statements of the then Minister of the Interior, who took the floor during the discussions on the law, regarding the purpose of the law are summarized as follows: "... to fully establish the honorable right of Turkish women, which is already equal to that of Turkish men, in municipal affairs" (Minute Book, 1930).

In the first municipal elections held in Türkiye immediately after this legal regulation (1930), women began to play an active role in local politics both as voters and candidates. Accordingly, because of the local elections held in the town of Kılıçkaya in the Yusufeli district of Artvin, a woman, Ms. Sadiye, became mayor for the first time in Türkiye. In the same district, Ms. Mediha, a relative of Ms. Sadiye, was elected as the first female municipal assembly member. In the 1950 local elections, a woman, Müfide İlhan, was elected as the mayor of Mersin for the first time (Bozkurt & Bozkurt, 2014, p. 53).

On October 26, 1933, amendments were made to Articles 20 and 25 of the Village Law, which had been adopted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1924, in order to ensure greater participation of women in local politics and to make their representation in municipalities and decision-making bodies more visible (T.B.M.M. Minute Book). As a result of these legal amendments, the way was legally paved for women to take an active role in village administrations. Accordingly, women could also participate in the elections for mukhtars or members of the council of elders in villages and serve as mukhtars or assembly members (Sezer, 1998).

These developments show that women, through the opportunities provided to them by the laws, were able to take their place on the political stage as actors of political life together with men, albeit at the level of local politics. Through such legal arrangements, which are seen as steps towards political modernization, steps were taken to eliminate the disadvantaged position of women in political life within the framework of equality with men (Tekeli, 1979). In this way, the state of the Republic of Türkiye gained a more democratic appearance, and it was shown to the international community and the world public opinion that women were prioritized in the political sphere as in all areas of life (Koray, 1995).

4. Methodology

In this section, information about the aim of the study, the scope and limitations of the study and the methodology of the study are presented respectively. At the end of the chapter, a literature review of national and international studies related to the study is presented.

4.1. Aim of the Study

According to the results of the local elections held on March 31, 2024, the aim of the study is to determine the representation of women among the mayors of four metropolitan and ten provincial municipalities and 187 district municipalities in the Central Anatolia Region and the members of the metropolitan, provincial and district municipal assemblies, which are the decision-making bodies of these elements, and the members of the provincial general assemblies in provinces only. The study aims to test the thesis that the representation of

women in local governments is low in the provinces, cities, and districts with metropolitan city status within the borders of Central Anatolia Region.

4.2. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study covers local governments including metropolitan, provincial and district municipalities and provincial general assemblies within the borders of Central Anatolia Region and information on the structural characteristics of decision-making bodies according to the gender factor according to the results of local administrations/local elections held on March 31, 2024. Town municipalities and village/neighbourhood mukhtars' offices in the cities and districts of the region are not included in the study, and thus the scope is limited to the metropolitan, provincial and district municipalities, and provincial general assemblies of the region.

4.3. Methodology of the Study

In this study, it is aimed to determine the number and representation rates of male and female members and their representation rates in the local administrations and their decision-making bodies in the Central Anatolia Region local administrations and their decision-making bodies and to make evaluations by using the results and statistics of the local administrations elections held on March 31, 2024, which were announced and finalized by the Supreme Electoral Board. In identifying women administrators and members, a determination was made based on the official data of the Supreme Electoral Council by using the descriptive analysis method and document review method.

4.4. Literature Review

In this section, studies in the national and international literature on women's representation in local governments and local assemblies are presented separately under the headings of national and international studies. In the studies, the reasons why women are not adequately represented in local governments and the reasons for the problematic of representation are presented from different perspectives.

4.4.1. National Literature

Türeli and Çağlar (2010), in their study on Isparta province, stated that the representation of women in local governments is limited. Özyılmaz (2013), in his study on Bursa districts, found that women have difficulties in overcoming the social, economic, and political obstacles they face regarding their representation in local assemblies and that they are not adequately represented in local governments. Bozatay and Kutlu (2014) present findings supporting the thesis of “absence of women” in local assemblies in Çanakkale. Şahin (2021), in his study on Trabzon, found that the rate of women's representation in local assemblies is low. Kaşıkırık (2022), in his study specific to Istanbul, again identified the situation of “women's absence syndrome” in local assemblies. In her study, Karkış (2023) states that women are not allowed to find a place in the decision-making mechanisms of local governments due to male dominance.

4.4.2. International Literature

Fowsar (2019) states that women's representation in local governments in Sri Lanka is insufficient due to social, sexist attitudes, social assumptions, religious reasons, economic situation, etc. It is reported that women's representation rates in local governments are increasing compared to the past, but not enough representation is achieved in Greece (The gender aspect of the results of Municipal, Regional and European Elections in Greece, 2019). According to the report on women's representation in local governments prepared by the European Parliament (2020), which covers many European countries, including the Netherlands, Denmark, Slovenia, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania, Spain, Belgium, France and Sweden, women's local representation has increased in Sweden despite the lack of a legal quota requirement, Reports show that in Belgium, Portugal, France and Spain, women's representation has increased (from 22.8% to 31.5%) due to the legal quota requirement, but that there is a problem of women's representation in local governments on the European continent, including the Baltic states. According to the report, the rate of women local administrators in 41 countries and regions

within Europe (Paris, Madrid, Amsterdam, Luxembourg, Rome, Sofia, Stockholm, etc.) is 15.4% (Margaras, 2020). Bucci, Ferrara and Resce (2022) argue that if the problem of women's representation in local governments in Italy is overcome, women managers and members will strengthen local governments. Kgobe and Ramoroka (2024) argue that the lack of women's local representation in South Africa is due to factors such as the male-dominated understanding and social definition of women, culture, as well as violence against female figures interested in politics.

5. Women Representation in Local Governments in Central Anatolia Region Based on 31 March 2024 Local Election Results

According to the results of the local elections held on March 31, 2024, the total number of registered voters was 57,716,975, including 29,285,438 female voters and 28,481,362 male voters, and the number of voters who voted in the elections was 45,079,928. A total of 70 women were elected as provincial and district mayors, including 5 women among 30 metropolitan mayors, 6 women in 51 provincial municipalities and 64 women among 922 district mayors. A total of 34,932 people, 5485 women and 29,447 men, were elected as municipal assembly members in metropolitan, provincial and district municipalities across the country. A total of 2563 assembly members, 123 women and 2440 men, were elected as members of provincial general assemblies in 51 provinces across the country (ysk.gov.tr). Data specific to the Central Anatolia Region are presented in the rest of the study.

Central Anatolia Region consists of the provinces located in the central region of Türkiye and is a region that includes the provinces of Konya, Kayseri, Eskişehir, Sivas, Çorum, Yozgat, Aksaray, Niğde, Nevşehir, Kırıkkale, Karaman, Kırşehir and Çankırı respectively, especially the capital Ankara. In total, there are 187 districts in the region, which consists of four metropolitan cities, namely Ankara, Konya, Kayseri, Eskişehir and Konya, and nine provinces, namely Sivas, Çorum, Yozgat, Aksaray, Niğde, Nevşehir, Kırıkkale, Karaman, Kırşehir and Çankırı. There are 25 districts in Ankara, 31 in Konya, 16 in Kayseri, 14 in Eskişehir, 17 in Sivas, 14 in Çorum, 14 in Yozgat, 8 in Aksaray, 6 in Niğde, 8 in Nevşehir, 9 in Kırıkkale, 6 in Karaman, 7 in Kırşehir and 12 in Çankırı (Türkiye Mülki İdare Bölümleri Envanteri, 2024). The total population of these settlements in the Central Anatolia Region is 14,218,237 people, of whom 10,484,824 live in metropolitan cities and 3,733,413 in provinces. The proportion of women in the total population is around 50.8%, while the proportion of men is around 49.2% (ADNS, 2023). In the March 31, 2024 local elections, the total number of voters was 9,766,572, 7,690,175 in metropolitan areas and 2,076,397 in provinces. The ratio of female voters was approximately 51.3% and the ratio of male voters was approximately 48.7% (ysk.gov.tr).

5.1. Information on Metropolitan Municipality Assemblies

Within the Central Anatolia Region, there are the metropolitan municipalities of Ankara, Konya, Kayseri and Eskişehir. Among these four metropolitan municipalities, only the mayor of Eskişehir metropolitan municipality is a woman. In the metropolitan assembly memberships in the region, the number of male and female assembly members is as follows.

Table 1. Information on Metropolitan Municipality Assembly Members

No.	City	Total Number of Members of the Metropolitan Municipality Assembly	Total Number of Male Assembly Members Elected to the Metropolitan Municipality Assembly	Total Number of Female Assembly Members Elected to the Metropolitan Municipality Assembly
1	Ankara	1246	1014	232
2	Konya	1110	1030	80
3	Kayseri	568	514	54
4	Eskişehir	388	329	59
	Total	3312	2887	425
	Proportional Distribution	%100	%87,17	%12,83

The table was prepared by the author utilising ysk.gov.tr

There are a total of 3,312 metropolitan municipality assembly members in the metropolitan municipality assemblies in provinces with metropolitan status. Only 12.83% of these assembly members are women and 87.17% are men.

The total number of assembly members, the number of male assembly members and the number of female assembly members in the district municipalities within the borders of metropolitan municipalities in Ankara, Konya, Kayseri and Eskişehir are as follows:

Table 2. Metropolitan Municipality District Municipal Assembly Members Information

No.	City	District	Total Number of Municipal Assembly Members	Number of Male Municipal Assembly Members	Number of Female Municipal Assembly Members
1	Ankara		1246	1014	232
1	Ankara	Akyurt	30	28	2
2	Ankara	Altındağ	74	53	21
3	Ankara	Ayaş	22	16	6
4	Ankara	Bala	30	28	2
5	Ankara	Beypazarı	30	27	3
6	Ankara	Çamlıdere	22	19	3
7	Ankara	Çankaya	90	69	21
8	Ankara	Çubuk	50	44	6
9	Ankara	Elmadağ	30	21	9
10	Ankara	Etimesgut	90	64	26
11	Ankara	Evren	18	15	3
12	Ankara	Gölbaşı	62	52	10
13	Ankara	Güdül	22	21	1
14	Ankara	Haymana	30	27	3
15	Ankara	K.Kazan	50	40	10
16	Ankara	Kalecik	22	18	4
17	Ankara	Keçiören	90	73	17
18	Ankara	Kızılcahamam	30	28	2
19	Ankara	Mamak	90	71	19
20	Ankara	Nallıhan	30	26	4
21	Ankara	Polatlı	62	47	15
22	Ankara	Pursaklar	62	54	8
23	Ankara	Sincan	90	70	20
24	Ankara	Ş. Koçhisar	30	30	0
25	Ankara	Yenimahalle	90	73	17
	Ankara	Total	1246	1014	232
1	Konya	Ahırlı	18	18	0
2	Konya	Akören	18	17	1
3	Konya	Akşehir	50	40	10
4	Konya	Altunekin	22	22	0
5	Konya	Beyşehir	50	47	3
6	Konya	Bozkır	30	27	3
7	Konya	Cihanbeyli	50	47	3
8	Konya	Çeltik	22	21	1
9	Konya	Çumra	50	48	2
10	Konya	Derbent	18	18	0
11	Konya	Derebucak	18	18	0
12	Konya	Doğanhisar	22	22	0
13	Konya	Emirgazi	18	18	0
14	Konya	Ereğli	62	52	10
15	Konya	Güneysınır	18	18	0
16	Konya	Hadim	22	20	2
17	Konya	Halkapınar	18	18	0
18	Konya	Hüyük	22	22	0
19	Konya	İlgin	50	47	3
20	Konya	Kadınhanı	30	29	1
21	Konya	Karapınar	50	48	2
22	Konya	Karatay	74	68	6
23	Konya	Kulu	50	48	2

24	Konya	Meram	74	66	8
25	Konya	Sarayönü	30	28	2
26	Konya	Selçuklu	90	79	11
27	Konya	Seydişehir	50	44	6
28	Konya	Taşkent	18	18	0
29	Konya	Tuzlukçu	18	17	1
30	Konya	Yalıhüyük	18	16	2
31	Konya	Yunak	30	29	1
	Konya	Total	1110	1030	80
1	Kayseri	Akkışla	18	18	0
2	Kayseri	Bünyan	30	27	3
3	Kayseri	Develi	50	46	4
4	Kayseri	Felahiye	18	17	1
5	Kayseri	Hacılar	22	20	2
6	Kayseri	İncesu	30	29	1
7	Kayseri	Kocasinan	74	63	11
8	Kayseri	Melikgazi	90	79	11
9	Kayseri	Özvatan	18	16	2
10	Kayseri	Pınarbaşı	30	25	5
11	Kayseri	Sarıoğlan	22	20	2
12	Kayseri	Sarız	22	21	1
13	Kayseri	Talas	62	52	10
14	Kayseri	Tomarza	30	30	0
15	Kayseri	Yahyalı	30	29	1
16	Kayseri	Yeşilhisar	22	22	0
	Kayseri	Total	568	514	54
1	Eskişehir	Alpu	22	20	2
2	Eskişehir	Beylikova	18	16	2
3	Eskişehir	Çifteler	22	18	4
4	Eskişehir	Günyüzü	18	18	0
5	Eskişehir	Han	18	17	1
6	Eskişehir	İnönü	18	17	1
7	Eskişehir	Mahmudiye	18	15	3
8	Eskişehir	Mihalgazi	18	16	2
9	Eskişehir	Mihalıççık	18	16	2
10	Eskişehir	Odunpazarı	74	52	22
11	Eskişehir	Sarıcakaya	18	17	1
12	Eskişehir	Seyitgazi	22	22	0
13	Eskişehir	Sivrihisar	30	24	6
14	Eskişehir	Tepebaşı	74	61	13
	Eskişehir	Total	388	329	59
		Total General	3312	2887	425
		Proportional Distribution	%100	%87,17	%12,83

The table was prepared by the author utilising ysk.gov.tr

Based on the data in the table, the representation rates of women assembly members in metropolitan district municipal assemblies are as follows: 18.62% of total assembly members in Ankara metropolitan municipality, 7.20% in Konya metropolitan municipality, 9.51% in Kayseri metropolitan municipality and 15.21% in Eskişehir metropolitan municipality. In general, considering that the ratio of female assembly members to all assembly members in metropolitan municipalities in Central Anatolia is 12.83%, it is seen that the representation of female assembly members in district assemblies in Konya and Kayseri metropolitan municipalities is below average.

5.2. Information on Provincial Municipal Assemblies

There are no female mayors in the municipalities of ten provinces in the Central Anatolia Region. In Sivas, Çorum, Yozgat, Aksaray, Niğde, Niğde, Nevşehir, Kırıkkale, Karaman, Kırşehir and Çankırı provinces, all mayors are male. Table 2 shows the number of men and women in the municipal assembly memberships of these provinces.

Table 3. Provincial Municipality Assembly Members Information

No.	City	Total Number of Provincial Municipality Assembly Members	Total Number of Male Assembly Members Elected to the Provincial Municipality Assembly	Total Number of Female Assembly Members Elected to the Provincial Municipality Assembly
1	Sivas	74	64	10
2	Çorum	74	63	11
3	Yozgat	50	43	7
4	Aksaray	74	69	5
5	Niğde	62	54	8
6	Nevşehir	62	47	15
7	Kırıkkale	62	47	15
8	Karaman	62	53	9
9	Kırşehir	62	53	9
10	Çankırı	50	44	6
	General Total	632	537	95
	Proportional Distribution	%100	%84,97	%15,03

The table was prepared by the author utilising ysk.gov.tr

There are a total of 632 municipal assembly members in the next municipal assemblies, of which 537 are male and 95 are female. Only 15.03% of these assembly members are women. The ratio of male assembly members among all assembly members is 84.97%. This situation is like the situation in metropolitan municipality assemblies and shows that the rate of male assembly members is significantly higher in provincial municipal assemblies, while the rate of female assembly members is quite low.

5.3. Information on District Municipal Assemblies

A closer look at the information on women's representation in district municipal assemblies reveals the following picture regarding the number of women municipal assembly members among the municipal assembly members of all 101 districts in ten provincial municipalities.

Table 4. Information on District Municipal Assemblies

No.	City	District	Total Number of Municipal Assembly Members	Number of Male Municipal Assembly Members	Number of Female Municipal Assembly Members
1	Sivas	Akıncılar	18	18	0
2	Sivas	Altınyayla	18	18	0
3	Sivas	Divriği	22	17	5
4	Sivas	Doğanşar	18	18	0
5	Sivas	Gemerek	22	22	0
6	Sivas	Gölova	18	18	0
7	Sivas	Gürün	22	22	0
8	Sivas	Hafik	18	17	1
9	Sivas	İmranlı	18	18	0
10	Sivas	Kangal	18	18	0
11	Sivas	Koyulhisar	18	17	1
12	Sivas	Suşehri	22	20	2
13	Sivas	Şarkışla	30	28	2
14	Sivas	Ulaş	18	17	1
15	Sivas	Yıldızeli	18	18	0
16	Sivas	Zara	22	17	5
	Sivas	Total	320	303	17
1	Çorum	Alaca	22	19	3
2	Çorum	Bayat	18	17	1
3	Çorum	Boğazkale	18	18	0
4	Çorum	Dodurga	18	17	1
5	Çorum	İskilip	22	19	3
6	Çorum	Kargı	18	15	3

7	Çorum	Laçın	18	18	0
8	Çorum	Mecitözü	18	15	3
9	Çorum	Oğuzlar	18	16	2
10	Çorum	Ortaköy	18	18	0
11	Çorum	Osmancık	30	27	3
12	Çorum	Sungurlu	30	28	2
13	Çorum	Uğurludağ	18	18	0
	Çorum	Total	266	245	21
1	Yozgat	Akdağmadeni	30	29	1
2	Yozgat	Aydıncık	18	17	1
3	Yozgat	Boğazlıyan	22	21	1
4	Yozgat	Çandır	18	18	0
5	Yozgat	Çayıralan	18	16	2
6	Yozgat	Çekerek	18	17	1
7	Yozgat	Kadışehri	18	18	0
8	Yozgat	Saraykent	18	18	0
9	Yozgat	Sarıkaya	22	20	2
10	Yozgat	Sorgun	50	48	2
11	Yozgat	Şefaati	18	18	0
12	Yozgat	Yenifakılı	18	18	0
13	Yozgat	Yerköy	30	29	1
	Yozgat	Total	298	287	11
1	Aksaray	Ağaören	18	17	1
2	Aksaray	Eskil	22	21	1
3	Aksaray	Gülağaç	18	17	1
4	Aksaray	Güzelyurt	18	17	1
5	Aksaray	Ortaköy	30	28	2
6	Aksaray	Sarıyahşi	18	18	0
7	Aksaray	Sultanhanı	22	21	1
	Aksaray	Total	146	139	7
1	Niğde	Altunhisar	18	16	2
2	Niğde	Bor	30	25	5
3	Niğde	Çamardı	18	18	0
4	Niğde	Çiftlik	18	17	1
5	Niğde	Ulukışla	18	14	4
	Niğde	Total	102	90	12
1	Nevşehir	Acıgöl	18	18	0
2	Nevşehir	Avanos	32	30	2
3	Nevşehir	Derinkuyu	22	21	1
4	Nevşehir	Gülşehir	22	17	5
5	Nevşehir	Hacıbektaş	18	13	5
6	Nevşehir	Kozaklı	18	18	0
7	Nevşehir	Ürgüp	30	24	6
	Nevşehir	Total	160	141	19
1	Kırıkkale	Bahşılı	18	17	1
2	Kırıkkale	Balışeyh	18	18	0
3	Kırıkkale	Çelebi	18	18	0
4	Kırıkkale	Delice	18	17	1
5	Kırıkkale	Karakeçili	18	18	0
6	Kırıkkale	Keskin	18	18	0
7	Kırıkkale	Sulakyurt	18	16	2
8	Kırıkkale	Yahşihan	30	26	4
	Kırıkkale	Total	156	148	8
1	Karaman	Ayrancı	18	16	2
2	Karaman	Başyayla	18	17	1
3	Karaman	Ermenek	22	17	5
4	Karaman	Kazımkarabekir	18	16	2
5	Karaman	Sarıveliler	18	18	0
	Karaman	Total	94	84	10
1	Kırşehir	Akçakent	18	17	1
2	Kırşehir	Akpınar	18	18	0
3	Kırşehir	Boztepe	18	18	0
4	Kırşehir	Çiçekdağı	18	16	2

5	Kırşehir	Kaman	30	27	3
6	Kırşehir	Mucur	22	20	2
	Kırşehir	Total	124	116	8
1	Çankırı	Atkaracalar	18	16	2
2	Çankırı	Bayramören	18	16	2
4	Çankırı	Çerkeş	18	16	2
5	Çankırı	Eldivan	18	16	2
6	Çankırı	Ilgaz	18	17	1
7	Çankırı	Kızılırmak	18	17	1
8	Çankırı	Korgun	18	18	0
9	Çankırı	Kurşunlu	18	17	1
10	Çankırı	Orta	18	16	2
11	Çankırı	Şabanözü	18	18	0
12	Çankırı	Yapraklı	18	17	1
	Çankırı	Total	198	184	14
		General Total	2496	2274	222
		Proportional Distribution	%100	%91,11	%8,89

The table was prepared by the author utilising ysk.gov.tr

Regarding the representation of women in the municipal assemblies of district municipalities, it is observed that the representation rate of women municipal assembly members among the municipal assembly members of all districts consisting of 101 districts in ten provincial municipalities is 8.89%. There are 222 women municipal assembly members among 2496 assembly members.

5.4. Information on Provincial General Assemblies

Information on the members of provincial general assemblies in the provinces in the Central Anatolia Region is presented in detail in Table.5, which shows the total number of members of provincial general assemblies in all provinces, the number of male and female members, their overall totals, and proportional distributions.

Table 5. Provincial General Assembly Members Information

No.	City	Total Number of Provincial General Assembly Members	Total Number of Male Assembly Members Elected to the Provincial General Assembly	Total Number of Female Assembly Members Elected to the Provincial General Assembly
1	Sivas	86	86	0
2	Çorum	74	69	5
3	Yozgat	76	76	0
4	Aksaray	46	43	3
5	Niğde	38	38	0
6	Nevşehir	44	42	2
7	Kırıkkale	46	45	1
8	Karaman	34	34	0
9	Kırşehir	38	38	0
10	Çankırı	54	54	0
	General Total	536	525	11
	Proportional Distribution	%100	%97,94	%2,06

The table was prepared by the author utilising ysk.gov.tr

When the provincial general assembly members in the provinces in the Central Anatolia region are evaluated according to their gender characteristics, it is seen that only 11 members of the total 536 provincial general assembly members are women, and the remaining 525 members are men. In this case, 2.06% of the provincial general assembly members of the provinces in the region are women and the remaining 97.94% are men. Across the country, this ratio is 4.79% (123 female assembly members out of 2563 members) and 95.21% (2440 male assembly members). This shows that there are not enough female members among the provincial general assembly members in the provinces in the Central Anatolia region and that they are far behind male members in terms of representation.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

A total of 34,932 people, 5485 women and 29,447 men, were elected as municipal assembly members in metropolitan, provincial and district municipalities across the country. While this rate is 15.70% across the country, it is 11.16% in Central Anatolia. In the region, there are 5102 male assembly members and 641 female assembly members out of a total of 5743 municipal assembly members. Accordingly, 11.16% of all municipal assembly members in the region are women, while the rate of male assembly members is 88.84%. Both in metropolitan municipal assemblies and in provincial and district municipal assemblies, the number and ratio of female assembly members is much lower than that of male assembly members. In provincial general assemblies, the rate of female assembly members is 4.79% in the country, while it is 2.09% in Central Anatolia. This situation reveals that the representation of women among provincial general assembly members in the provinces in the Central Anatolia region is lower compared to the country.

According to the United Nations Women's Studies report (2021), 133 countries were evaluated in terms of women's representation in local governments. As a result of this evaluation, Türkiye ranked 118th among 133 countries in the ranking of women in local representation. Afghanistan ranked 98th and Pakistan 97th (Women's Representation in Local Government: A Global Analysis, 2021). In the same report, considering that the average rate of women's representation in local governments and local assemblies worldwide is 36%, the general representation rate in the geography in which Türkiye is located is 18% and Türkiye's overall score is 10.14%. Along with these data, studies also show that there is a problematic problem of women's representation in local governments and local assemblies in Türkiye. Türeli and Çağlar (2010) stated in the study on Isparta province that the representation of women in local governments is limited. Özyılmaz (2013), in the study on Bursa districts, found that women have difficulties in overcoming the social, economic, and political obstacles they face regarding their representation in local assemblies and that they are not adequately represented in local governments. Bozatay and Kutlu (2014) present findings supporting the thesis of “absence of women” in local assemblies in Çanakkale. Şahin (2021), in the study on Trabzon, found that the rate of women's representation in local assemblies is low. Kaşıkırık (2022), in the study specific to Istanbul, again identified the situation of “women's absence syndrome” in local assemblies. Karkış (2023) states in the study that women are not allowed to find a place in the decision-making mechanisms of local governments due to male dominance. In these and similar studies in the literature, the lack of women's representation in local governments is revealed and it is seen that there is a problematic of women's representation in local government assemblies in the Central Anatolia region, as expressed in this study, including the country.

To eliminate or at least alleviate this problem, it is necessary to overcome the traditional-societal acceptance of the female figure and to effectively operate structural mechanisms instead of superficial practices such as quota practices or superficial practices such as representation of female figures to remove women's glass ceilings. In addition, it is necessary to ensure a mental transformation that can create the conditions that “women” consciousness deserves in society. This mental transformation can be realized by recognizing that women are actors in the development of society together with men in the context of gender equality, instead of limiting their roles to certain places and tasks. With the mental transformation that will take place because of the establishment of this awareness, “women” will be able to reach the places they deserve in general or local politics and administrations as well as in all areas of life and society with their roles, participation, and representation.

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