

CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY: A STUDY OF FEMINIST STRATEGIES TO ELIMINATE MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN TURKEY

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Abstract

This study explores the feminist campaigns and demonstrations organized between the 1980s and the 2010s in Turkey against male violence. Adopting an intersectional perspective, this analysis draws on statistical data from the Ministry of Family and Social Work and feminist organizations, articles published in national press, reports published by feminist groups and associations, testimonies of feminists, analysis of feminist blogs, as well as publications on social networks. The experiences of the authors of this article, as feminist scholars, are also taken into consideration during the analysis. In order to show how feminist efforts contribute to the resistance against male violence and how the feminist strategies have evolved throughout 4 decades, the article, firstly, sets the context by discussing the structural roots of violence against women; secondly it examines the feminist campaigns and demonstrations throughout the four decades; and finally it explores the roles of the feminist efforts in the resistance against violence by pointing the complexity of the violence and evokes the need for a multidimensional model, which can intervene at individual, interpersonal, and structural levels in order to effectively combat male violence against women.

Keywords: Feminist Campaigns, Male Violence Against Women, Patriarchal Social Structure, Turkey, Istanbul Convention.

PATRIARKAYA KARŞI ÇIKIŞ: KADINA YÖNELİK ERKEK ŞİDDETİYLE MÜCADELEDE FEMİNİST YÖNEMLER ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de kadına yönelik erkek şiddetiyle mücadelede en etkili feminist stratejileri, bu stratejilerin zaman içindeki gelişimini anlamaya odaklanarak incelemektedir. İstatistikî veriler, raporlar, feministlerin tanıklıkları, feminist blogların analizi ve internet yazıları gibi çeşitli kaynaklardan yararlanan bu makale,

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1980'ler ve 1990'larda geliştirilen feminist stratejilerin yanı sıra 2000'ler ve 2010'larda geliştirilen stratejileri tartışmakta ve bu feminist çabaların erkek şiddetiyle mücadeledeki rollerini incelemektedir. Çalışma, kadına yönelik erkek şiddetinin, ataerkil toplumsal cinsiyet hiyerarşisinde erkeklerin baskın konumunu pekiştiren, ekonomik, sosyal ve siyasi gücün eşitsiz dağılımına neden olan ve modern toplumlarda kadınların erkekler tarafından ikincilleştirilmesine yol açan güç dinamiklerinden kaynaklandığını ortaya koymaktadır. Dolayısıyla, kadınlara yönelik erkek şiddetinin ele alınması, bunun toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı iktidar ilişkilerinin bir ürünü olarak kabul edilmesini gerektirmektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de kadına yönelik erkek şiddetine karşı direnişin kapsamlı bir analizini sunmakta, konunun karmaşıklığı hakkında fikir vermekte ve farklı şiddet biçimleri karşısında feminist dayanışmanın önemini vurgulamaktadır. Makale, feminist çabaların şiddetin ortadan kaldırılması için hayati önem taşıdığını vurgulamakta ve kadına yönelik erkek şiddetiyle etkili bir şekilde mücadele etmek için bireysel, kişiler arası ve yapısal düzeylerde işlemek üzere çok boyutlu bir modelin gerekli olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminist Kampanyalar, Kadına Yönelik Erkek Şiddeti, Patriarkal Toplum Yapısı, Türkiye, İstanbul Sözleşmesi.

Introduction

Male violence against women is a pervasive issue that exists across all spheres of life, despite the presence of national and international legal frameworks for its prevention. Women all over the world are subjected to physical, psychological, sexual, or economic violence, with the extremes of this violence ranging from death and the threat of violence to verbal abuse, rape, beatings, sexual harassment, and honor killings. These acts are considered gender-based violence, which refers to “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately” (Council of Europe, 2011, Article 3), and they are overwhelmingly committed by men against women and are underpinned by societal gender inequalities.

Serving as a mechanism of control over women, male violence against women functions as an essential tool of patriarchy. From a sociological perspective, it involves both the use of force and the threat thereof to compel women to behave or not behave in a certain way. This violence is an indicator of gender inequality and is defined in Article 3 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) (2011) as a “violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. Defining male violence as a type of discrimination against women in international law is crucial, as it demonstrates that the act is

rooted in social inequalities between individuals rather than an individual and interpersonal occurrence (Kuyucu, 2015, p. 61). Therefore, it can be approached as a systematic, structural, and political problem that necessitates political and structural changes to address. Male violence against women and its norms and techniques are widespread rather than deviant or subculture-specific, as orders of violence are constructed through institutions such as the state, military, educational system, and family. These institutions provide privileged spaces for learning the norms and techniques of violence, and violence participates in the social distribution of power dynamics. In such a context, it is crucial to recognize that violence is also structural. It hinders women's potential development through the unequal distribution of power as well as political, economic, and social resources. Thus, addressing this issue requires a comprehensive understanding of the social, political, and economic factors that participate in this process.

In this study, we argue that violence against women is a manifestation of power dynamics that maintain the dominant position of men in the patriarchal gender hierarchy. The patriarchal structure creates hierarchies in the allocation of economic, social, and political resources while discrediting feminine values in favor of masculine ones (Héritier, 1996). This leads to the subordination of women by men in modern societies (Delphy, 1998). For this reason, addressing male violence against women necessitates understanding and considering it as a product of gender-based power relations. By conceptualizing male violence against women as a result of power relations between men and women in patriarchal societies, we will explore the most effective feminist strategies for combating it in Turkey, and how these strategies have evolved over time. In this regard, we aim to provide a thorough analysis of the resistance against the male violence against women in Turkey, offer useful insights into the complexities of the issue, and highlight the importance of feminist solidarity in the face of different forms of violence.

Adopting an intersectional approach, the analysis draws on statistical data from the Ministry of Family and Social Work and feminist organizations, articles published in national press, reports published by feminist groups and associations, testimonies of feminists, analysis of feminist blogs, as well as publications on social networks. In addition, we incorporate our own observations and experiences as feminists and researchers in Istanbul. To address the topic, we begin by providing a contextual framework around male violence against women, highlighting the societal and structural roots of this pervasive issue. Secondly, we examine the feminist strategies developed in the 1980s and 1990s, prior to the Helsinki Summit in 1999. Thirdly, we discuss the strategies developed in the 2000s and 2010s before exploring the roles of these feminist efforts in the fight against male violence, and lastly, we offer a thorough discussion and our suggestions on how build a useful and comprehensive model for eliminating male violence against women.

In addition to analyzing feminist movement's strategies since the 1980s, this study points out the considerably conservative dynamic that has taken hold in Turkey since the mid-2010s. Here, we emphasize that feminist efforts are crucial for eradicating violence, particularly when the state is responsible for ensuring women's safety. Despite the comprehensive legal frameworks in place, political situations can shift, as evidenced by Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in April 2021. For this reason, a feminist perspective is vital to understanding and critically examining male violence against women and promoting gender equity and justice. Furthermore, a multidimensional model is necessary to intervene at individual, interpersonal, and structural levels and to combat male violence against women effectively.

1. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE NEED FOR FEMINIST STRATEGIES

Male violence against women is a manifestation of gender asymmetry (Walby and Allen, 2004) and a reflection of the social construction of women's subordination to men (MacKinnon, 1989, p. 242). In patriarchal societies, male violence has been historically justified and normalized as a product of men's social roles and has been internalized by both the victim and the perpetrator (Sancar, 2009, p. 215-219). As such, gender roles and expectations, structural dimensions of violence, and socially constructed power asymmetries between men and women are rendered invisible and are instrumentalized to legitimize and perpetuate male violence against women (Telsereen, 2021). Women are subjected to violence or at risk of being subjected to violence due to the patriarchal system's systematic suppression of their agency and autonomous power (Ertürk, 2015, p. 40-41), which reinforces a patriarchal worldview in which women's subordination is normal, natural, and expected (Russo and Pirlott, 2006, p. 187). In such a context, all women, regardless of whether they are direct victims of male violence or not, are affected by violent acts and their political and social consequences. Women feel the risk of male violence in subtle ways (Hanmer, 1977, p. 71), which creates a climate of insecurity. Initially, this feeling of risk causes discomfort, but when a woman or someone she knows becomes a victim of violence, the fear increases. The patriarchal goal of keeping women "in their place" seems to be the root of male violence (Ertürk, 2015, p. 33). To comprehend this phenomenon and combat it effectively, it is necessary to understand the role of the state in creating and perpetuating gender inequality and "male power". Sauer refers to this as the masculinity of the state, where states organize social inclusion and exclusion in a patriarchal and violent manner (Sauer, 2009, p. 61, as cited in Harders, 2017). In this regard, the relations between state and society are also relations of gendered violence (Sauer, 2009, p. 63, as cited in Harders, 2017) and embodied in a context of fraternal contract (Patemann, 1988) and economic, social, and political insecurity (Harders, 2017, p. 140).

The acceptance of gender-based violence against women by social and political institutions seems to transform it into an ordinary action, where the fraternal contract plays an essential role. As a means of controlling state power, the law has only recently been extended to this private sphere (Harders, 2017, p. 140). Moreover, there are still difficulties in enforcing laws against domestic violence.

In the 2000s, honor crimes were rampant in Turkey (Bükecik and Özkan, 2018, p. 35). Deviations from traditional gender norms were often used as a pretext for honor killings (Yüksel and Cindoğlu, 2006). However, it is important to note that honor killings were not the only form of domestic violence. Altınay and Arat's study shows that two out of every three women who have a higher income than their husbands are subjected to physical violence (Altınay and Arat, 2007, p. 104), indicating that men try to consolidate their patriarchal authority in the family by using physical violence in these situations. Additionally, Çalışkan and Çevik's analysis of the Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey published by the Turkish Statistical Institute in 2008 highlights that the main determinants of violence against women depend on the socioeconomic and psychological status of women and the way they perceive and interpret violence (2018). The Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey published by the Turkish Statistical Institute is important to gather high amount of data about the subject. Similarly, Seyrek and Gencer's study, which used data mining methods to analyze the data from the Turkish Statistical Institute's research which covers the interview of 7462 women across the country in 2014, shows that women who have experienced violence are more likely to experience sleeping problems, anxious feelings, frequent crying, feelings of uselessness, worthlessness, and suicidal thoughts (Seyrek and Gencer, 2022, p. 79).

Field studies are equally important to understand the landscape of domestic violence. Ediz and Altan's study, which interviewed 200 women in different regions of Turkey who have experienced violence, highlights that women of all educational levels have been subjected to violence (2017, p. 403). According to their research, women who are under 20 and over 60 are less likely to be subjected to violence compared to women between 21-60; and a woman's employment reduces her exposure to violence (Ediz and Altan, 2017, p. 403). It is also noteworthy that married and divorced women are more likely to be exposed to violence, which can be traced back to the patriarchal character of marriage and the family (Ediz and Altan, 2017, p. 404). Another field study is conducted by Doğan and Karaman (2023). Doğan and Karaman's qualitative research underscores that defining and internalizing violence play a critical role in preventing all forms of violence against women. Women's definitions of violence, experiences of violence, and coping strategies vary depending on their educational, social, and economic status (Doğan and Karaman, 2023, p. 76). Women can choose to remain silent, instrumentalize their education, or empower themselves economically to leave this vicious

cycle of violence (Doğan and Karaman, 2023, p. 80-82). It is essential to recognize the intersectionality of factors such as gender, class, and education that contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence against women in Turkish society.

Due to the patriarchal structure of Turkish society, women face significant obstacles in terms of opportunities and decision-making. Male violence against women in Turkey is primarily motivated by factors such as divorce, separation, arguments, jealousy, depression, and financial difficulties (KCDP, 2021). Despite legislation aimed at addressing the issue, the state has not demonstrated sufficient commitment to combating violence against women. In practice, the state's approach often reinforces patriarchal structures that support the domination of men, obscuring the societal and structural roots of violence, and depoliticizing the issue. This approach often undermines the struggle against sexist prejudices, misogyny, and racism, and perpetuates the cycle of violence. Notably, the number of women exposed to violence and femicide in Turkey is alarmingly high. According to the Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu (the We will stop femicides Platform), in 2022, 334 women were killed by husbands, partners, ex-partners, or male family members, and another 245 women died suspiciously during the same year. Between 2020 and 2022, 914 women exposed to femicide, and 632 women found suspiciously dead (KCDP, 2023). However, the state has failed to produce reliable data on the issue, and the number of femicides reported by the state and women's organizations is inconsistent (TBMM, 2013; Belge, 2011; Tahaoğlu, 2013).

The movement of denunciation on social networks of harassment in Hollywood (#metoo), as well as the denunciations in Turkey in the TV series sector, shows that violence is widespread in all circles, and that harassers are also present in all circles. After #metoo, there were the #sendeanlat and #uykularınızkaçsın movements in Turkey for the reporting of sexual harassment in the literary and media sectors (Poyrazlar, 2020; Yazan, 2018). Unfortunately, the perpetrators of such violence are often not held accountable, and they continue to go unpunished, perpetuating the cycle of violence. Despite the high number of cases of male violence and its steady increase, Turkey denounced its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in March 2021 (“İstanbul Sözleşmesi: Türkiye, Cumhurbaşkanlığı kararı ile anlaşmadan çekildi”, 2021), while the lowest number of femicides in Turkey in the past ten years was in 2011, the year the Istanbul Convention was prepared.

The convention is the first legally binding instrument at the European level that provides a comprehensive legal framework for preventing violence, protecting victims, and ending impunity for perpetrators. It was concluded and signed in May 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey, and entered into force in August 2014. Turkey was the first country to sign and ratify it without any reservations (Kadının İnsan Hak Yeni Çözümler Derneği, 2019, p. 10).

Therefore, when there is political will and determination to fight against violence, it produces real social effects. The development of policies in line with international standards to combat violence against women is a clear commitment, as expressed in the preparation of the important document discussed herein (Acar and Altunok, 2013, p. 17). The adoption of this instrument was a direct result of Turkey's condemnation by the European Court of Human Rights in *Opuz v. Turkey*, in which the country was found to have failed to protect the right to life of a woman murdered by her husband. Turkey's judiciary passivity is considered as a form of passive discrimination against women by the Court (ECHR, 2009). As a result, Turkey became the first country, which is condemned for its failure to protect the right to life of a woman despite being informed about the violence that she was exposed to.

The need for a more effective law to combat violence than the previous Law No. 4320 on Family Protection became visible after the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. As a result, Law No. 6284 on Family Protection and Prevention of Violence Against Women was prepared by the collaboration of Ministry of Family and Social Policies and women's organizations (Kadının İnsan Hak Yeni Çözümler Derneği, 2019, p. 25) and was ratified on the March 8, 2012. However, despite these developments, there remains a noticeable lack of political will to bridge the gap between legislation and its implementation. This became even more evident at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, as the government issued a temporary executive order on the execution of prison sentences, leading to the release of some perpetrators of violence against women ("HSK kararının kadınlar için ağır sonuçları olur", 2020). While the government has argued that this decree does not cover crimes against women, this assertion does not reflect reality, as there is no specific article in the Penal Code that deals with "crimes against women". Although crimes against sexual and physical integrity, such as rape, harassment, child abuse, and crimes concerning the violation of privacy are excluded from the decree, the majority of violence against women cases arises from crimes such as blackmail, threats, injuries, assaults, insults, and violations of home immunity, which therefore fall within the scope of the amendment.

Given these circumstances, it is essential to develop feminist strategies and defend achievements on women's rights to eliminate male violence against women. Thus, feminist policies to prevent such violence represent a broad field of endeavor encompassing activism, research, theorizing, legal work, and social policymaking.

2. THE FEMINIST MOBILIZATION AGAINST MALE VIOLENCE IN TURKEY THROUGHOUT THE 1980S AND 1990S

The feminist movement gained momentum in Turkey during the 1980s (Sirman, 1989, pp. 16-17), with a particular focus on gender inequalities that persisted in practice. Feminist texts and symposia, as well as works analyzing

women's roles in social and political life, have provided a theoretical framework for this movement (Davutoğlu, 2015, p. 162). In the 1990s, women began to accomplish legal and social achievements, and feminists questioned women's position in the family and male domination, concentrating on issues such as sexism, domestic violence, domestic work, and patriarchy (Koç, 2013, p. 193). One of the most remarkable achievements of the feminist movement in Turkey has been the challenging of patriarchy in all areas of life. The feminist movement in the 1980s and 1990s focused on combating male violence and analyzing the role of patriarchy in this violence. It is worth noting that male violence is an instrument of patriarchy to control women, and that this control is maintained in a context of "consent" through institutions such as family and marriage. However, using force and violence is still crucial to maintaining this control over women (Ertürk, 2015, p. 33). Considering these points, feminists have organized themselves around campaigns, demonstrations, feminist publications, and consciousness-raising groups to fight against violence, focusing on the de facto inequalities between men and women. One notable example is the Campaign Against the Battering of Women.

2.1. The Campaign Against Violence Against Women (aka Campaign Against Battering of Women)

In 1987, a judge in Çankırı denied a woman's request for divorce despite physical violence in her marriage, citing her pregnancy and the fact that her husband still engaged in sexual activity with her. The judge's decision was based on the patriarchal notion of women's subordination to men and the normalization of domestic violence in Turkey. The judge further remarked that arguments and fights were normal in marriage and cited an Anatolian expression that advised men not to leave their wives without a baby in their belly or a stick on their back (Karakuş, 2013). This event highlighted not only the systemic injustice towards women in Turkey but also the need for a collective effort to fight against domestic violence and its legitimization.

Feminist lawyers and activists in Turkey responded to this decision by attempting to file a lawsuit for moral damages, but legal barriers thwarted their efforts, the lawsuit they filed with a claim for 1 lira was rejected on the grounds that they were not parties to the case. This shows that the intervention of women is not expected unless they are personally affected (Karakuş, 2013). As a result of this, women organized a solidarity march against domestic violence in Kadıköy's Yoğurtçu Parkı on May 17, 1987. This was the first campaign and demonstration against domestic violence and its normalization in Turkey. This solidarity march was the first to be exclusively organized and attended by women. It is a significant milestone for gender equality, women's rights, and the struggle against violence against women in Turkey. The speeches of transgender women from the scene (Şakir, 2022) during this event

was a significant affirmation of the intersectionality and the need for solidarity across diverse communities of women.

Throughout the campaign, feminist activists organized festivals, exhibitions, and discussions to raise awareness about the issue of male violence and to provide support for women who were facing violence. They organized a festival composed of concerts, exhibitions, theaters, and discussions in the Chora Museum. An outcome of the campaign was the publication of “Shout Out! Let them all hear you!”. This book is based on testimonies of women who were exposed to violence at least once in their lives. It has shed light on this problem and created a sense of solidarity among women. In the same year, the Tüyap Book Fair provided a place for activists to conduct a survey where 351 out of 364 women agreed that a campaign against domestic violence was necessary. Additionally, in the continuity of the campaign women opened an exhibition called “Temporary Museum of Modern Women” on International Women's Day and they created solidarity networks to meet the demands of women who needed legal and medical help, temporary housing, and financial assistance. The manual “Now For Shelter,” which included the “Shelter for Women” project, was prepared to provide guidance on how to create a safe and supportive environment for women exposed to violence (Şakir, 2022). This campaign showed that solidarity networks were insufficient, and a shelter for women was needed. Consequently, this campaign that began with a solidarity march against violence against women ended with the establishment of the Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation, which is still a prominent feminist organization in the struggle against male violence against women.

Another substantial impact of this campaign was on the establishment of national laws that provide support for women facing violence in Turkey, the Law of Municipalities (Official Journal, 2005) is an example of such legislation. Although the municipalities use the word “guest house” instead of “shelter” to avoid negative connotations about the family, the underlying need remains the same. The law provides support for women facing violence, including shelter and legal assistance. As a result, it seems that the campaign against domestic violence not only raised awareness about the issue but also contributed to the establishment of a supportive legal framework for women who experience violence.

2.2. The Purple Needle Campaign

The feminists regularly held meetings, organized many events and campaigns in the 1980s and 1990s. One of these campaigns was the “Our Bodies Are Ours, No to Sexual Harassment!” Campaign (known as The Purple Needle Campaign). After an intense process of meetings and preparation, the campaign started with the sale of purple needles on the ship between Kadıköy-

Karaköy on November 2, 1989 (Karakuş, 2022). One of the feminists, Filiz Karakuş, presented the needles as follows:

“I would like to present you an excellent product. The purple needle you see in my hands is made of nickel-chrome alloy steel and is 7 cm long. The purple ribbon attached to it makes it an accessory for any outfit. I will now show you that this elegant accessory is at the same time a tool of defense that you can use against anyone who molests you. The move is this... Use it against the harassers without feeling sorry, don't be afraid, it doesn't cause tetanus” (Üstündağ, 2008).

The Purple Needle Campaign spearheaded by feminists in 1989 was a landmark movement that brought to the forefront the issue of sexual harassment in Turkey. Using the purple needle symbol, the campaign aimed to empower women and raise awareness about the sexual harassment. Here it is important to emphasize that the needle is a long-standing tool that women used to defend themselves in case of a sexual assault (Karakuş, 2022). The decision to use the color purple was deliberate and significant. The color purple is a symbol of women's freedom worldwide and was chosen to represent the feminist movement's goals. The campaign had several objectives, such as selling purple needles at markets, publishing and distributing newsletters and leaflets, and organizing meetings on testimonies about sexual harassment. The campaign encouraged women to say “no” to sexual assault, not to feel guilty in case of sexual harassment but to blame and expose the aggressors and show solidarity with other women against sexual harassment (Karakuş, 2022). The Purple Needle Campaign took a significant turn in January 1990 after a sex worker was abducted and raped by four men in 1986. The Antalya Police Department informed the court that the woman was engaged in sex work, leading to discussions about reducing the sentence to 2/3 according to Article 438 of the Penal Code. The judge of Antalya asked the Constitutional Court to annul Article 438 of the Penal Code. However, the Constitutional Court rejected the request with a majority of votes because a prostitute and a chaste woman cannot be put on the same scale in such a situation (Karakuş, 2023). The feminists then focused on the abolition of Article 438, which became a “No to 438” campaign. They called on all women to unite against Article 438 and organized a series of activities and actions on the issue (Karakuş, 2022). They emphasized that there is no legitimate rape, and the motive of the Constitutional Court was a “male lie”. They also criticized the notion that women could be divided into “chaste” and “immodest” categories. Finally, Article 438 of the Penal Code was abolished in November 1990 (Karakuş, 2022), marking a significant legal victory, which represents a milestone.

It is worth noting that this campaign played a decisive role in raising awareness about sexual harassment and empowered women to defend themselves. During this campaign, the objectives of feminists were

multifaceted, they provided a space for women to share their experiences and called for action against sexual harassment. Consequently, they worked as an oppression group to bring out an essential legal change while demonstrating the power of feminist mobilization.

3. UNIFYING AGAINST PATRIARCHY: STRATEGIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE 2000s AND 2010s IN COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The feminist movement has grown stronger in both social and political spheres due to the feminist efforts in the 1980s and 1990s. Currently, in the 2020s, the feminist movement in Turkey is comprised of women coming from diverse backgrounds, including those of varying religions, ethnicities, classes, and ages. They unite to dismantle the patriarchal structures that perpetuate systemic inequality. In this regard, the feminist movement in Turkey is particularly important for its intersectionality, acknowledging that gender, class, sexual orientation, age, religion, health status, citizenship, and other factors all contribute to shaping women's experiences. The movement continues to challenge the link between power relations and women's social and political experiences, recognizing gender, class, and ethnicity as among the most complex and politicized social relations of the modern world (Hill-Collins, 1990). The movement's intersectional character is a key driver of its strength.

It is important to note that there exist many independent feminists who do not have any organic links to established women's or feminist organizations. The democratization of the internet and social networks in Turkey in the 2000s played a pivotal role in this fact. Social networks, in particular, have emerged as a powerful force within the feminist movement since the mid-2000s.

Women have continued to fight against domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and femicides in the 2000s and 2010s, building upon previous strategies while also creating new ones. This period has seen the emergence of numerous campaigns, platforms, demonstrations, and the utilization of social networks and weekly meetings/forums. Henceforth, in the scope of this article, we will focus on the examples of those that have produced significant changes in women's lives.

3.1. Feminist Campaigns and Platforms for Legal Change

3.1.1. Women's Platform on the Turkish Penal Code (TCK Kadın Platformu)

This platform brought together a large number of women's and feminist organizations to communicate women's demands during the campaign for the new Turkish Penal Code in 2003. It was formed to communicate women's

demands during the campaign leading up to the adoption of the new Turkish Penal Code in 2005. The previous Penal Code had significant problems related to male violence against women, such as the lack of consideration of sexual harassment as a crime and the absence of a definition of rape. Moreover, having evidence was essential to prove sexual torture (“Being a woman in the world of violence”, 2004). The feminist movement's amendment of the Turkish Penal Code in 2004 was one of its most significant achievements.

The articles proposed by the Women's Platform on the Turkish Penal Code (*TCK Kadın Platformu*) aimed at a significant transformation in the everyday practices of society (Yılmaz, 2006, p. 161). These demands can be seen as an attempt to subvert the status quo and forge a new path for gender equality. Thirty of the 35 articles proposed by the Women's Platform for the Change of the Turkish Penal Code were included in the new Turkish Penal Code (“AKP Karnesi”, 2018). In April 2005, the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237 came into force, introducing revolutionary measures to prevent violations of women's sexual and physical rights (Official Journal, 2004). This success was due to the platform's ability to bring together a large number of women's and feminist organizations to advocate for the rights of women. Among the many revolutionary changes that were made to prevent violations of women's sexual and physical rights, the notable examples can be listed as follows (Kadının İnsan Hakları Yeni Çözümler Derneği, 2019): Firstly, the new Penal Code no longer considers a woman's body and sexuality to be the property of her husband, family, or society. Sexual crimes such as rape and harassment are now defined as crimes against individuals and are regulated under the section of crimes against bodily integrity. This change is significant for recognizing the importance of a woman's agency over her own body and sexuality, and acknowledging that women deserve protection against sexual violence. Secondly, marital rape is defined as a crime, thus emphasizing women's right to say no to sexual intercourse within the context of marriage. Thirdly, the article in the former penal code that provided for the remission of the sentence of the rapist who married the victim has been removed, ensuring that rapists are held accountable for their actions. Fourthly, discrimination between women based on their marital status and virginity has been removed. This change recognizes that women should not be judged based on their sexual history or marital status, and that all women deserve equal rights and protection under the law. Finally, the new Penal Code recognizes virginity checks as a form of violence against women and considers them a crime. This change is significant because it recognizes that women's bodies should not be subjected to invasive and degrading procedures, and that women have the right to privacy and autonomy over their own bodies.

All these changes show that the Women's Platform for the Change of the Turkish Penal Code played a crucial role in the feminist movement's achievement of legal change in Turkey. The platform has made significant strides towards a more just and equitable society by advocating for women's

rights and making effort to change the laws that perpetuate gender-based violence and discrimination.

3.1.2. The End to Violence Platform (Şiddete Son Platformu)

The End to Violence Platform (Şiddete Son Platformu), established in 2011, is a feminist initiative that brought together 241 women's organizations during the preparation of a new law on violence (Karakuş, 2010). The platform's primary objective was to continue the law's preparation process and disseminate information about it to women's organizations while also establishing relations with the media (Kadının İnsan Hakları Yeni Çözümler Derneği, 2018). Thanks to its efforts and contributions, the platform played a crucial role in drafting Law No. 6284 on Family Protection and Prevention of Violence Against Women, which was enacted on March 8, 2012.

Law No. 6284, which was enacted after the Istanbul Convention, recognizes violence against women as a human rights violation and encompasses all forms of violence, including physical violence and the threat of violence. It is essential for preventing violence against women. The law also established protection and prevention measures for women and other family members who are victims of domestic violence. However, despite the law, the number of violence prevention and monitoring centers and shelters for women victims is still insufficient in the 2020s. The law also allows judicial authorities to take preventive measures, protection orders, or removal measures against violent spouses.

One of the significant achievements of the feminist movement in preventing impunity of perpetrators of violence is the idea of “primacy / or presumption of validity of the word of women,” (kadının beyanı esastır in Turkish), which is enshrined in Law No. 6284. According to this, the person seeking protection can apply for a measure without presenting evidence to the prosecutor, family court, or the police. Any proof is required for the decision for preventive measures. This principle means that in cases where there is insufficient evidence, the prosecution phase is initiated based on the statement of the woman or child. In other words, the woman's statement is essential to take protective measures and initiate an investigation/prosecution (Karlık and Gözcü, 2017). Therefore, it does not contradict the presumption of innocence.

Despite the legal measures, eliminating male violence is far from complete, especially in the context of violence against foreign women. Migrant women, in particular, avoid filing complaints in Turkey, and when they do, they often face discouraging behavior from officials. The testimonies of women in a 2015 documentary (Durmuş and Keleş, 2015) highlight the social, economic, and political difficulties of being a migrant and African American woman in Turkey and their experiences regarding violence. The International Migrant Women's Solidarity Association, founded in 2018, aims to make visible all forms of violence and discrimination that migrant, refugee,

and asylum-seeking women have experienced (UGKDD). In such a context, women came together to develop policies that center on and prioritize women's needs and perspectives.

3.1.3. Campaigns and Platforms Against Femicide

Since the early 2000s, women have been reacting massively against honor killings by explaining that honor killings are committed to preserve women's secondary position. Therefore, feminists defined femicide as a political issue and stated that honor killings are political killings... 'Honor' is an extremely vital political concept for women. As soon as we object to living within the boundaries determined by men, we find ourselves confronted with male violence embedded in custom, honor, jealousy, and selfishness. Our death would intimidate all other women who 'refuse to align' with the patriarchy (Gülbahar, 2004, p. 5). In this period, femicides entered the agenda of the feminist movement. Feminists launched many campaigns and created platforms against femicide, including the "We are in Rebellion Campaign" (2010) (Kadın cinayetlerine isyandayız); "We Will Stop Femicide Platform" (2010) (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu); and "The Emergency Precautionary Group Against Female Murder" (2014-2016) (Kadın cinayetlerine karşı acil önlem grubu). These campaigns were born out of the need to continue this struggle stronger. Feminists have assumed that femicide is political and that the reduction of the sentence on the grounds of unjust provocation is a reward for manhood as well as the reduction of the sentence for good behavior. The women, therefore, declared that femicides are under the responsibility of the state with its branches of legislation, execution, and judiciary, and demanded to end femicide and called the state to assume its responsibility (Istanbul Feminist Kolektif, 2010).

Feminists have started to assist the trials dealing with male violence to prevent sentence reductions (Karakuş, 2010), and they are still doing it today. By attending trials, feminists ensure the visibility of femicides and announce that the judicial branch promotes femicides by reducing the sentence for good conduct and unjust provocation (Karakuş, 2010). According to the testimonies of feminists and feminist lawyers, the presence of women in the courts impacts judges (SFK, 2011) by surprising them and taking them out of the routine. It allows judges to pay attention and reflect. They report that since adopting this strategy, fewer decisions have been made involving penalty reductions (SFK, 2011). Even though attending trials is emotionally challenging, they feel that being in that space and being able to speak out through feminist advocates is empowering. However, while it is crucial to attend trials, feminists also believe that murder and rape are all consequences and need to reveal their reasons rooted in the patriarchal societal structure.

These feminist efforts have faced a number of challenges and have been met with resistance by the state. In a disturbing turn of events, We Will Stop Femicide Platform (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu) was

subjected to a lawsuit in April 2022, accusing them of engaging in “illegal and immoral activities”, without any concrete evidence to support these claims (Sönmez, 2023). It is concerning to see such tactics employed against a group of dedicated activists fighting for the fundamental human rights of women. As of July 2023, the case for the platform’s closure is still ongoing, with the subsequent trial scheduled for September 2023 (Çolak, 2023). It is an unfortunate reality that the fight against gender-based violence continues to be met with obstacles and resistance. These types of resistance and obstacles reveal the political character of violence against women.

3.2. Campaigns and Platforms Against Sexism and Patriarchal State Character

3.2.1. The Purple Needle Again Campaign

The Purple Needles Campaign was launched in response to the release of perpetrators who sexually assaulted two women in Taksim Square on December 31, 2007. As the women did not file a complaint, the perpetrators were released after paying a meager fine (57 YTL (about 34 euros with the parity of January 2008)). The lower limit of the penalty is determined as four years on the grounds of failure to file a complaint, while Article 102 of the Turkish Penal Code, which deals with sexual assaults, does not call for filing a complaint if the crime was committed in a group (Üstündağ, 2008).

This decision highlights the patriarchal nature of the country, where being a woman seems to be synonymous with being open to becoming a victim of sexual harassment and assault. Furthermore, the intersectionality of being a foreigner in a country further magnifies the degree of aggression faced by women. This clearly indicates how men consider themselves to have rights over the female body.

3.2.2. The Platform of “Abortion is a Right; The Decision is Up to Women”

The “Abortion is a right; the decision is up to women” platform was established in June 2012 in response to the government's questioning of abortion rights. Comprised of women who sought to preserve the right to abortion, the platform's more than 40 components have organized massive demonstrations and campaigns. The women of the platform spoke out against the revocation of this right. They cited the fact that 80,000 women have abortions in unsanitary conditions each year due to the lack of free, healthy, and safe contraception and abortion (Karakuş, 2012). These women refused to be oppressed in terms of their bodies, sexuality, and fertility, and called on political authorities, particularly the then-prime minister who had labeled abortion as a massacre, to stop femicides (Karakuş, 2012). In the context of Turkey, the polemics on abortion indicate a point of failure in the

conservative-democratic discourse (Ertürk, 2015, p. 113). And confirm that conservative politics cannot serve as a consistent and liberating basis for women's rights.

The Platform of “Abortion is a Right; The Decision is Up to Women,” is an essential step towards ensuring women's autonomy and bodily integrity, as it recognizes the right of women to make decisions regarding their own bodies. It is high time for the patriarchal structures that reinforce and perpetuate gender-based violence to be dismantled and for women's voices to be heard and respected.

3.2.3. The Power of Social Media Networks and Feminist Solidarity in the Fight Against Violence

In Turkey, more than one woman is killed every day and many others suffer from different forms of violence. Therefore, women must continue to struggle against violence, and their strategies should focus on the processes prior to violence. Feminists and women create solidarity networks by following the needs of the present time. They use social networks, websites, and blogs to issue calls to action and organize online demonstrations, especially on Twitter. With the Covid-19 pandemic, online meetings have become an important way to reflect together against male violence and attacks against the Istanbul Convention. In the pursuit of a feminist perspective, it is imperative that women continue to resist the oppression on their bodies, sexuality, and fertility, and persist in their fight for their rights. The rise of social media has a deep impact on the organization and communication forms of feminist movement. Creating a blog and using social networks are critical for staying up-to-date and quickly informing others to organize against violence. This is important because it shows that economic power is no longer the main factor in spreading ideas and news. It changes how people communicate and allows women of different classes, ethnicities, and sexualities to share ideas and experiences. The conditions of globalization give a unique character to the feminist movement to connect across national boundaries, promoting mutual support and solidarity in the fight against oppression and violence. In this period, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and feminist blogs have facilitated campaigns, actions, and the dissemination of feminist discourse and principles. Social media has also become a crucial space for exposing the perpetrators of violence and abuse against women. The #MeToo movement is a crucial example. Its global impact has brought to light the pervasive nature of sexual violence and harassment by revealing the extent to which women are subjected to these forms of abuse in various environments. Such exposure has become a central component of feminist efforts against male violence, as demonstrated in movements like #SendeAnlat and #UykularınızKaçsın.

In this regard, it is paramount to emphasize the significance of maintaining communication and solidarity among feminists. To exemplify, a

WhatsApp group was established among feminists residing in Kadikoy, Istanbul to ensure their safety. Another group was created after a resident of the neighborhood threatened a migrant woman who owned a local café. By congregating in large numbers in her café, they effectively brought attention to the incident, demonstrating that feminist solidarity is indispensable in safeguarding their lives. When this woman sought assistance from the police alone, she was met with instances of sexism and racism. However, when accompanied by women in her café, the civil police inquired as to her well-being and whether the perpetrator was bothering her. This shift in attitude is indicative of the potency of solidarity among women.

3.2.4. Feminist Gatherings and Forums

In Istanbul, feminist forums like the Yoğurtçu Kadın Forumu meet weekly to discuss various relevant topics and methodologies. These gatherings also provide a space to address diverse forms of violence, not only those perpetrated by individuals but also by the patriarchal state. For example, the Kadınlar Birlikte Güçlü (Women are Stronger Together) platform was established to resist misogynistic laws. While changes in legislation are undoubtedly significant, such gains are often precarious and susceptible to obstacles in the absence of a robust feminist movement.

Feminist forums in Turkey offer a space for feminists to engage in producing political discourse and discussing any subject related to gender relations while striving to avoid the reproduction of gender, class, and ethnic hierarchies. The solidarity demonstrated between Turkish and Kurdish feminists serves as an admirable example of such efforts. Moreover, international feminist solidarity can be viewed as a viable strategy in the fight against male violence. To this end, feminists use virtual platforms to meet with their counterparts worldwide, as demonstrated in recent meetings with Polish, Hungarian, Greek, and Spanish women. Feminists recognize that male violence or the threat thereof is not a problem unique to a single country or context.

The feminist movement in Turkey has shown that the struggle against male violence towards women not only involves a record of violence but also, and perhaps more importantly, a history of solidarity, resistance, sisterhood (although the term may be fraught), empowerment, and, in cases where it does not end in fatality, a narrative of emancipation.

3.3. Discussion and Suggestions

Over the course of the past four decades, the feminist movement in Turkey has been actively engaged in preventing and eliminating violence against women, successfully pressuring the state to take preventive measures against male violence. Concrete improvements in women's rights have been

achieved, including the reform of the Turkish Civil Code, Turkish Penal Code, ratification of the Istanbul Convention, and the Law No. 6284 on the Protection of Family and the Prevention of Violence against Women, among others. The efficacy of feminist non-governmental organizations and alternative media in gaining considerable public support has been documented in a study conducted by Köse and Akyazı in 2019. The study, which randomly selected 840 unique users between April 15 and May 1, 2019, revealed that 99.3% of the participants found the measures taken against male violence towards women insufficient, and were in favor of supporting the process in their own way through their social media accounts (Köse and Akyazı, 2020, p. 62). Such findings highlight the ongoing need for feminist activism and advocacy in the fight against gender-based violence, and the importance of continued support for feminist organizations and initiatives in Turkey.

However, violence against women is a significant and structural problem that requires decisive political will. Studies (Özkan, 2018; Silsüpür & Övüç, 2022) have shown the need for a multidimensional model to eliminate male violence against women. For instance, Özkan (2018) considers social media as a new public space and analyzes the Twitter account of the We Will Stop Femicide Platform (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu) to find out to whom they are addressing or appealing. Özkan's (2018) analysis indicates that the tweets of this platform focus on the experiences of the victims of male violence, who suffer from physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence. To convey their messages, the tweets address the judiciary (63.6%), women (20.9%), the national assembly (11.8%), and the general public (3.6%) to have public support (Özkan, 2018, p. 67).

In the light of this information, it seems that a multidimensional model should intervene at individual, interpersonal, and structural levels, and it should envisage determined cooperation among individuals, civil society, and the state. This requires a courageous confrontation with the problem and admitting that it is the problem of the whole society. Once individuals, civil society, and the state admit the problem, then the mechanisms to cope with violence against women and eliminate it can enter into play: Education, political participation, law-making, media.

Education is one of the essential mechanisms to end violence against women. It is especially important to educate and raise awareness of children, parents, and teachers on the issue by providing them with free compulsory courses and workshops on gender equality, human rights, women's rights, prevention of domestic violence and violence against women, as well as basic law and self-defense courses. To encourage participation in debates during the course, such courses should be composed of non-formal learning techniques such as role-playing, viewing videos, self-study, and debates. To raise social awareness on the subject, universities should involve lectures on gender equality. It is impossible to end violence without ensuring concrete gender

equality. With this aim, gender equality policies that consider the differences between individuals from different socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds should be developed and implemented. The laws can have limitations and cannot bring about progressive change at the societal level if they are not properly implemented. To end violence against women, in the short term, a determination to apply deterrent punishments through the law is necessary, and in the long term, there is the need to implement continuous and persistent public education. Education is the most effective solution to transform the patriarchal mentality and to reach the new generation.

The empowerment of women in the field of political participation, both at local and national levels, is also another important mechanism to end violence. Because it is the field where decisions are made, and the political determination to end male violence can be shown. Having more gender-sensitive women politicians in the assembly may not guarantee full gender equality, but it implies a greater chance to increase the numbers and qualities of women's shelters. Additionally, existing in a field that is widely perceived as masculine, they can help transform traditional gender roles. The establishment of a Ministry of Women to draw public attention to women's problems, including male violence, would also be an important step in this context.

Lastly, necessary legal arrangements should be made to prevent gender discrimination, and measures should be taken to deter discrimination and provide de facto equality. For example, those who intervene when seeing an action of violence against women can be encouraged, and Turkey should become once again a part of the Istanbul Convention. Both conventional and alternative media can be used as tools to raise social awareness about the importance of international law. It is essential to recognize that violence against women is not a private matter but a public and political one that affects the whole society.

Conclusion

Violence against women committed by men is closely linked to the violation of the right to life, as well as a range of economic and social rights violations. Violence serves as a mechanism to maintain control over women and reproduces inequalities in both public and private spaces. The patriarchal system, which governs societal rules, destroys women's agencies, and reinforces gendered power dynamics. In this regard, violence is the product of gendered social processes and interactions that have their roots in the patriarchal system. To effectively combat male violence against women, a multidimensional model that intervenes at individual, interpersonal, and structural levels is necessary as proposed by the feminist movement in Turkey. This article highlights the importance of feminist solidarity in the face of different forms of violence and why feminist strategies are essential to

eliminate male violence against women, mainly when the state is responsible for ensuring women's safety.

In addition to analyzing feminist movement strategies and efforts since the 1980s, this article evaluates the considerably conservative dynamic that has taken hold in Turkey since the mid-2010s and proposes a multidimensional method to end violence. It also underscores that feminist efforts are crucial for the eradication of violence because political situations can shift, as evidenced by Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in April 2021, even if national and international laws are comprehensive enough and the intentions of women and politicians are correct enough. A feminist perspective is vital to understanding and critically examining male violence against women and to promoting gender equity and justice. It is essential to continue to develop feminist strategies and defend feminist achievements to eliminate male violence against women. Developing feminist policies to prevent such violence represents a broad field of endeavor encompassing activism, research, theorizing, legal work, and social policymaking. The feminist movement in Turkey has provided crucial insights into the effectiveness of feminist strategies against violence against women, and their contributions to the broader social movement for gender equality are vital.

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