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Exploring the Intersection of Gender Roles, Religion, and Cultural Identity: The Case of Third-Generation Turkish Immigrants in France

Zeyneb Güşta Arık* 

Abstract

This study examines gender role attitudes among third-generation Turkish immigrants in France, focusing on 18-25 year-olds who were born and raised in France, received formal education, and identify as highly religious. Using the cultural adaptation framework, it explores how these individuals navigate traditional Islamic gender norms, state secularism (laïcité), and egalitarian values. Through semi-structured interviews, the research highlights themes of gender roles, familial responsibilities, and the impact of education and religiosity on gender perceptions. The findings reveal a dynamic interplay between cultural heritage, religious teachings, and progressive societal values, with a notable shift toward egalitarian attitudes, particularly among women. The study underscores the role of education in shaping gender perspectives and the challenges of reconciling cultural and religious identities within a secular context. It provides insights to inform policies promoting social cohesion and gender equality in multicultural European societies.

Keywords : Migration, Turkish Diaspora, Integration, Gender, Religion

Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerini, Din ve Kültürel Kimliğin Kesişimini Keşfetmek: Fransa'daki Üçüncü Nesil Türk Göçmenler Örneği

Özet

Bu çalışma, Fransa'da doğup büyümüş, örgün eğitim almış ve kendilerini yüksek düzeyde dindar olarak tanımlayan 18-25 yaş arası bireyler üzerinden üçüncü nesil Türk göçmenlerin toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine yönelik tutumlarını incelemektedir. Kültürel adaptasyon çerçevesine dayanan araştırma, bu genç yetişkinlerin geleneksel İslami toplumsal cinsiyet normları, laiklik ilkesi, eşitlikçi değerler ve Fransız toplumundaki kendilerine özgü konumları arasında nasıl bir denge kurmaya çalıştıklarını ele almaktadır. Gerçekleştirilen yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin nitel analizi sonucunda, toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri, ailevi sorumluluklar, eğitim ve dindarlığın toplumsal cinsiyet algıları üzerindeki etkisine dair temel temalar ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Bulgular; kültürel miras, dini öğretiler ve ilerici toplumsal değerlere maruz kalma arasında dinamik bir etkileşim olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu araştırma; göç, entegrasyon ve toplumsal cinsiyet dinamiklerine ilişkin literatüre katkı sağlamak ve çok kültürlü Avrupa toplumlarında sosyal uyum ile toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini desteklemeye yönelik politikalara rehberlik edecek bulgular sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Göç, Türk Diasporası, Entegrasyon, Din, Toplumsal Cinsiyet

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Introduction

The gender role attitudes of third-generation Turkish migrants in France represent an important yet under-explored area of migration and gender studies. While there is increasing interest in how migrant communities navigate gender roles, the experiences of third-generation Turkish immigrants—who are caught between their Turkish cultural roots and the egalitarian values of French society—remain insufficiently explored. Born and raised in France, this generation faces the complex task of balancing their Turkish heritage with the gender equality values, family dynamics, and social expectations they encounter in French society. This research aims to explore how third-generation Turkish migrants, particularly those aged 18-25, perceive and navigate gender roles within their families.

The research question guiding this study is the following: How do third-generation Turkish immigrants, aged 18-25, who are educated and born and raised in France, navigate and perceive their gender roles within their families, considering the intersecting influences of gender, religiosity, and societal attitudes?

The study examines how various factors such as education, religiosity, and cultural integration influence these young adults' views on gender roles. It also investigates how the intersection of Turkish traditions and French societal values shapes the gender roles of these young adults. By focusing on this specific demographic, the research provides valuable insights into the ongoing transformation of gender norms within migrant communities and their implications for social cohesion and policy development.

Using qualitative research methods, specifically in-depth interviews, this study explores how third-generation Turkish migrants navigate gender roles. The research delves into how education, religious beliefs, and cultural integration interact to influence these young adults' perceptions and how they negotiate traditional gender norms with more egalitarian values.

This research contributes to a gap in the literature by specifically focusing on third-generation Turkish migrants aged 18-25 who have grown up within the framework of French integration policies. These individuals are exposed to both European insights from the host country and Islamic teachings from their families. By exploring these complexities, this study aims to deepen our understanding of how education, family upbringing, and cultural exposure shape gender attitudes, with implications for promoting gender equality and social cohesion in multicultural societies like France. This paper is organized as follows: the first section reviews literature on gender dynamics in migrant communities, focusing on Turkish migrants in France. The second section presents the theoretical framework and analysis concepts of assimilation, integration, religion, and gender equality. The third section outlines the methodology, including the interview process and data analysis. The final section discusses the findings and their policy implications and suggests areas for future research.

Conceptual Framework

France is home to a significant Muslim population, with recent studies highlighting its diversity and intergenerational evolution. According to Drouhot et al. (2023), Muslims account for approximately 10% of France's adult population, which translates to roughly 5.7 million individuals, reflecting a complex interplay of cultural, social, and religious practices influenced by migration and integration patterns. The Turkish population in France, including migrants and their descendants, is estimated to range between 600,000 and 800,000 (Küçük Sirene, 2019). This means that Turkish individuals constitute about 10% to 14% of the total Muslim population in France.

The Turkish community in France, concentrated in urban centers such as Paris, Lyon, and Strasbourg, has its roots in the labor migration of the 1960s and 1970s. This migration was initially driven by economic opportunities, with Turkish migrants filling labor shortages in various industries (French Ministry of Interior, 2020). Over time, family reunification policies facilitated the growth and entrenchment of the Turkish community in France (Fargues, 2008, p. 8). The Turkish immigrants have contributed significantly to the cultural and economic landscape of France. They have established businesses, participated in various sectors, and maintained cultural and religious practices.

France's approach to integration is deeply rooted in its principle of *laïcité*, a concept often equated with secularism but distinct in its application and philosophy. While secularism generally refers to the separation of religion and state to ensure freedom of belief and religious expression, *laïcité* emphasizes the neutrality of the public sphere and seeks to exclude religious symbols and practices from state institutions (Bowen, 2006, p. 5; Baubérot, 2010, p. 13–15). This framework reflects a more stringent interpretation of secularism, aiming not just to protect religion from state interference but to limit religion's visibility in public life.

French integration policies emphasize the assimilation of immigrants into the *laïcité*, the republican values of the state, often leading to tensions with religious practices that visibly differ from the mainstream (Bowen, 2007, p.5-8). One prominent example of these tensions is the 2004 law banning conspicuous religious symbols in public schools, which specifically targeted Muslim girls wearing hijabs. The government justified this law as a measure to preserve *laïcité* and ensure equality in public education (Joppke, 2009, p.117). Another example is the 2010 law prohibiting face-covering veils, such as the niqab and burqa, in public spaces (Scott, 2007). This legislation has sparked considerable debate and controversy, with critics arguing that it disproportionately targets Muslims and restricts religious freedom (Laurence & Vaisse, 2006, p. 58).

In addition to these legal measures, France has implemented various integration programs to promote social cohesion and economic participation among immigrants. For instance, the Reception and Integration Contract (*Contrat d'Accueil et d'Intégration*)

requires new immigrants to attend language classes and civics training to better understand French values and societal norms (Weil, 2008, p. 67). The Republican Integration Contract (*Contrat d'Intégration Républicaine*), which replaced the CAI in 2016, continues this effort by providing mandatory training sessions on French history, values, and language proficiency to help immigrants integrate into society (Ministère de l'Intérieur, 2023). The French government also introduced the Hope for the Suburbs Plan (*Plan Espoir Banlieues*) in 2008, aiming to address socio-economic inequalities in urban areas with high immigrant populations. This program focused on education, employment, and community development to provide better opportunities for residents in marginalized neighborhoods (Fassin, 2013, p. 124). Additionally, the National Agency for Urban Renewal (*Agence Nationale pour la Rénovation Urbaine*) spearheads urban renewal projects in disadvantaged areas to improve living conditions and foster integration (Tissot, 2015, p. 212). France has further supported initiatives to combat discrimination in housing, employment, and education through the High Authority for the Fight against Discrimination and for Equality (*Haute Autorité de Lutte contre les Discriminations et pour l'Égalité*). This institution, established in 2005, investigates complaints and promotes equal opportunities for all residents, regardless of their religious or ethnic background (Laurence & Vaisse, 2006, p. 58).

Gender roles in Islam, influenced by cultural traditions and religious teachings, often prescribe distinct roles for men and women within the family and society (Esposito, 1992). This is reflected in the Quranic verse: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means" (Quran 4, 34). This includes expectations regarding family responsibilities, such as childcare and household chores, which traditionally fall more heavily on women. Additionally, Hadith literature often reinforces these roles. For instance, a well-known Hadith reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim states: "The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The leader of people is a shepherd and is responsible for his subjects. A man is the shepherd of his family and is responsible for his family. A woman is the shepherd of her husband's home and children and is responsible for them'" (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim). These teachings have historically shaped gender roles in Muslim communities, emphasizing a complementary division of labor between men and women.

Research has shown that individuals with high levels of religiosity often adhere more strictly to traditional gender norms (Diehl et al, 2009, p. 289). This is evident in the recurring debates over the Muslim headscarf, often perceived as a symbol of female oppression. Due to its prevalence in public discussions, this perceived negative correlation between Islam and gender equality deserves careful examination. For instance, a study by Read (2003, p. 487) on Arab American Muslims found that highly religious individuals were more likely to support traditional gender roles, believing that men should be the

primary breadwinners and women should be responsible for domestic duties and child-care. Similarly, in a study of Muslim communities in the United States, Peek (2005, p. 220) observed that religiously devout Muslims often maintained traditional views on gender roles, which were reinforced through community practices and religious teachings.

Individuals' gender attitudes are strongly influenced by their social background, with those who are better educated, female, and younger tending to hold more egalitarian views. Similarly, gender-related behaviors, such as the division of household tasks, decision-making within the household, and financial arrangements among couples, are influenced by factors like partners' resources, including income disparities and life circumstances (Blood and Wolfe 1960; Becker 1981; Treas 1993; Bianchi et al. 2000; Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001; Breen and Cooke 2005; Grunow, Schulz, and Blossfeld 2007). Research conducted among Turks in Germany (Idema & Phalet, 2007, p. 175) revealed that second-generation daughters exhibited a notable shift towards more egalitarian values, particularly among those with highly educated and egalitarian mothers. In contrast, sons tended to maintain traditional attitudes similar to their fathers, a tendency reinforced by the father's religious socialization goals and perceived discrimination.

Assimilation theories propose that migrants' attitudes gradually align with those predominant in the receiving society, leading to a departure from their cultural origins. According to classical assimilation theory, migrants are expected to adopt the values and behaviors of the host society over time, gradually shedding their cultural differences (Barnett et al., 2012). Transnationalism theory suggests, however, that migrants maintain a connection with their origin culture while also integrating aspects of the host culture, constructing their identity from both contexts (Bejarano et al., 2011, p. 526). As migrants assimilate, they may adopt aspects of the host society's lifestyle and value systems, including gender equality, especially in societies that actively promote these values (Bejarano et al., 2011, p. 533). The segmented assimilation theory (Huschek et al., 2011) argues that the extent to which migrants adopt the host society's values varies, influenced by social, economic, and cultural factors. Modernization theory (Norris & Inglehart, 2012, p. 297-300) suggests that, as migrants integrate, they are likely to adopt the egalitarian gender values prevalent in the host society, particularly if the society promotes these norms. Finally, multiculturalism theory (Röder, 2014) posits that while migrants may maintain elements of their original culture, they are still influenced by the broader cultural shift, including changes in gender roles, as they adapt to the new society. Thus, these studies indicate that assimilation is not just about economic or social integration, but also about the transformation of personal values and attitudes, including those regarding gender.

Research suggests that younger generations of Turkish migrants, particularly those born and raised in France, may adopt more egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles

(Idema & Phalet, 2007, p. 175-178). For instance, Pailhé (2015, p. 428) observed that while first-generation Turkish immigrant women tend to enter into unions earlier than French women, their descendants show a delay in union formation, aligning more closely with native French patterns (Pailhé, 2015, p. 420). This shift suggests an adaptation to the host society's norms regarding gender roles and family formation. Röder and Mühlau (2023, p.32) found that immigrant-origin youth in Europe, including those of Turkish descent, adapt their gender attitudes significantly to match the prevalent norms in their host countries. This adaptation is especially evident among younger, more acculturated individuals who have been exposed to the progressive values of their societies (Röder & Mühlau, 2023, p. 27). These findings underscore a trend toward egalitarian gender roles among Turkish immigrants in France, shaped by factors such as increased education and societal exposure.

These changes are often facilitated by the French educational system and workplace environments, which promote gender equality and provide opportunities for women to participate in the labor market. For example, second-generation Turkish women in France have been found to express greater aspirations for education and employment outside the home compared to their mothers (Diehl et al., 2009, p. 282).

Despite these influences, studies indicate that an increase in women's resources does not always result in greater gender equality; migrant families often maintain cultural traditions, including gender-role expectations, while also navigating changes brought about by industrialization and evolving societal norms. For instance, traditional family values, where gender roles are distinctly separated, may persist among migrants, particularly those originating from rural and less educated backgrounds (Timmerman, 2008). Research suggests that Turkish migrants often maintain traditional gender roles within their families, with women primarily responsible for domestic tasks and childcare while men are expected to be the primary breadwinners (Nauck, 2000, p. 223). This adherence to traditional gender norms is influenced by factors such as socio-economic status, level of education, and religiosity (Phalet & Schonpflug, 2001). This dynamic tension can lead to complex gender negotiations, especially among third-generation migrants, who may find themselves balancing the expectations of both their family heritage and the broader societal norms of their host country.

Given the lower levels of modernization in the countries of origin for many Muslim immigrants to the West (Norris and Inglehart 2004), it is expected that first-generation immigrants tend to show higher levels of religiosity and more traditional gender ideologies compared to Western European populations (Diehl et al., 2009, p. 277; Steinbach 2009). However, the religiosity and gender ideologies of subsequent generations are less well understood. The third generation is socialized in different contexts than their parents, which may influence both their religiosity and gender ideologies. Recent research

shows that while the level of religiosity remains stable across generations, there are changes towards more egalitarian gender ideologies among non-Western immigrant groups in Europe (Diehl et al., 2009, p. 279).

For migrants, particularly third generation, navigating between these cultural norms and the expectations of an egalitarian society can present challenges (Phalet & Schönflug, 2001). On one hand, they may face pressure to adhere to traditional gender roles within their families and communities, which prioritize patriarchal structures and gendered divisions of labor. On the other hand, they are exposed to French societal norms that promote gender equality and individual autonomy (Verkuyten, 2007, p. 286). As a result, third-generation Turkish immigrants often find themselves balancing between these competing influences, negotiating their identities and roles within the context of both their cultural heritage and the society in which they reside. This dynamic underscores the complexities of cultural adaptation and integration, particularly concerning gender dynamics, and highlights the need for nuanced approaches to addressing these issues within migrant communities in France. Despite these shifts, patriarchal values and gendered expectations continue to shape the experiences of Turkish migrant families in France, highlighting the ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity within migrant communities.

Despite facing challenges related to integration and discrimination, the Turkish community has managed to preserve its cultural identity while adapting to the broader French society. Through this exploration, we can gain a deeper understanding of how these individuals adapt to the challenges of balancing personal and societal expectations in a multicultural yet secular context.

The following sections will explore the research process and findings. The methods section outlines the qualitative approach, including sampling, interviews, and data analysis. The findings section presents key themes, such as the negotiation of traditional and egalitarian values, education, religiosity, and the influence of French norms. The discussion interprets these findings about existing theories, considering implications for integration policies and gender equality. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the study's contributions and limitations and suggests future research directions on gender roles and cultural integration in migrant communities.

Methods

In this study, a qualitative research design was employed to explore the gender roles of third-generation Turkish immigrants aged 18-25, born and raised in France, with a focus on the division of tasks, childcare, and house chores, and their perspectives on egalitarian gender roles and their ties with religion.

France was chosen as the focal point for this study for several reasons. Firstly, France

has a significant population of Turkish migrants, particularly in urban centers such as Paris, Lyon, and Strasbourg (French Ministry of Interior, 2020), making it a relevant context for examining the experiences of this community. Secondly, France has a distinctive approach to integration, characterized by its principle of *laïcité*, which emphasizes the separation of religion and state. This unique socio-political context provides an interesting backdrop for exploring how Turkish migrants navigate their cultural and religious identities within a society governed by *laïcité*.

By narrowing the focus to third-generation individuals who have grown up in France and received an education, this study highlights the unique socio-cultural context in which they have been raised. It recognizes that education plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward gender roles, potentially influencing how individuals adhere to traditional norms or adopt more egalitarian views. Additionally, this study examines how these young adults navigate the intersection of religious teachings and patriarchal gender roles within the context of French society, offering a nuanced understanding of their experiences and attitudes.

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection as they provide a balance between flexibility and structure, allowing for open-ended responses while ensuring that key topics are covered consistently across participants (Bryman, 2016). Participant selection involved purposeful sampling to ensure diversity in the sample. Criteria for inclusion specified third-generation Turkish immigrants aged 18-25 residing in France. Sampling was conducted to encompass a range of demographic characteristics, including age, educational background, employment status, and geographic location. A sample size of seven participants was collected in the study.

The data collection procedure involved recruiting participants through community organizations, social media platforms, and personal networks. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, outlining the purpose of the study, their rights, and the confidentiality measures in place. Interviews were conducted between March 2024 and May 2024, both virtually via Skype and face-to-face. With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate accurate data capture. Detailed field notes were also taken during and after the interviews to record non-verbal cues and researcher reflections.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis, a systematic approach to identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data. Interview transcripts were coded, with data organized into meaningful categories and subcategories. The interpretation of the coded data involved synthesizing themes and narratives that captured participants' experiences and perspectives. Overall, this methodology aimed to conduct a rigorous qualitative study that provides valuable insights into the gender roles and perspectives of third-generation Turkish immigrants in France.

Table 1 - Demographic Table of the Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Educational Background	Employment Status	Geographic Location	Religiosity	Marriage Status
P1	22	F	University Student	Employed	Lyon	Highly Religious	Single
P2	22	M	Master Student	Employed	Saint-Claude	Highly Religious	Single
P3	21	F	High School	Unemployed	Lyon	Highly Religious	Single
P4	23	F	High School	Unemployed	Lyon	Highly Religious	Engaged
P5	22	F	University Student	Employed	Lyon	Highly Religious	Single
P6	20	M	University Student	Employed	Straousburg	Highly Religious	Single
P7	22	M	University Student	Employed	Bourg en Bresse	Highly Religious	Single

Findings

The analysis of the participants' responses reveals several key themes regarding their gender roles, the influence of religiosity, and their adaptation to French societal norms. The results are organized into the following sections: *Gender Role Perceptions*, *Influence of Religiosity*, and *Adaptation to French Cultural Norms*.

Gender Role Perceptions

Participants exhibited a range of perspectives on gender roles. Most of the respondents expressed more egalitarian views, advocating for shared responsibilities in childcare and house chores. The findings of the study illuminate a spectrum of perspectives on gender roles among third-generation Turkish immigrants in France, revealing a complex interplay between tradition, modernity, and personal experiences. A notable example is from a 22-year-old female participant (P1) who described the traditional roles within her family: "My father works, and my mother is a housewife. She is responsible for everything but earning money. My father is only responsible for bringing in money; he does not even care how the money will be spent. My mother decides on that. She organizes everything in the house." (P1, 15 March 2024, via Skype). This quote underscores the traditional division of labor that persists in some Turkish households, where men are seen as breadwinners and women as homemakers.

However, this participant also expressed a desire for a more egalitarian arrangement in her future marriage, indicating a shift towards more modern gender roles. She stated, “I would not want the same thing to happen to me when I get married. I want to share responsibilities with my husband.” This sentiment reflects a broader trend among the younger, third-generation Turkish immigrants who aspire to balance household responsibilities more equally between partners.

The participant further highlighted that her mother’s dissatisfaction with the traditional division of tasks has influenced her views. She mentioned, “My mother also advises that as well. She is not happy with the division of tasks.” This indicates that even within traditionally structured households, there are internal critiques and desires for change, particularly from women who experience the brunt of household responsibilities. This finding suggests that intergenerational communication within families can play a significant role in shaping more egalitarian gender role attitudes among the younger generation.

Another 21-year-old female participant (P5) provided insights into how parental influence and the pursuit of education shaped her views on gender roles. She described her upbringing in a small village in France, noting the early marriages among her peers: “I grew up in a small village in France. Almost all my friends from childhood got married at an early age.” However, her father’s progressive outlook played a crucial role in her and her brother’s educational pursuits: “My father advised me and my brother to study in bigger cities such as Paris or Lyon, and we moved when I was 17.” (Interview with P5, Ankara, 28 April 2024).

Just like P1 despite adhering to traditional gender roles at home, the participant’s father held progressive views about education and independence: “Even though my father—just like the rest of the Turkish fathers—is satisfied with the gender roles in our home, he always advised us to earn our own money and study.” This juxtaposition highlights a complex dynamic where traditional values coexist with aspirations for greater gender equality, particularly in the realm of education and career.

The participant also shared her father’s occasional underestimation of household work: “Sometimes he comments, ‘What is hard with washing and cooking? I could do that as well.’ But he is not aware of how hard it is for women both mentally and physically.” This underscores a common disconnect between traditional perceptions of gender roles and the actual experiences of women who perform these tasks.

Interestingly, the participant’s father, despite his traditional views, encouraged both his children to pursue education and share responsibilities: “Unlike our relatives and neighbors, he wanted both me and my brother to study, earn our money, and share the responsibilities equally.” This support extended to the household, where she was not expected to do house chores simply because she was the daughter: “My father and my

mother never asked me to do house chores even though I was the only daughter in the home.”

The move to a bigger city for education marked a significant transition: “We learned everything when we moved from our home and had to learn everything on our own.” This experience of living independently reinforced the importance of sharing responsibilities and balancing traditional expectations with modern egalitarian values.

She also highlighted the significant impact of her educational journey on her views about marriage and gender roles. She reflected on how attending high school in a larger city broadened her perspectives: “If I hadn’t attended high school in another city, I would have married early like my peers.” This shift in environment exposed her to new ideas and possibilities: “Because I studied in high school in a big city, I realized that marriage is not the sole purpose of life. I understood that studying and earning money are priorities.”

The participant emphasized the crucial role her mother played in supporting her aspirations: “My mother also supported me a lot in this regard. She told me not to marry until I earned my own money.” This parental encouragement was pivotal in shaping her ambitions and delaying early marriage.

A 20-year-old male participant (P6) from Strasburg discussed the significant impact of family support and the environment in shaping gender role perceptions. He highlighted the dichotomy within the Turkish diaspora: “There are two extremes here—those who only hang out with other Turkish expatriates and think like expatriates, and those who completely resemble the French.” Despite her family’s adherence to traditional gender roles, they supported her desire for more egalitarian roles: “My family behaved according to traditional gender roles, but they always supported my being more egalitarian” (Interview with P6, 16 March 2024, via Skype).

Reflecting on her friends who remained in their small town, the participant noted the contrast in their life choices: “All my friends who stayed in the small town for high school are already married and have children.” He attributed their traditional mindset to their insular environment: “They all have the typical expatriate Turkish mindset because their surroundings are just like them. They don’t even associate with the French because they find them too open-minded.”

The participant further explained how her peers, despite living in France, maintained a lifestyle reminiscent of their rural origins: “They live as if they have never left their villages. They still live like they are in Yozgat in ‘70s.” This observation underscores the role of social and environmental factors in perpetuating traditional gender roles among Turkish immigrant communities in smaller towns.

Influence of Religiosity

Participants also acknowledged the significance of religious teachings in views on gender roles. Participant (P1): “Our religion places great importance on men working and taking responsibility for women.” She cited Islamic principles that define financial responsibilities within the family: “According to Islam, a woman’s money belongs to her, and a man’s money belongs to the entire family.”

The participant emphasized her desire for financial independence: “I want to work and earn my own money, not just because of responsibility but because I want to have my own money.” This statement reflects a blend of traditional and modern values, showcasing her attempt to balance personal independence with religious teachings.

Another participant (P5) detailed the profound influence of her religious upbringing on her gender role perceptions. She described her family’s commitment to religious practices: “I was raised in a family that places great importance on religious values. My parents pray, and so do I. We regularly attend religious gatherings at the mosque, especially those organized by Milli Görüş.” This context provided a foundation for her evolving views on gender roles. Through participation in mosque activities and guidance from community members, the participant received reinforcement of traditional gender roles: “The sisters at the mosque remind me of the responsibilities men have over women.” These teachings have gradually influenced her stance on gender equality: “I used to believe that men and women are absolutely equal and that everyone should earn money, but now I think differently” (Interview with P5, Ankara, 28 April 2024).

While she still supports women’s financial independence, her understanding of religious expectations has led to a nuanced view: “Women should earn money, but the responsibility of the household falls on men according to our religion. Therefore, men should save money before marriage.” This shift reflects a balance between modern aspirations for gender equality and adherence to traditional religious roles.

A 20-year-old recently engaged participant (P4) provided insight into the balancing act between traditional religious norms and contemporary economic realities. She expressed a strong commitment to religious teachings, stating, “If I wasn’t forced to, I wouldn’t even go out for shopping because that’s what’s right religiously.” However, she acknowledged the necessity of adapting to current circumstances: “But nowadays, men don’t fully meet their responsibilities, and everything is very expensive, so I work to help my fiancé.” Reflecting on family history, she criticized the educational disparity practiced by her grandfather, who sent his uncle to school but not his mother: “I don’t think it was right that my grandfather sent his brother to school but not my mother.” Despite this, she emphasized the importance of education for both genders in today’s context: “I will support my children to get an education and a profession.” She noted that her grandfather might have acted differently given today’s conditions, highlighting the evolving

nature of gender roles: “Maybe my grandfather would have done the same if it was in his time, but since circumstances have changed today, there must be innovations without stepping outside Islamic lines.” (Interview with P4, 17 April 2024, via Skype).

This participant’s experience underscores the complex interplay between adhering to traditional religious expectations and adapting to modern economic and social realities. It highlights a generational shift in attitudes towards gender roles, influenced by both religious teachings and contemporary necessities. This narrative provides a nuanced understanding of how third-generation Turkish immigrants in France navigate and reconcile traditional and modern gender expectations within their familial and cultural contexts.

A 22-year-old male participant (P2) shared insights into his personal experiences and future aspirations regarding gender roles. He described a household where both parents worked and shared household chores: “Both of my parents work, and they also divide the housework.” However, as a single individual living alone, he takes full responsibility for household tasks: “I do everything in my own house.” Looking ahead to marriage, he expressed his intention to maintain equality in household responsibilities with his future spouse: “When I get married, we will share everything equally” (Interview with P2, 26 April 2024, Ankara).

Despite advocating for an egalitarian division of tasks, the participant emphasized the traditional view of male responsibility within Islam: “But religiously, the responsibility lies with the man. That’s why the man should earn more money and take more responsibility.” This reflects a nuanced understanding of gender roles, balancing personal beliefs with societal expectations rooted in religious teachings.

This tendency towards egalitarian gender roles is also reflected by another participant, P7, who grew up in a small city in France. In his household, everyone shared responsibilities for daily chores, including cooking, cleaning, and washing dishes. He explains, “My mom was born in France and attended university. Although she doesn’t work now, her open-minded mindset sets us apart from the rest of the Turkish community” (Interview with P7, 26 March 2024, via Skype).

P7 differentiates his family from the rest of the Turkish community by their pursuit of higher education and their lack of concern for status symbols like expensive cars or traditional occupations such as running a kebab shop or construction business. He elaborates, “In the town where I grew up, I didn’t see a single Turk who cared about studying, self-development, or intellectual pursuits. All they cared about was the car they drove, the money they earned, and showing off to their relatives in Turkey.” He confirms the stereotypical image of Turkish people in France and describes small towns as a microcosm of Turkey in the 1970s.

When asked about his relationship with religion, he explains, “I grew up equating

Islam with the Turkish community. They acted like they were the only Muslims in the world, and no one else could be Muslim. My parents taught me Islam well but also told me I was free to make my own decisions. I should be the one to make the choice.” This indicates that traditional religious and cultural tendencies differ in third-generation households.

P7 further states the following:

“When I moved to Lyon, I met intellectual Muslims who study, work in quality jobs, and are open-minded. They were just like me. I started going to Milli Görüş Camii, which was very different from DITIB Mosques. The talks in the mosques were in French, addressing current problems of Muslims. They organized activities that interested young people and included other Muslims such as Moroccans, Arabs, and Tunisians. Now I pray five times a day and am the vice-president of the Milli Görüş Youth.”

His explanation portrays Turkish families in small towns as strictly traditional and closed off, with limited acceptance of non-Turkish Muslims.

When asked about his views on gender roles, he expresses the following:

“I grew up in a home where I learned everything just like my sisters. Our responsibilities were the same. If my wife wants to work, she can work. If she wants to stay at home, she can stay, but our responsibilities at home will be equal, just as my mother taught me.”

He adds, “My beliefs do not contradict Islam; these traditional gender roles do not come from Islam but are fully traditional. I used to struggle to differentiate them, but once I got to know truly religious third-generation Muslims with an intellectual mindset, I saw the difference.” His strong connection with his peers through the mosque allowed him to compare different groups within the Turkish community in France. He describes the young Turkish generation in small villages as close-minded and shallow. He also notes that his peers see him as degenerative because he decided to study, unlike the rest of them. He emphasizes that he can bring together the positive qualities of both Turkish and French cultures, creating a mindset that does not contradict his religion.

The findings from this study reveal a complex and nuanced landscape of gender role attitudes among highly religious, third-generation Turkish immigrants in France. The participants’ experiences and perspectives illustrate a dynamic interplay between traditional cultural values, religious teachings, and the influence of modern European societal norms.

One of the key themes that emerged from the interviews is the persistence of traditional gender roles within the family. For instance, a 22-year-old female participant (P1)

highlighted the conventional division of labor in her household, where her father was the breadwinner and her mother managed all household responsibilities: “My father works, and my mother is a housewife. She is responsible for everything but earning money.” This division aligns with traditional Islamic teachings, which often emphasize distinct roles for men and women (Quran 4:34; *Sahih Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*).

Adaptation to French Cultural Norms

The desire for more egalitarian gender roles is evident among the younger generation. The same participant expressed her aspiration for a different arrangement in her future marriage, stating, “I want to share responsibilities with my husband.” This sentiment reflects a broader trend among third-generation immigrants, who, despite their traditional upbringing, are influenced by the egalitarian values prevalent in broader French society.

The role of education and parental influence is significant in shaping these attitudes. A 21-year-old female participant discussed how her father’s progressive views on education influenced her outlook on gender roles: “Even though my father—just like the rest of the Turkish fathers—is satisfied with the gender roles in our home, he always advised us to earn our own money and study.”

Interestingly, the findings also reveal a tension between religious adherence and modern gender role expectations. A 20-year-old recently engaged female participant (P4) expressed her commitment to religious teachings while acknowledging the need to adapt to contemporary economic realities: “But nowadays, men don’t fully meet their responsibilities, and everything is very expensive, so I work to help my fiancé.” This indicates a pragmatic approach where religious values are balanced with the practicalities of modern life.

Another participant, a 22-year-old male (P2), provided insight into how religious beliefs influence his view on gender roles. Despite advocating for an equal division of household tasks, he maintained that “religiously, the responsibility lies with the man.” This underscores the enduring influence of religious teachings on gender role perceptions, even among those who espouse more egalitarian views in practice.

Discussion

The concept of intersection is crucial in understanding these findings. Third-generation Turkish immigrants in France navigate multiple intersecting identities, including their cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and the societal norms of their host country. This intersection shapes their unique experiences and attitudes towards gender roles. It is noteworthy to say that the previous generation also motivates their children to adopt more egalitarian roles. Even though they cannot change their reality, they support their children to change the future.

The study aligns with existing literature suggesting that the level of religiosity and traditional gender ideologies tend to persist across generations, although there are shifts towards more egalitarian views, particularly among women (Diehl et al., 2009, p. 277; Idema and Phalet, 2007). The egalitarian shift among third-generation immigrants is more visible among young people who pursue higher education.

Given that all participants declare themselves to be highly religious, regularly attending mosque and praying, the impact of education and connections with broader society appear to be more influential determinants of gender roles. Participants who grew up in small cities highlight the small-mindedness of the Turkish community and note that being a progressive Muslim can lead to social criticism. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the role of education and social integration in shaping more egalitarian gender roles among immigrant communities.

Research indicates that higher levels of education are associated with more egalitarian views on gender roles (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Educated individuals are more likely to question traditional gender norms and advocate for equality (Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn, 1983, p. 211). Additionally, social integration, particularly interaction with diverse groups, has been shown to foster progressive attitudes towards gender roles (Berry, 1997). This is evident in the experiences of participants who moved to larger cities and encountered intellectual Muslims who balanced their religious beliefs with open-minded and progressive views.

For instance, P7 describes the contrast between the conservative, traditional attitudes prevalent in small towns and the more progressive, inclusive environment he found in Lyon. He notes that in his small town, the Turkish community was primarily focused on material success and social status, while education and intellectual pursuits were undervalued. This is consistent with findings from Koydemir and Schütz (2012), who argue that immigrant communities in less urbanized areas may adhere more strictly to traditional cultural norms.

Furthermore, P7's experience at the *Milli Görüş Camii* in Lyon, where discussions and activities were inclusive and addressed contemporary issues, underscores the importance of social networks in shaping religious and cultural identities (Peek, 2005, p. 227). The mosque's focus on engaging with a diverse Muslim community, including Moroccans, Arabs, and Tunisians, provided a broader perspective and reinforced egalitarian values.

The findings from this study reveal a nuanced and complex landscape of gender role attitudes among highly religious, third-generation Turkish immigrants in France. Participants exhibited a range of perspectives, from traditional to more egalitarian views, shaped by a dynamic interplay between cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and the influence of modern European societal norms.

One key theme is the persistence of traditional gender roles within many families, as highlighted by participants like P1, who described a conventional division of labor in her household. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the enduring influence of traditional gender norms among immigrant communities (Quran 4:34; [Sahih Bukhari](#), [Sahih Muslim](#)). However, the younger generation's desire for more egalitarian arrangements indicates a significant shift. P1's aspiration to share responsibilities with her future husband reflects broader trends among third-generation immigrants who, despite their traditional upbringing, are influenced by the egalitarian values prevalent in French society.

Education and parental influence play critical roles in shaping these attitudes. The experience of P5, whose father encouraged both his children to pursue education and independence, underscores the transformative impact of education on gender role perceptions. This supports findings from Inglehart and Norris (2003) that higher education levels are associated with more egalitarian gender views.

Interestingly, the study reveals a tension between religious adherence and modern gender role expectations. P4's pragmatic approach to balancing religious values with contemporary economic realities highlights this tension, reflecting similar findings in more recent literature on immigrant adaptation and integration. Recent studies show that immigrants often navigate complex intersections between their cultural beliefs and the societal norms of their host countries, especially regarding gender roles. For example, research has demonstrated that while religious adherence remains a significant aspect of identity, the pressures of modern economic demands can lead to more flexible and pragmatic approaches to traditional gender expectations ([Işık, 2022, p. 48](#); [Çelebi, 2023, p. 127](#)). Additionally, the adaptation process within immigrant communities reveals a gradual shift toward more egalitarian gender roles as younger generations engage with the broader social and economic environments in their host countries ([Zhou, 2021](#); [Kaya & Demirtaş, 2020](#)).

However, these overlapping identities—religious, cultural, and modern—also present a challenge in terms of participants' sense of belonging. Many participants feel torn between the values of their immigrant community, which may emphasize traditional gender roles, and the broader, more egalitarian values promoted in French society. This internal conflict can create feelings of alienation as participants struggle to reconcile their cultural heritage with their desire to integrate fully into the social fabric of their host country. The conflicting demands of these multiple identities often lead to a sense of being neither fully accepted within their community nor fully integrated into mainstream society.

These insights contribute to the broader understanding of how immigrant communities navigate and reconcile traditional and modern gender expectations within their familial and cultural contexts. The study aligns with existing literature suggesting that while

traditional gender ideologies persist across generations, there are notable shifts towards more egalitarian views, particularly among women and those who pursue higher education (Diehl et al., 2009, p. 289).

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the gender role attitudes of third-generation Turkish migrants in France, revealing a complex negotiation between traditional cultural values, religious beliefs, and modern European societal norms. While many participants still adhere to traditional gender roles, particularly within family structures, a noticeable shift towards more egalitarian views is emerging, especially among younger generations and those exposed to higher education. Education plays a significant role in shaping these attitudes, with participants who received higher education displaying more progressive views on gender roles.

Parental influence also emerged as key, with several participants reporting that their parents encouraged education and financial independence, fostering more egalitarian perspectives. For example, a female participant shared that although her father maintained traditional gender roles at home, he encouraged both her and her sibling to pursue their education and become financially independent.

The study also highlights the role of social integration in shaping gender perceptions. Participants who lived in larger, more diverse urban environments were more likely to adopt progressive views on gender roles compared to those in smaller, more conservative towns. This suggests that exposure to diverse social environments can play a crucial role in shaping gender attitudes. Additionally, the intersection of religiosity and modern gender expectations was an important theme as participants navigated the balance between religious teachings and contemporary gender norms. Some participants expressed a desire for gender equality while acknowledging the traditional gender roles prescribed by religion.

While offering valuable insights, this study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the small sample size of seven participants limits the generalizability of the findings. Although the study captures rich qualitative data, the small number of participants means the results may not be representative of the broader population of third-generation Turkish immigrants in France. Therefore, caution should be taken when applying these findings to the entire community.

Another limitation is that since the data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participants may have provided responses that they felt were socially acceptable or aligned with cultural norms, particularly on sensitive issues such as gender roles and religion. This could affect the authenticity of their accounts, as participants might have unintentionally skewed their responses to meet perceived expectations.

A variety of potential research avenues can be explored to deepen our understanding of the gender role attitudes of third-generation Turkish migrants in France. One possible direction is a longitudinal study comparing the gender role perceptions of first, second, and third-generation Turkish migrants. Such research could reveal how gender expectations evolve across generations as migrant families become more integrated into French society. Additionally, a comparative study examining gender role attitudes across different Muslim communities in France—such as North African—would offer a broader understanding of how different cultural backgrounds shape gender norms and their transformation within a French context.

In conclusion, this research highlights the complex negotiation of gender roles among third-generation Turkish migrants in France, shaped by the intersection of cultural heritage, religiosity, and exposure to French values of gender equality. The study underscores the critical role of education and socio-economic factors in influencing gender perceptions, while also examining how French integration policies and societal norms impact these individuals' gender attitudes. By exploring these dynamics, the research provides valuable insights into the ongoing transformation of gender norms within migrant communities, contributing to broader discussions on migration, cultural integration, and gender equality in multicultural societies. Further research in this area can help inform policies that promote social cohesion and gender equality, addressing the specific needs of migrant communities in France.

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