

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION: A CRITICAL APPROACH TO MEASUREMENT OF SINGLE-PARENT WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT^{1,2}

HANEHALKI KOMPOZİSYONU BAĞLAMINDA KADINLARIN GÜÇLENMESİ: TEK EBEVEYN OLAN KADINLARIN GÜÇLENMESİNİN ÖLÇÜMÜNE ELEŞTİREL BİR YAKLAŞIM

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to analyze how women's empowerment varies by household composition, focusing on single-parent and married women. This study also aims to discuss how empowerment can be measured, which components are critical when analyzing women's empowerment, especially according to the household composition variable, and to address limitations. The factors behind this issue are addressed from a feminist perspective using a mixed method approach. The 2018 TDHS data were used to answer the research question, the variable of women's empowerment was created through factor analysis using a polychoric correlation matrix, and multinomial logistic regression was used to determine the relationships between women's empowerment and explanatory variables. Following the quantitative analysis, in-depth interviews were conducted with 18 women to discuss their life experiences, coping strategies, and perceptions of empowerment and self-image. The quantitative analysis, in which married women with dependent children were taken as the reference category, revealed that the level of empowerment of single-parent women with dependent children was particularly high. Single-

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parent women's entry into the world of work, family support and critical inequalities have been addressed. For married women, the unequal sharing of household chores and limited autonomy in decision-making were identified as obstacles to their empowerment. On the other hand, it was also discussed that issues that empower women can actually create burdens. This study, which also emphasizes the limitations of the quantitative measurement of women's empowerment, provides a perspective for the creation of a deeper and feasible approach and surveys on this subject, too.

KEY WORDS: Measurement of women's empowerment, household composition, single-parent women, mixed-method approach.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, tek ebeveyn ve evli kadınlara odaklanarak, kadınların güçlenmesinin hane halkı kompozisyonuna göre nasıl değiştiğini analiz etmektir. Öte yandan bu çalışma, güçlenmenin nasıl ölçülebileceğini, özellikle hane halkı kompozisyonu değişkenine göre kadınların güçlenmesini analiz ederken hangi bileşenlerin kritik olduğunu ve bileşenlerin sınırlılıklarını tartışmayı da amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, bu konuları karma yöntem yaklaşımı kullanarak feminist perspektif ile ele almaktadır. Araştırma sorusunu yanıtlamak için 2018 TNSA verileri kullanılmış, kadınların güçlenmesi değişkeni polikorik korelasyon matrisi kullanılarak faktör analizi yoluyla oluşturulmuş ve kadınların güçlenmesi ile açıklayıcı değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri belirlemek için multinomial lojistik regresyon kullanılmıştır. Nicel analizin ardından 18 kadınla derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılarak yaşam deneyimleri, baş etme stratejileri, güçlenme algıları ve benlik imajları tartışılmıştır. Evli ve bakmakla yükümlü olduğu çocuğu bulunan kadınların referans kategori olarak alındığı nicel analiz, tek ebeveyn olan ve bakmakla yükümlü olduğu çocuğu olan kadınların güçlenme düzeyinin yüksek olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Tek ebeveyn olan kadınların işgücü piyasasına girişleri, aile desteği ve kritik eşitsizlikleri de tartışılmıştır. Evli kadınlar için ev işlerinin eşitsiz paylaşımı ve karar alma süreçlerinde sınırlı özerklik, güçlenmelerinin önündeki engeller olarak tanımlanmıştır. Öte yandan, kadınları güçlendiren konuların aslında yük yaratabileceği de ele alınmıştır. Kadınların güçlenmesinin nicel ölçümünün sınırlılıklarına da vurgu yapan bu çalışma, daha derin ve uygulanabilir bir yaklaşımın oluşturulması ve bu konudaki araştırmalar için bir perspektif de sunmaktadır.

ANAHTAR KELİMELELER: Kadının güçlenmesinin ölçümü, hanehalkı kompozisyonu, tek ebeveyn kadınlar, karma yöntem yaklaşımı

INTRODUCTION

The conceptualization and measurement of women's empowerment remain complex and contentious in the literature. For liberal feminists, empowering women involves expanding and promoting their options both inside and outside of the household (Rowland-Serdar and Schwartz-Shea, 1991). In the 1960s, development debates undervalued women, viewing them as tools for development (Toksöz, 2011). Since the 1970s, despite global development efforts, feminist scholars have highlighted women's stagnant status and examined inequality through the lenses of class, culture, ethnicity, and politics. Although the term "empowerment" is not used, this issue has been addressed by Marxist feminist theorists in the context of liberation, by focusing on women's oppression in their role within the nuclear family in class societies (Hochschild, 1997). While structural factors influencing women's status are widely studied, the literature focus on the fact that women's empowerment must be examined multidimensionally (Jain, 2023, Bayissa et al., 2018; Akadlı Ergöçmen, 1997; Calvès, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989; Hooks, 1984; Rathgeber, 1990). In its broadest sense, empowerment-which will be conceptualized in the Conceptual Framework Section- is the ability of women to make decisions about their lives, recognize their resources, and participate as political actors in solidarity with other women (Ewerling et al., 2017).

Without a doubt, understanding and analysing the drivers of empowerment is crucial for fostering empowerment. Most demographic studies analyze women's status in terms of education, employment, and decision-making participation (Upadhyay et al., 2014). On the other hand, the analysis of causative linkages between aspects of women's empowerment, population dynamics and socioeconomic development has been a greater emphasis of demographers in recent years (e.g. Bageant et al., 2024; Desai et al., 2022; Céline et al., 2021; Ewerling et al. 2020;). It is also discussed how important it is to include qualitative data collection since it helps put theories of change into context, guides the design of research and interventions, and makes it easier to comprehend results that show causality (Committee on Population, 2024).

The household, which is one of the focal points of demographic studies, should be considered not only as a category but also as one of the factors affecting women's empowerment. Both intra-household dynamics, lifecourse experiences affecting household composition and policies developed according to household type are closely related to women's empowerment. Many studies underline that single-parent households are at risk of vulnerability (e.g.; Kader, 2020; Koç, 2018; Pency and Zhan, 2004). Therefore, we argue that it is worth to concentrate on household composition and intra-

household dynamics in empowerment discussion, which served as the basis for this article. Studies on single-parent households, which are generally seen as “broken families”, mostly focus on the difficulties experienced in these households, household welfare, and the psychosocial status of the child growing up in the households. There are limited number of studies that focus on the position and experiences of women in single-parent households. Discussions on welfare policies emphasize the rising prevalence of single-parent households and the poverty risks faced by female-headed households. While the literature often focuses on household conditions; intra-household dynamics play a critical role in shaping women’s empowerment, making their life trajectories and biographies essential for comprehensive analysis.

Recent familialist social policies in Turkey have made single-parent women even more vulnerable by preventing them from “enjoying” the freedom to make their own choices. Single-parent women are not only economically disadvantaged but also socially deprived as Kader (2020) argues. However, as seen in many studies, it can be observed that women have developed new tools to struggle with both the patriarchal system and the economic difficulties by using different “bargaining” methods (Kandiyoti, 1988). One of the most important motivations behind this study is to address the determinants of women’s empowerment from different aspects by aiming to reveal this mechanism from a critical perspective.

The main objective of this study is to discuss how empowerment can be measured, and which components are critical when analysing women’s empowerment, specifically household composition variable with a focus of single-parent women-household. The study also aims to address the limitations of such quantitative measurement of empowerment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Measurement of Women’s Empowerment

Given the discussion and gaps in definitions of women’s empowerment and actions taken to advocate women’s empowerment, it is inevitable to think about how difficult it is to measure the level of empowerment, with scientific criteria. It would not be wrong to say that these challenges are not only due to the complexity of the historical definition of women’s empowerment and the diversity of actions taken to achieve it but also associated with lack of data, outdated data, difficulties in accessing data sources, lack of data quality, low sample size, and ignoring the women’s experience and personal biographies (CEID, 2021; Alloatti, 2019; Laszlo, 2020).

Although efforts have been made to measure quantitatively on the axis of certain indicators, it would be quite appropriate to resort to qualitative methods

reflecting women's participation if one has an empowerment perspective that focuses on women as "subjects". Keeping in mind the difficulty of this issue, the importance of measuring the level of women's empowerment with specific and scientific indicators should be emphasized. In the report of the CEİD –one of the rights and advocacy-based civil society organizations in Turkey– it is mentioned that indicator-based measurement of women's empowerment is crucial and it provides a roadmap for civil organizations, local governments, and the public sector in both identifications of existing gaps in gender inequality and developing policies to contributing women's empowerment (Sancar et al., 2021).

In their article, Céline et al. (2021) review the methodologies of existing indices designed in the last 5 years in the literature and identify the dimensions and indicators common to their measurement. It presents the gaps and challenges in measuring women's empowerment. They review around 30,000 publications, and 170 of them are examined in the final step. Their research summarized the following 7 domains of women's empowerment. Within the scope of these domains, they review 38 surveys. Half of them were designed within the field of humanitarian action. They explore that earlier studies concentrate on dimensions related to health such as fertility, family planning, and maternity/health. Contraceptive use has been associated with a high level of women's empowerment. More recently, literature on measuring women's empowerment mainly centers upon sociocultural domains: 81% of the studies on the measurement of women's empowerment include sociocultural domains such as early and child marriage, the experience of violence, awareness of violence, opinion on gender equality and women's right, and attitudes towards sexuality. Health, economic participation, and justice follow sociocultural dimensions. Each of these dimensions is covered by 40% of the related studies. Economic dimensions include ownership and control over ownership, access to employment, types of employment, paid/unpaid work, formal/informal work, source of income, child labor, economic violence, and economic leadership. Health-based indicators include access and barriers to health services, survivorship, health perception, the decision on health, reproductive health, abortion, awareness, and communication on sexuality, ad reporting violence to health personnel. The human development domain involves indicators related to literacy, education, knowledge and skills, access to information and aid, change in gender attitudes, and self-esteem. Human development indicators seem closely linked to sociocultural ones. 15% of the studies involve psychological domains and indicators such as access to support, self-esteem, feelings about the future, etc. Analysis by Céline et al. (2021) indicates that leadership and justice are covered in only 9% of the studies. They include indicators of community engagement and political participation of women, access to the justice system, and so on.

As aforementioned, Kabeer (1999) presents a comprehensive understanding of women's empowerment by resources, agency, and achievement, which was borrowed by many scholars and institutions. From this perspective, World Bank (2022) identifies dimensions and indicators to measure women's empowerment. In addition, several steps have been taken to monitor women's empowerment and gender inequalities. United Nations developed Gender Development Index (GDI) and The Gender Inequality Index (GII). Overall, women's participation in the job market, political empowerment, educational attainment, and health are considered in the calculation of the index. The OECD's index covers a wide range of indicators on traditional norms and values, violence, basic needs, health, property ownership, decision-making, and legal rights.

One of the empowerment index models in the literature is developed by Phan (2016), he uses Demographic Health Survey data for the measurement of women's empowerment. Accordingly, women's empowerment could be measured by taking into account these four elements: "Women's labor force participation"; "Women's household decision-making"; "Women's use of contraception"; and "Women's education". They are formed by several dimensions of women's empowerment at a subjective level. The first part of the components includes the following points: "the engagement of women into the cash economy"; "their occupational status"; "the continuity of employment throughout the year"; and "types of their earnings". The second one includes "decision-making on health"; "household spending"; and "visiting people". Concerning the use of contraception, "Met need"; "access to family planning messages on media"; and "knowledge of contraception" constitute the third element. Lastly, a component of women's education includes "women's literacy" and "completion of a level of education". These components are ranked according to the level of women's empowerment.

Ewerling et al. (2017) also developed an index for the measurement of women's empowerment which is based on the DHS data and includes the following modules: "Woman's participation in household decisions"; "Employment and earnings"; "Control over resources"; "Opinion on wife-beating"; "Personal ownership of a house or land". They first selected 23 components for the analyses; after the evaluation, some of the indicators were excluded. In the last step, they decided on 15 components for the index and implement factor analysis. The factors which they grouped, are analyzed as (a) Social independence; (b) Attitude to Violence, and (c) Decision Making.

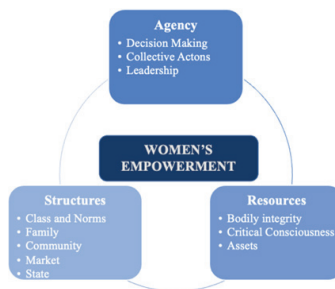
After 3 years, in 2020, they developed and adopted this method for analysis for global monitoring after the expert meeting held in 2018 to improve the index. A list of recommendations was raised by the experts (Ewerling et al., 2020). The first one is the removal of the woman's working status variable

from the index because it was found controversial. Experts suggest that working status itself does not address high empowerment, and paid/unpaid work, working conditions, and forced work should be considered. Therefore, Ewerling and her colleagues removed this variable. The second improvement was held in the indicators related to a person who decides on individual health issues and household expenditures. They are equally weighted joint decisions and woman's deciding alone. Thirdly, experts recommended adding indicators on decisions on women's reproductive health and access to technology. Finally, they also suggested that women who do not have a partner also should be covered in the analysis of empowerment. The last two recommendations have not been added to this index yet however they stated that they are working on the index for future research.

Based on these improvements, factor loading was employed for each country and then they were combined. After the validation with global indexes, the index developed by them was evaluated as international standards and better results to monitor women's empowerment, which also become a guideline during designing the methodology of this study.

The conceptual framework of the study is drawn upon Ewerling (2017), Calvès (2009), Kabeer (1999), Batliwala (1993), and Sen (1997)'s conceptualization of empowerment. When women's power is considered as control over assets, intellectual resources, and ideology, then "empowerment" is described as a woman's investigating and attempting to control her own capacity to determine her own needs, expectations, and resources, including economic, social, and intellectual resources, which all of them are also shaped by class, ethnicity, norms, and values. Women's empowerment relates not just to individual empowerment, but also to women acting together with other women. The figure below summarizes the conceptualization of women's empowerment in the work of Ewerling and her colleagues (2017).

Figure 1. Determinants of Women's Empowerment



Source: Ewerling et al. (2017)

Accordingly, women's over-resources and agency manifestations are shaped and influenced by institutional systems like class, ethnicity, family, community, market, and state. Women's resources are sources of power and material and immaterial capital that they can utilize individually or collectively to exert their agency. Women's assets (financial and productive assets; knowledge and skills; time; social capital) and critical consciousness are examples of resources. Purposive action, goal-pursuit, voice and influence, and decision-making without violence or retaliation are all examples of agency. It is central to empowerment and it involves group action, leadership, and decision-making.

Women's empowerment is multifaceted so measurement should incorporate variables that represent these dimensions. Considering the limitation based on the survey data, which will be covered in greater depth in the methods section; Ewerling's conceptualization of empowerment guides the discussion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Single-Parent Households

There is an important point that many authors emphasize: women's empowerment is measured by indicators such as wealth, participation in work and decision-making, and so on, however, women's life course and the passages they go through have a significant impact on all these dimensions. For this reason, some scholars have argued that important transitions in women's lives, such as marriage, divorce, or loss of a spouse, directly or indirectly play a decisive role in women's empowerment. Walby (1990) is one of the authors who emphasize the household type. She recommends analyzing the presence and absence of a spouse in the household and investigating the role of the spouse. In the same way, in her article, Chant (2006) critically addresses the feminization of poverty and examines the definition of poverty. Women's feminization of poverty is usually associated with the increasing proportion of women-headed single-parent households. She added that poverty does not only mean the absence of income, but it should also be analyzed by the concepts of women's decision-making capacity, and deprivation. When women's poverty is considered in this context, it should also be analyzed as a situation that affects women's ability to make important decisions that affect their lives.

As Chant (2006) underlined, together with the changes in the social, economic, and cultural settings of the countries, the demographic structures of households have gradually changed in almost all countries in the world. Today, a significant decrease is observed in the size of the household as well

as a transformation in the types of households. In most countries, the share of the extended family type has dramatically decreased. It also brought about a transformation in the understanding and perception of the types of “traditional family”. Depending on increasing divorce rates and changing cultural and social environments, single-parent families have also increased.

In the world, nearly 5-10% of all households are single-parent households among OECD countries (OECD,2011). The study by European Union (EU) Policy Department for Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs Directorate (2020) indicated that between 2009 and 2019, the proportion of households with children headed by a single adult increased from 12% to 14%. The study underlined that single-parent households are gendered: only 3% of them are male-headed while 13% of them women-headed. %43 of the single-parent households is at risk of poverty, which is almost half of the two-parent households. Among EU-27 countries, a higher number of single-parent adults is observed in Estonia, Denmark, and Sweden by approximately 20%. According to OECD (2018), the highest number of single-parent households is observed in New Zealand at 40%.

According to TURKSTAT (2024), 10.6% of total households in Turkey include a single-parent and children. The gender structure of these families shows a similar trend with the globe: it was observed that 2.4% of total households consisted of households with a father and children and 8.2% of total households consisted of households with a mother and children.

Considering the structure of all single-parent families, a substantial share of all single-parent families consists of mother-headed ones. It may be expected that such a trend will show the same pattern in the future. As a result, most of the OECD countries take action to develop policies to provide well-being for both women and their families. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of mother-headed single-parent families becomes more and more important not only due to a considerable increase in these types of families but also growing concerns about women’s equality and empowerment. Therefore, analyzing women’s empowerment in the concept of household types constitute the main focus of this study. This section provides a conceptual definition of single-parent households, followed by a review of studies focusing on household types in terms of women’s empowerment.

Definition of Single-parent Families

There are different factors affecting the composition of a family. Divorce, the passing away of the other spouse, or separation or adopting a child without marriage can lead to single-parent families. However, “a family composed of a mother and at least one child” is considered as the common criteria in the definition of a women-headed single-parent family”. The age

of children also shows a variety within the definitions. For example, in OECD (2011) family database, a mother-headed single-parent family is defined as "household with only a mother and at least one child under age 25". However, in Turkey, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) (2018) defines this type of family as "families with sole parent and at least one child." The age of the child is not clearly defined but it may be understood that it refers to a dependent child. Lastly, in the Single Parent Study which is the official research conducted by the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (MoFLSS) (2011), "households composed of a mother who lives with her dependent children under the age of 18, whose spouse either passed away or who lives apart from her spouse due to divorce or separation" is considered as a mother-headed single parent family.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Single-Parent Families

The status of single mothers has been studied as a significant issue in the literature due to both an increase in the number of women-headed single-parent households and the disadvantageous position of these types of households. It is seen that economic difficulties are more common in families where single parents are women due to reasons such as insufficient job opportunities and receiving low wages. The lack of nursery opportunities with affordable amounts prevents women from participating in the labor market. In addition, if childcare services are inadequate women have to work in low-paid jobs for meeting children's needs, which causes poverty in families, especially where women are single parents compared to men.

The poverty rate for single-person households in Türkiye increased from 12.8% in 2018 to 13.7% in 2023. Similarly, households consisting solely of couples experienced a dramatic rise in poverty rates, climbing from 7.2% to 16.6% during the same period. While the poverty rate for lone-parent households increased slightly from 17.1% to 19.1%, it remained relatively stable compared to other household types. In contrast, the poverty rate for nuclear families, although high, decreased from 26.9% to 25.7%, showing a slight improvement. When the employment rate is analyzed according to marital status, divorced women are the most employed with 39.4%. This is followed by never-married women with 31.9% and married women with 29.3%. The proportion of working women who have lost their husbands is low, only 6.7% of these women are employed (TURKSAT,2022). In addition, single-parent women may face difficulties in work life. For instance, they often have lower wages for the same job than men, they have to work in precarious and flexible jobs. Under these circumstances, being a single parent requires taking over multiple roles (MoFLSS, 2018).

In addition to macro-level analysis, other studies mostly concentrate on the welfare status of single-mother-headed households by emphasizing the

poverty status of the households or psychological problems experienced by children or women in these household types (Brown et al., 1997; Franz et al., 2003; Van Den Berge & Duyulmus, 2015). On the other hand, the common point of view in the literature is the fact that singleparent households are more likely to be subject to poverty compared to twoparent households (Pendy & Zhan, 2004).

Considering the studies on single mothers in Turkey, Research on Family Structure in Turkey (RFST), is the most recent and comprehensive one. Family structure in Turkey is examined in the scope of Advance Statistical Analyses of RFST, which is the most recent report published in 2018. One chapter in this report focuses on single-parent households. In this study, Koç (2018) uses the method of logistic regression to assess the determinants of single-parent households. The research indicates that although there are significant improvements in the socioeconomic status of single-parent families in recent years, they are still vulnerable relative to other family types in terms of monthly income, spending, and saving. Also, according to the study, these families need social assistance or receive loan from either banks, or their relatives. Lastly, it is also observed that they have a lower level of happiness compared to other types of families.

In addition to RFST, the Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry General Directorate of Social Assistance (ASAGEM) (2012) conducted research on Single Parent Families to identify how single-parent family members experience becoming a single-parent family in terms of economic, psychological, social, legal and cultural factors. The study includes 473 participants and is based on qualitative and quantitative methods. Parents aged between 18-55 and children aged between 7-17 living with a single parent were involved in the study. One of the important findings of the study is the fact that women, as single parents, have difficulties in working life. Therefore, the ASAGEM proposes a list of suggestions. According to this report, both employment opportunities and access to childcare services should be improved with a well-established monitoring system. In addition to public services of the free nursery, there should also be available services supporting family members psychologically. Another finding addresses that since single-parent household members are exposed to some prejudices, therefore, there should be single-parent families becoming more visible in public campaigns, published works, or TV programs to raise public awareness. The study also highlights that single parents should be provided free legal advice on legal procedures such as divorce, property division, and so on. To further research, the study recommends two important conclusions. First of them is that women's every work experience since marriage should be analyzed well. Studies indicate that in the case of women who had no work experience or who have work experience in unskilled jobs, they mostly prefer to return to their parental

family, which is identified as the most difficult experience for women with a low socio-economic status. In particular, women living in rural areas who do not receive alimony from ex-husbands are the most vulnerable.

Considering that the mother is the primary responsible parent for childcare, the lack of free daycare facilities and the fact that the mother has not worked in a skilled job since the first day of marriage are the biggest barriers for the mother to work after becoming a single parent. Therefore, women's socioeconomic status and ever work experience could be analyzed in detail in further studies.

Secondly, it is underlined that most of the studies focus on challenging experiences and the low socio-economic status of single-parent households. On the other hand, their study indicated that experiencing single parenting is more complex and multidimensional since there are positive feelings or experiences. Therefore, the study suggests further research may focus on the experience of single parents holistically.

On the other hand, Kader (2018) highlights that despite some single-parent women having positive feeling and experience such as freedom and autonomy after divorce, policies in Turkey does not support women during such positive expectations, Kader argues that rather the policies put them into a more disadvantaged position. In addition to Kader (2018), Unal (2018) also suggests that better labor policies are necessary for women's economic independence and provision of work-family balance because they have to maintain work and family life in the absence of a partner, and they also find it difficult to bear both the physical and financial burden of caring for their children.

There has been limited data on mother-headed single-parent families in Turkey. As mentioned before, the most comprehensive and detailed one is the Single Parent Study (2011) conducted by ASAGEM. Accordingly, in the study, policies on single-parent families –particularly on mother-headed– are presented in detail. Although there have been certain development, a comprehensive family policy in the European Union countries, such application has not yet been fully implemented in Turkey. Although there are family benefits and cash benefits, it is possible to say that these are insufficient and make families more dependent. Foundations affiliated with the ASAGEM also provide social support. However, for this assistance, there is a requirement to not receive regular-based income from social security institutions in any way. In this case, women who are single parent cannot benefit from these benefits.

As explained above, policies vary from country to country in accordance with the types of welfare regimes. When welfare regime policies are examined

in the framework of the feminist-demographic approach, it could be said that welfare-state regime in most countries is gendered in their nature. Rather than providing freedom to women who are single parent, the welfare regime in Turkey reinforce inequality and patriarchal norms within the society. As mentioned in the breadwinner model, within the conservative policies, women are not encouraged to participate in the labor market, rather, they are forced to work in mostly informal sector or low-payment jobs (Ecevit, 2003). Another problem with single mothers' participation in the labor market refers to policies encouraging part-time jobs. At first, a part-time job seems beneficial to women, on the other hand, it refers to low-payment and low-status jobs. This situation is a reflection of the Breadwinner Model of the Welfare State regime which attributes to women's traditional role as a mother instead of an individual. Lastly, Turkey's welfare regime policies focus on social assistance rather than giving women autonomy.

Unal (2014) also mentioned that support provided by the General Directorate of Social Assistance to women whose husbands pass away has a significant impact on providing regular income however, this opportunity is not provided for divorced or separated women. The provision of services such as shelter, psychological and financial assistance, and support in finding a job for women who have been subjected to violence in women's guesthouses, regardless of their marital status, is considered to have positive effects on women and their children. However, it is not sufficient to provide these services only to survivors of domestic violence. Finally, although it is considered a good practice that children of single parents with insufficient economic power can benefit free of charge from a 5% quota of at least two children in private daycare centers, it is not sufficient. Therefore it should be increased, especially when the increasing trend of the single-mother household is considered.

Various policy suggestions for single-parent family members could be presented. Among the recommendations on legal procedures, the units where parents could receive free legal consultancy services on issues such as child support, property regime, and custody during the divorce period or after divorce should be made widespread. Another point emphasized in the study is to create priority employment policies for single parents and especially for mothers who are single parents. Another issue related to labor force participation is the free nursery and day nurseries where working single-parent mothers and fathers will leave their children during the working period. The study also suggests that single-parent families should benefit from the tax credit, family allowances, or child allowances. However, despite the risk of abuse of these incentives, the establishment of a control mechanism is important for such incentives to reach the right target audience. In other OECD countries, it is possible to argue that Nordic Model has been more

successful in providing women to exist in the labor market as a result of the policies encouraging and enjoying women in both the public and private domains of social life.

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed and implemented using a mixed-method approach. The “Sequential Explanatory Design” is utilized in this study even though there are numerous varieties of mixed methods research (Creswell and Clark, 2015). The study is divided into two stages in line with the Sequential Explanatory Design. First, quantitative analysis is conducted. After the quantitative data has been evaluated, the qualitative data is collected and processed to explain and elaborate on the quantitative findings.

Quantitative Data and Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis is based on data from the 2018 Türkiye Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS), which is a representative study across Türkiye. It includes individual and household-level demographic indicators such as fertility, mortality, reproductive health, nutrition, as well as some indicators on women's empowerment. The survey was designed to be representative at the level of Türkiye as a whole, urban-rural regions, 5 demographic regions and NUTS 1 regions for some section. A weighted, multi-stage, stratified cluster sampling method was used for data collection, based on 754 clusters obtained from TURKSTAT. Approximately 100 households were selected from each cluster, and then 21 households were selected from each cluster through systematic random sampling. In this process, a total of 15,775 households were selected and 11,056 of these households were found eligible and interviews were completed. In the survey, women's questionnaire is implemented to women aged 15-49. It includes modules including women's socio-demographic characteristics, fertility, reproductive health, maternal and childcare, nutrition, migration, marriage history, labor force experiences and women's status. Interviews were completed with 7,346 eligible women. In this study, 5,484 (unweighted number: 5,141) ever-married women were included in the analysis by excluding never-married women.

The unit of analysis for this study is ever-married women, not households. The analyses focus on the distinctive characteristics and experiences of ever-married women in comparison with their different types of households. Therefore, the women in the dataset were grouped based on household types to enable the demonstration of this comparison as follows: (1) Married women without any children, (2) Married women with at least one dependent child, (3) Married women with independent children only, (4) Single (divorced/separated/widowed) parent women with at least one dependent child,

(5) Single parent women with independent children only and (6) Single (divorced/separated/widowed) women without any children. To investigate the main research question, the “women’s empowerment” variable consisting of 3 categories (higher, middle, lower) was constructed through factor analysis using a polychoric correlation matrix (UCLA: Statistical Consulting Group, 2022), and descriptive and multivariate analyses were conducted. In the determination of “single-parent households with dependent children”, OECD (2018)’s definition is used. Accordingly, single-parent household refers to families consisting of one parent and at least one resident child below the age of 25. This is because the age range between 18-24 corresponds to the period of university level of education and during university education of children, families may continue to economically support their children.

It is important to acknowledge that “being divorced” and “being widowed” have different theoretical underpinnings and underlying causes. Whether intentional or involuntary, divorce entails a decision-making process. These distinctions surely impact women’s empowerment in different aspects. Due to the low number of observations, these two categories were considered together in the quantitative analysis. By acknowledging this gap as a limitation, this study takes into account their common experiences and the lack of a husband in the home. On the other hand, this element has been mentioned as one that is influencing the conversations.

Construction of the Empowerment Variable

Considering women’s empowerment, as one of the phenomena which includes multiple dimensions, factor analysis was used to decide whether and how the information on these dimensions should be combined to measure empowerment. Appendix-1 presents the research matrix and details of the variables used in the factor analysis. Components of empowerment variable, including various variables ranging from education, employment, family’s survival to views on social norms is presented in Appendix-1.

Firstly, the suitability of the sample for factor analysis was tested using A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test (Kaiser, 1974; Bruin, 2006). Results greater than 0.5 means that the sample size is sufficient for factor analysis. KMO results indicate that the sample size is sufficient for factor analysis (KMO=0,75). To understand whether the variables are suitable for factorization. Bartlett’s (1951) test of sphericity was applied. Since the test result is less than 0.05 (sig=.0), the null hypothesis of Bartlett’s Test (hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the variables) is rejected and we can accept that there is a significant relationship between the variables. Both test results are presented in Appendix 2. Additionally, correlation between the variables is presented in Appendix 3. Accordingly, results indicate that there are sufficient correlations between the variables and that there is a structure suitable for

factor analysis.

The Eigenvalue was interpreted to determine which factor to retain. The significant factor or factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 are considered significant and retained in factor analysis. It indicates that the factors explain more common variance than unique variance (Shrestha, 2021). In terms of explanatory characteristics of the variance, which is greater than 1, only two factors were considered as "retained factors". Accordingly, 87.9% of the total variation is explained by these two factors (%63.3% by Factor 1 and 24.6% by Factor 2). Considering the higher explanatory characteristics of Factor-1, presented in the table below, this factor was used for the construction of the women's empowerment variable.

Table 1. Factor Analysis Results

Variables	Factor 1
Educational Attainment	0.49022
Educational Differences Between Spouses	0.01105
Age at First Cohabitation	0.01020
Having Formal Job	0.11055
Having Money to Spend Independently	0.12407
Ownership of House	0.04285
Ownership of Land	0.02296
Ownership of Car	0.07181
Opinion on Only Men's Decision Making	0.15165
Opinion on Gender Division of Labour	-0.09472
Opinion on Violence Exercised by Men	0.07525
Internet Use	0.13462
Respondent's Mother Alive	-0.00179
Respondent's Father Alive	0.02566

Factor 1 is likely to reflect a dimension related to educational level and partly economic independence. The high loading of the education variable suggests that it is the main determinant of this construct. Other variables such as gender-related views (such as opinions on the dominance of men in decision-making) and internet use make small but significant contributions to this dimension. It can be interpreted that the the factor is explained by educational attainment, on the other hand, other dimensions such as participation in employment and decision making. can also be affected by this variable.

The next step was to calculate the standardized f1 score. After Factor Analysis was conducted on Stata software, a standardized factor score was calculated (f1). The women's empowerment variable was constructed in cases where the standardized factor score (f1) was less than 0, the empowerment was coded as 1 (empowerment=1). When it was between 0 and 1, the empowerment was considered as 2 (moderate), and when it was higher than 1, it was coded as 3 (high).

Accordingly, above half of the women (52.1%) are observed in the low empowerment category. Similarly, 23.7% of them are in the middle empowerment category and 24.2% of them are observed in the high empowerment category.

Table 2. Distribution of Women by Empowerment Variable

	Number of Women (Unweighted)	Percentage of Women (Unweighted)	Percentage of Women (Weighted)
Low	2962	55.1%	52.1%
Middle	1241	23.1%	23.7%
High	1175	21.8%	24.2%
Total	5378	100%	100%

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

In the scope of the qualitative component, 18 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with women from the following household categories in September 2022:

- Married women without any children
- Married women with at least one dependent child
- Married women with only independent children
- Single parent women with at least one dependent child
- Single parent women with only independent children
- Divorced/separated/widowed women without any children

This study was approved by the Hacettepe University Ethics Commission with decision no. E-85844849-300-00002485335 dated 17.11.2022.

Since the qualitative study aims to interpret and gain insight through women's experiences, large sampling was not used. Based on the categories above, it was decided to conduct 18 interviews by considering the saturation point.

From each category, 3 women were interviewed based on each socioeconomic status (SES) (high, middle, and lower). The Income and Living Conditions Survey of the TURKSTAT (TURKSTAT, 2022) was used to determine the reference points at the socioeconomic level. The distribution of annual household disposable income by 20 percent of the groups was ordered by household disposable income, according to the median income amounts. Accordingly, lower refers to annual household income below 41761,88 TL; middle refers to households with income 41761,88- 82594,01 TL, and higher refers to households with income 82594,01 and higher. TURKSTAT data was based on the 2021 year. Considering the economic fluctuations, the participant's income level in 2021 was considered. Participants were reached with a snowball and purposeful sampling, and their income statement was considered to identify their SES level. In particular, middle and low-SES single-parent women were reached through women's cooperatives and local civil society organizations (CSOs) working in the field of humanitarian aid in Ankara, Hatay and Gaziantep.

Qualitative findings were analyzed in MAXQDA within the identified themes related to empowerment. Quantitative and qualitative findings were interpreted and triangulated in line with the findings obtained from secondary analysis and literature review.

Adopting Mixed-method Approach

The main motivation for adopting a mixed-method approach is to understand the limitations of quantitative measurement of women's empowerment and to explain better which aspects need to be considered while discussing women's empowerment by household composition. Cornwall, A. (2014) emphasizes qualitative measurement techniques could present a broader understating of women's experiences and it would be beneficial in the analysis of biographic histories, and revealing cultural varieties among women. As feminist research methodology premises, conducting focus group discussions and in-depth interviews would be helpful to build on the non-hierarchical relationship and put women at the center of the research (Harding, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Ackerly et al., 2019). Alloatti (2019) underlines that building a strong theoretical and conceptual framework is at the center of better measurement.

We particularly prefer to adopt Sequential Design since it is a very good ground for discussion to explain the results of the quantitative analysis. We tried to explain the results of the quantitative analysis with the experiences of women. Similarly, this study aimed to understand the reasons for the findings that were not consistent and controversial in the literature and to address these gaps with qualitative findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Basic Characteristics of Women

Table 3 presents the basic characteristics of women by the empowerment levels. Accordingly, most of the women at higher empowerment levels are in the 30-34 age group (23.0%), reside in the West (55.3%), in urban areas (91.4%), and at higher wealth levels (57.0%).

Table 3. Basic Characteristics of Women (Weighted)

	Level of Empowerment							
	Lower		Middle		Higher		Total	
Age								
15-19	28	1.1%	26	2.2%	5	0.4%	59	1.2%
20-24	152	5.8%	185	15.4%	81	6.6%	418	8.3%
25-29	252	9.6%	261	21.8%	238	19.5%	751	14.9%
30-34	421	16.0%	251	21.0%	281	23.0%	954	18.9%
35-39	588	22.4%	197	16.4%	252	20.6%	1036	20.5%
40-44	588	22.4%	173	14.5%	214	17.5%	975	19.3%
45-49	599	22.8%	103	8.6%	154	12.6%	856	17.0%
Region								
West	973	37.0%	574	48.1%	678	55.3%	2225	44.1%
South	390	14.8%	150	12.6%	98	8.0%	638	12.6%
Central	520	19.8%	253	21.2%	301	24.5%	1074	21.3%
North	126	4.8%	72	6.0%	68	5.6%	266	5.3%
East	619	23.5%	146	12.2%	81	6.6%	846	16.7%
Type of place of residence								
Urban	1834	69.8%	996	83.4%	1120	91.4%	3951	78.3%
Rural	794	30.2%	199	16.6%	105	8.6%	1098	21.7%
Wealth								
Poorest	687	26.1%	82	6.9%	16	1.3%	785	15.6%
Poorer	715	27.2%	198	16.5%	48	3.9%	961	19.0%
Middle	583	22.2%	284	23.8%	165	13.4%	1032	20.4%
Richer	459	17.5%	361	30.2%	298	24.3%	1118	22.1%
Richest	184	7.0%	269	22.5%	699	57.0%	1152	22.8%

When analyzing based on household composition, most women who are single parents with at least one living child under 25 falls into the higher empowerment category (42.7%), whereas more than half (51%) of married

women with at least one living child under 25 are in the lower empowerment category. Comparing married and single-parent women with children over 25, both groups indicate low levels of empowerment, which could be associated with the age factor. Nevertheless, the percentage of single-parent women in the higher empowerment category is higher: 66.0% of single-parent women with children over 25 are categorized as having low empowerment, compared to 82.9% of married women with children over 25.

Table 4. Distribution of women by household composition and the levels of empowerment

Women	Levels of Empowerment							
	Lower		Middle		Higher		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Married without living children	93	27.3%	83	24.2%	165	48.4%	341	100.0%
Married with at least one living children under 25	2027	51.4%	994	25.2%	921	23.4%	3942	100.0%
Married with at least one living children over 25	393	82.9%	56	11.8%	25	5.3%	474	100.0%
Single mothers with at least one living children under 25	73	36.9%	40	20.4%	84	42.7%	198	100.0%
Single mothers with at least one living children over 25	31	66.0%	10	22.5%	5	11.5%	47	100.0%
Single women without children	11	24.0%	11	24.3%	24	51.7%	47	100.0%

Multinomial Logistic Regression (MLR) Results

Comparing the level of empowerment based on household composition, results indicates that single mothers with dependent children ($p = .001$), have much higher levels of empowerment than married women with at least one dependent child which is employed as the reference category. In addition, widowed/separated/divorced women without children ($p = .002$) had also significantly higher levels of empowerment than the reference group. It is followed by the married women without children ($p = .001$), having significantly higher levels of empowerment compared to the reference group. Married women with independent children ($p = .001$), on the other hand, exhibit a significant decrease in empowerment levels.

Table 5. Distribution of Women by Empowerment Variable

Variables	Middle Level Empowerment		High Level Empowerment	
	Coef,	p-value	Coef,	p-value
15-19	17.55	.000	1.745	.442
20-24	15.482	.000	4.669	.000
25-29	11.746	.000	7.453	.000
30-34	4.394	.000	2.943	.000
35-39	2.171	.000	1.632	.016
40-44	1.673	.003	1.189	.359
45-49*	1	.	1	.
West	1.683	.000	1.913	.000
South	2.011	.000	2.356	.000
Central	1.321	.038	1.492	.014
North	2.586	.000	3.138	0
East*	1	.	1	.
Urban	.708	.004	.472	.000
Rural*	1	.	1	.
Poorest*	1	.	1	.
Poorer	2.814	.000	3.461	.000
Middle	6.845	.000	21.267	.000
Richer	14.654	.000	64.565	.000
Richest	35.348	.000	495.296	.000
Married women without any children	1.039	.854	3.366	.000
Married women with at least one dependent child*	1	.	1	.
Married with only independent children	.652	.01	.261	.000
Single parent women with at least one dependent child	2.186	.005	4.676	.000
Single mothers with only independent child	1.964	.037	1.943	.123
Widowed/separated/divorced women without any children	1.321	.606	4.433	.002
Constant	.018	.000	.006	.000

*Reference category

The MLR result reveals that wealth and age in particular have a significant relationship with empowerment. If we recall the components of the empowerment variable, participation in education and employment emerged as determining factors in the construction of the empowerment index. Therefore, the empowerment levels of women who are highly educated and

participate in the formal labor force can be explained in this way. Qualitative findings also show that education and labor force participation are key factors in women's empowerment. The experience of being a single parent was observed to push women to make autonomous decisions and participate more in the labor force.

On the other hand, these results are not sufficient to explain the reproductive role of married and single-parent women and their experiences in household relations and labor force.

Although the difference in empowerment levels across household types were found statistically significant, it should be considered a surprising finding that single-parent women have a higher level of empowerment compared to married women with at least one depended children, and this should be approached with critical perspective. In fact, the main motivation of this study is to examine these differences not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. The findings will address how they are involved in the production and reproduction processes. Then, it will focus on participation in decision-making and household dynamics. Finally, the experiences of single-parent women and married women will be addressed in relation to inequalities encountered in the social sphere and patriarchal norms.

Women's Roles in Production and Reproduction

Although statistical results indicate that single mothers with dependent children have higher empowerment levels than married women with dependent children, qualitative analysis provide deeper context by revealing the complex dynamics of labor market participation for women, and the role of women in re-production process. During the quantitative analysis, the higher level of empowerment of this group is initially associated with participation in the labor market, considering the weight of the factor load. Participants often emphasized that divorce or the loss of a spouse is a challenging experience requiring a recovery process. However, qualitative findings indicate that both divorcee women and the women who lost their spouses frequently tend to invest in themselves financially and emotionally, focusing on future goals, particularly, and this is commonly associated with their labour force participation. Participation in the labor market does not on its own constitute women's empowerment, but it is an important component of women's empowerment as it influences women's choices and agency more broadly.

There are many studies that point to the paradoxical side of employment, such as the one on employment and women's empowerment over the last fifty years, which argues that it encourages women to reproduce their reproductive role. On the other hand, participation in the labor force has been

shown to help low-educated women in developing nations escape domestic roles, negotiate with their families, and regain some degree of autonomy over their own lives (Him, 2020). Some of the single mothers involved in the in-depth interviews highlighted how financial independence contributes to their empowerment, not only economically but also socially and psychologically. As one divorced participant explained:

“I was left with nothing, I only had a job. But I worked, I worked hard, and I became stronger.”(Single-parent woman with dependend children, 51, Middle SES)

A single-parent woman who returned to work after the loss of her husband- despite the fact that her husband passed away when her children were younger- expressed this situation as follows:

“It took 1-2 years to recover after losing my husband. Of course, having children and family support are very important in this process. But what really brought me back to myself was working. I was taking care of my children at that time. After I lost my husband, I said I couldn't work anymore. Then, with the support of my relatives, I started working after 1 year. I am glad I worked, otherwise I would have loss my mind.” (Single-parent women with independent children only, 56, Lower SES)

Compared to single-parent mothers, it may be argued that reproductive roles combined with unequal gender dynamics and oppression in the household hinder the labor market participation of the married women with depended children . The inequalities in the division of labor within the household and the patriarchal norms that permeate the household decision-making mechanism, which will be discussed in detail in the following sections, reinforce this and hinder the economic independence of this group. According to TURKSTAT (2022), 39.4% of divorced women are employed, a rate higher than that of married women (29.3%). ILO (2024) statistics also highlights that for many single parents, entering the workforce is not optional, as they are the sole source of financial support for themselves and their children. This financial imperative often forces single mothers to deviate from traditional gender norms. Globally, single mothers with young children have a labor force participation rate of 71%, higher than women with young children living with spouse (56%).

Without doubt, childcare responsibilities significantly impact women's access to labor market. Married women often delay or forego employment particularly if their husbands are earning a steady income, or they may be more reluctant to seek support from their parental families. Participants who married, especially in low-income households or who married of their own free will or without their families' approval, stated that they do not prefer

to receive their parental support, and preferred to take care of their children staying at home. According to the literature and interviews, middle-class women frequently have to put their caring responsibilities ahead of entering into labour market, particularly when domestic responsibilities are divided unequally. Married women with low incomes enter the labor out of financial needs. However, a lot of women encounter obstacles like criticism from their spouses, which makes balancing work and household duties more difficult.

On the other hand, qualitative analysis indicates that single-parent women often have to choose between entering the labor force and relying on family childcare support. Considering the limitations in the institutionalization of care, qualitative analysis indicates that participation in the labour market is associated with family support for the participants. It has been observed that these women receive family support in order to enter the labour market after divorce or loss of spouse. For single mothers, parental support often serves as a crucial resource including economic, emotional or childcare, providing both emotional and financial stability. Literature also address that family support significantly influences women's psychological well-being (Thomas et al., 2017). Grandparents play a vital role in childcare for single-parent families, filling gaps left by absent spouses and easing the burden on single mothers (Kavas & Hoşgör, 2018).

“For the first 10 years after we separated, my children mostly stayed with their grandmother. Without that support, I would have faced enormous difficulties.” (Single parent woman with dependent children, 40, Lower SES)

The decision to return home depends largely on the family's economic conditions and cultural norms. considering it can contribute to challenging dynamics of being single parent women, it can also perpetuate economic dependency and limit women's decision-making power. Literature also draws attention to the fact that women living with extended families are less likely to participate in working life: the labour market participation of women is 55% for women living in extended households.

The literature also underlined that cohort is associated with women's empowerment. The life course and experiences of women vary by age group. Age group affects both entering, staying in, and returning to the labor market, as well as the cultural values and perspectives internalized. Accordingly, when women leave work for childcare, they have difficulty in returning to the labor market. It is mentioned that married women with dependent children do not enter the labor market to take care of their children. According to Walby (1990), women who quit their jobs in this situation may have difficulty competing with younger women even if they decide to return to the labor market. However, especially younger divorced/deceased women may decide

to enter the labor market earlier due to the loss of income. Women who make this decision are more advantaged. It should be noted that cohort shaped women's critical consciousness as well.

Special Focus on Divorced Women's Experiences

It is also useful to open a parenthesis that the difference between divorced and widowed women. Divorce is seen as choice; it is not a circumstance as loss of spouses. It should be considered that women may make this decision especially when they feel that they are economically empowered. For instance, divorced women have dramatically higher employment rates than women who have lost their husbands. Only 6.7% of these women are in the labour market (TURKSAT, 2022). Due to the low number of observations in the data, divorced single parent women and single parent women who lost their spouses could not be taken as two separate categories in quantitative analysis. While accepting this as limitation, qualitative analysis addresses that women who did not work while married also enter the labour market after divorce since women argue that returning to the parental home after divorce brings about additional challenges, such as social pressure in addition to reduced autonomy and increased dependence, therefore, they choose to enter into labour market after divorce.

Additionally, it can be argued that divorced and widowed women's experiences are common despite the fact that social assistance is offered to women who have lost their spouses. This is because, given the current socioeconomic conditions, the assistance is insufficient to combat poverty, and the lack of adequate institutional care will have a variety of restrictive effects regardless of whether the passing away of husband or divorce. Furthermore, one of the primary goals of the study is to examine the effects of a spouse's presence or absence in the household on women's empowerment; it is suitable to assess both of these variables jointly. For instance, in 2010, Boğaziçi University conducted the Research Project for the Development of a Cash Social Assistance Program for Widowed Women on behalf of Directorate General of Social Assistance and Solidarity. In its formation phase, the research project aimed only to understand the situation of women whose spouses had passed away and to develop a cash transfer program for them. However, during both the preliminary studies and the field work, they were understood that it would not be correct to exclude from the study divorced women who were at least as risk of vulnerability as the women whose spouses had passed away, because their marital status was different, they underlined that their living conditions were similar. Therefore, the scope of the research project was expanded.

On the other hand, perception of women participated in the qualitative interviews address that while divorced women are frequently subjected to

prejudice widowed women have a more recognized place in society. Divorced women show resilience by overcoming social and economic obstacles in spite of these social expectations. For instance, a lot of people engage in social activities and make investments in their own development, both of which support their empowerment. Social participation in lower income group frequently takes the form of solidarity among women's organizations or cooperatives. These networks offer direction and emotional support, which increases empowerment even further.

Challenges affecting empowerment of single-parent women

While the empowering effect of participation in the labour market of single-parent women is emphasized, it would be an incomplete analysis to associate access to the workforce alone with empowerment. As Him (2022) argued, in a capitalist society, more and more women believe that having a job is essential to their survival and possibly to their empowerment. A growing number of women believe that flexible work arrangements are a sensible choice in a patriarchal culture. Therefore, it is inevitable to discuss the challenging nature of the process and conditions associated with labour market participation. Single-parent women may face difficulties in labour market. Lack of socialization of care, low-wage, flexible work or insecure work is most of the time may be the best option for them. For instance, they often have lower wages for the same job than men, they have to work in precarious and flexible jobs. Under these circumstances, being a single parent requires taking over multiple roles (MoFLSS, 2018)

While designing the women's empowerment variable, the component related to work was taken into account as "being employed full time with insurance". On the other hand, both the literature and qualitative research results reveal that this is not sufficient and that a detailed analysis and variables regarding their situation in the workforce are needed. For single-parent women with children, when we look deeply into the processes of labor force participation, we need to understand the challenging dynamics impact women's empowerment adversely- which is not explained by empowerment index but revealed in the literature and qualitative analysis: the dual labor burden (paid and unpaid) of single-parent women and the lack of institutionalization of care work make this group more vulnerable.

Kader (2018) highlights that despite some single-parent women having positive feeling and experience such as freedom and autonomy after divorce, policies in Turkey does not support women during such positive expectations, Kader argues, rather the policies make them a more disadvantaged position. In addition to Kader (2018), Unal (2018) also suggests that better labor policies are necessary for women's economic independence and provision of work-family balance because they have to maintain work and family life

in the absence of a partner, and they also find it difficult to bear both the physical and financial burden of caring for their children.

Through more structural reading, Fraser's (2017) analysis can also provide a good framework for explaining the structural factors affecting empowerment. Fraser examines social reproduction historically and argues that contemporary financial capitalism encourages women's inclusion in the paid workforce and their withdrawal from social welfare by the state and corporations. By externalizing care work to families and communities, it has also diminished their capacity to do so. The result is a dual organization of social reproduction, commodified for those who can pay, privatized for those who cannot, and glossed over with the even more modern ideal of the "two-income family" amidst growing inequality. In addition to reducing public support and recruiting women for wages, financialized capitalism has lowered real wages, thus increasing the number of hours of paid work per household required to support a family and leading to a desperate struggle to outsource care work. 29 The regime imports migrant workers from poorer to richer countries to fill the "care gap." Typically, it is racialized and/or rural women from poor areas who undertake the reproductive and care work previously performed by more privileged women. But to do so, migrants must transfer their familial and social responsibilities to other, even poorer caregivers, who must do the same, and so on, in increasingly longer "global care chains." In short, even if women participate in the workforce, their role in social reproduction in two-income households continues to disempower other women in the upper class, and disadvantage women in the lower classes, who cannot afford care services, due to their paid and unpaid labor.

Other Determinants of Women's Empowerment: Household Socioeconomic Status, Household Dynamics and Decision Making

Socioeconomic status plays a critical role in women's empowerment. Quantitative analysis shows a strong positive relationship between wealth and empowerment, with women in the richest wealth category exhibiting substantially higher empowerment levels ($p=.001$). Wealth impacts life choices, as women struggling to meet basic needs are less likely to make empowering decisions (Kabeer, 2001). Interviews revealed that women from higher SES groups often have greater access to resources and support networks. In contrast, women from lower SES backgrounds face additional disadvantages, such as limited financial independence and restricted decision-making power. This dynamic is particularly evident in divorce cases, where lower SES women are more likely to return to their parental homes due to economic challenges.

Nevertheless, when gender, decision-making, and individual and collective conscious components were taken into account when discussing

women's empowerment; SES itself was not adequate to explain women's empowerment. It is explained by the context of patriarchal family ideology. Aforementioned, it has been observed that even married women from higher SES do not enter the labor market due to their children and they are in an unequal position in terms of domestic responsibilities. For lower SES women, on the other hand, even being able to work after struggling with their husbands was defined as empowerment. This can be interpreted as a contributing factor for single women without children constituting the highest level of empowerment. Although the absence of childcare responsibilities and the absence of a man at home reduces women's household income, it puts them in a more advantageous position in terms of decision-making, entering the labor market, and accessing their own material and non-material resources.

The background of relatively higher empowerment levels of single-parent women with dependent children may be an answer to Walby's question: The absence of a husband at home may make a woman more empowered due to the removal of oppression. However, when the background of the strength of single parents with dependent children is analyzed, it is seen that these women force themselves to be strong, resist and struggle because the male figure is left the household. When they received the necessary social and psychological support after the loss of their husband or separation, they felt very strong.

In order to avoid the misleading conclusion that single-parent households make all decisions because there is no spouse or extended family member, questions about decision-making mechanisms in the household were not included in the empowerment index in the quantitative survey. On the other hand, qualitative research indicated that the decision-making power of the women participating in the research increased not only within the household but also in the public sphere:

"Before we divorced, we both had a right to make decisions. I used to make the final decision about the children. If something was to be bought, he used to buy it. After the separation, only I make the final decision, not anyone else, not my parents. I become more confident making decision in my social environment, working environment." (Single-parent woman with dependent children, 51, Middle SES)

This certainly does not deny that every woman's experience is unique. It has also been observed that for single-parent women, the parental family is also involved in decisions both within the household and regarding the women themselves: while the burden of care in the family is shifting from the single parent woman to the mother as mentioned previously; the role of the spouse in decision-making is also shifting to the father:

“After I lost my husband, I started getting more support from my father. I consult him when I make important decisions.” (Single-parent women with at least one dependent child, 38, Lower SES)

This very insight underlines how difficult it is to measure empowerment and how insufficient an analysis isolated from structural inequalities and gender norms would be. While it is acknowledged that class inequalities and reproduction have fundamental and unique negative effects on both single-parent women and married women, it is also worth to highlight how women see and define empowerment is an important part of discussion. This can be a driving force in making choices. Especially single-parent women’s struggles and critical consciousness constitute an example of this situation. However, it should also be explained that empowerment does not mean taking on all roles. In fact, “being empowered” should not be understood as an oppressive term. The most important suggestion from the participant is the provision of accessible psychosocial mechanisms to help women for understanding their own resources and needs through psychosocial support and awareness-raising activities. Being in a part of a community empowers women. Through building collective consciousness and solidarity among women, women’s empowerment shifts from an individual concept to a social and political one. Women’s empowerment is not stable but a process (Kabeer, 2001), and it has been observed that when women come together with other women and share their experiences they feel more empowered. Cooperatives, women’s solidarity groups, and workplace environments are particularly important for women’s empowerment according to participants. In this context, participants underlined that women’s support mechanisms and solidarity platforms should be increased and disseminated.

CONCLUSION

Primary aim in this study was to examine the quantitative factors that influence women’s empowerment by analysing the status of women who are single parents. The study focused on single-parent women and used quantitative approaches to examine the elements influencing women’s empowerment by breaking them down by household composition. In this case, 14 variables were used to build an empowerment variable. Participation in the labour market and education is the primary factor that constitute this variable. Women’s material resources, including money and assets, as well as their educational attainment and media access, were considered. It was considered whether women had authority over them in addition to ownership. Women’s views on gender were considered as they were expressed in norms, such as age at first marriage, educational attainment of spouses, and attitudes toward issues like domestic violence and division of labour in the household.

The quantitative analysis, in which married women with dependent children were taken as the reference category, revealed that the level of empowerment of single-parent women with dependent children was particularly high. We turned our analysis at this point, thinking that it was important to examine the roles of single-parent women and married women in production and reproduction under structural inequalities as well as their unique experiences. Considering the fact that that this study would be incomplete without addressing the limitations of quantitative data and especially the effects of structural factors and women's experiences on their level of empowerment, we aimed to explain and discuss the areas left by the quantitative data through in-depth interviews with 18 women as well as literature review.

Qualitative data analysis and literature review, single parent women face difficulties such as psychological, economic and social pressure after the divorce process or loss of a spouse. After the recovery period, which is not included in the quantitative component but is prominent in the qualitative data, women are forced to join the workforce. The main factor contributing to the empowerment of single parent women has been participation in the workforce and family support. They stated that participation in the workforce strengthens women socially and psychologically. It should be also noted that family support creates limitations in participation in decision-making for some women, on the other hand, empowerment is explained by this group of women with independence and autonomy in decision-making. Therefore, this empowerment can be made sustainable by providing psychosocial support services after divorce or loss of a spouse, socializing childcare services (e.g. free crèches) and securing flexible working conditions.

On the other hand, the participation of married women with children to care for is limited and their reproductive roles hinder their empowerment. In fact, the particular disadvantage of married women is that working life – which empowers single-parent women – creates a dual pressure, that is, exploitation in both the production process and the home. As Fraser points out in his analysis, financial capitalism has today made the ideal of the “dual-income household” widespread, leading to problems such as “time poverty”, family/work balance and social exhaustion.

It is worth mentioning that the elements that empower these women do not empower other women. This study has presented a discussion focused on household categories. This is of course a cross-section. Especially in single-parent households, “family support” may empower single-parent women, while “family”, where the only parent in the family is usually the woman's mother”, may not empower her. Similarly, in the case of married women with children, in the dual-income household model, care work is privatized

and again falls on women. Therefore, women's empowerment should be addressed by institutionalizing care, access to secure labor, and strengthening social support mechanisms, whether single-parent or married. Finally, this study is also a methodological attempt to measure women's empowerment. It has once again demonstrated that quantitative analysis needs to be contextualized.

As Williams (2010) states in her article, *Doing Feminist Demography*, demography discipline based on the positivist approach, which is highly criticized by feminism due to the positivist approach's emphasis on objectivism. On the other hand, the feminist approach considers knowledge production could not be separated from social reality constructed in line with the social relations of power, class, gender, or race. This article which aimed to approach demographic studies critically, has served as a learning process and a springboard for more research in this field by highlighting the shortcomings of quantitative measurement of women's empowerment and offering ideas for the creation of a more in-depth feasible approach.

APPENDIX-1. COMPONENTS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT VARIABLE

Empowerment concepts based on the conceptual framework	Dimension used in quantitative analysis	Domain used in quantitative analysis	DHS indicators	Response categories in DHS	Category used in Factor Analysis	Recoding logic
Resources	Education	Educational Attainment	CS-Educational attainment	0 No edu/prim inc; 1 primary; 2 secondary; 3 high and higher; 8 dont know	0 No edu/prim inc; 1 primary; 2 secondary; 3 high and higher; 8 dont know	Code 0 if 0 and 1, Code 1 if 2, Code 2 if 3
Agency		Educational Differences between spouses	Husband's total years of education Education in single years	Continuous Continuous	husbanded ed	ed-husbanded=ediff; Code 0 if edif<0, Code 1 edif >=0
Structure	Marriage	Age at first cohabitation	Age at first cohabitation	Continuous		Code 0 if <18, code 1 if 18-25, code 2 if >25
Resources	Economic Status	Labor force participation	Currently Working	0 No; 1 Yes	Work: 0 currently not working; 1 working without coverage; 2 working with coverage	Code 0 if 0, Code 1 if 1, Code 2 if 2
			Social Security	0 No; 1 Yes		
Resources/ Agency	Ownership and Control over Ownership	Money	Have money to spend by herself	0 No; 1 Yes	0 No; 1 Yes	Code 0 if 0, Code 1 if 1
Agency/ Structure		House	Owens a house alone or jointly	0 Doesn't; 1 alone only; 2 jointly only; 3 both alone and jointly	0 Doesn't own; 1 owns jointly; 2 owns alone but cannot sell; 3 owns alone and can sell	Code 0 if 0, Code 1 if 1, Code 2 if 2, Code 3 if 3
Agency			Sell the house by her own	0 No, 1 Yes		
Resources		Land	Owens land alone or jointly	0 Doesn't; 1 alone only; 2 jointly only; 3 both alone and jointly	0 Doesn't own; 1 owns jointly; 2 owns alone but cannot sell; 3 owns alone and can sell	Code 0 if 0, Code 1 if 1, Code 2 if 2, Code 3 if 3
Agency/ Structure			Sell the land by her own	0 No, 1 Yes		
Resources		Car	Owens car alone or jointly	0 Doesn't; 1 alone only; 2 jointly only; 3 both alone and jointly	0 Doesn't own; 1 owns jointly; 2 owns alone but cannot sell; 3 owns alone and can sell	Code 0 if 0, Code 1 if 1, Code 2 if 2, Code 3 if 3
Agency/ Structure	Sell the car by her own		0 No, 1 Yes			

Agency/ Structure	Opinion on Gender Roles and Responsibilities	Opinion on only men's decision making	Opinion on: family decision by men	0 disagree; 1 agree; 8 dont know	0 disagree; 1 agree; 8 dont know	Code 0 if 1 or 8, Code 1 if 0
Agency/ Structure		Opinion on gender division of labour	Opinion on: husband should do housework	0 disagree; 1 agree; 8 dont know	0 disagree; 1 agree; 8 dont know	Code 0 if 0 or 8, Code 1 if 1
Agency/ Structure		Opinion on violence exercised by men	Beating justified if wife refuses to have sex with husband	0 No; 1 Yes; 8; dont know	0 No; 1 Yes; 8; dont know	Code 0 if 1 or 8, Code 1 if 0
Resources	Access to media	Internet	Use internet	0 No; 1;irregularly;2 regularly	0 No; 1;irregularly;2 regularly	Code 0 if 0; Code 1 if 1 or 2
Structure/ Resources	Family support	Respondent's mother alive or not	Mother alive	0 No; 1 Yes	0 Yes; 1 No	Code 0 If 0; Code 1 if 1
Structure/ Resources	Family support	Respondent's father alive or not	Father alive	0 No; 1 Yes	0 Yes; 1 No	Code 0 If 0; Code 1 if 1

APPENDIX-2. KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0,750
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7961,893
	df	91
	Sig.	0,000

APPENDIX-3. Correlation Matrix

	Female Education	Education Differences between Spouses	Age at First Marriage	Female Employment	money	House Ownership	Land Ownership	Car Ownership	Opinion on Decision Making	Opinion on Husband's Doing Housework	Opinion on Sexual Violence	Internet Use	Mother alive	Father alive
Female Education	1,000	0,366	0,333	0,238	0,294	0,117	0,032	0,213	0,231	-0,292	0,117	0,476	0,166	0,171
Education Differences between Spouses	0,366	1,000	0,090	0,142	0,083	0,023	0,047	0,070	0,103	-0,108	0,096	0,184	0,057	0,068
Age at First Marriage	0,333	0,090	1,000	0,162	0,154	0,087	0,012	0,136	0,092	-0,117	0,028	0,179	0,030	0,029
Female Employment	0,238	0,142	0,162	1,000	0,377	0,142	0,071	0,213	0,105	-0,161	0,049	0,158	0,009	0,004
money	0,294	0,083	0,154	0,377	1,000	0,153	0,080	0,154	0,111	-0,191	0,058	0,245	0,045	0,029
House Ownership	0,117	0,023	0,087	0,142	0,153	1,000	0,234	0,279	0,041	-0,054	-0,008	0,062	-0,042	-0,057
Land Ownership	0,032	0,047	0,012	0,071	0,080	0,234	1,000	0,146	-0,002	-0,001	-0,006	0,016	-0,076	-0,094
Car Ownership	0,213	0,070	0,136	0,213	0,146	0,279	0,146	1,000	0,089	-0,110	0,020	0,146	0,025	0,014
Opinion on Decision Making	0,231	0,103	0,092	0,105	0,111	0,041	-0,002	0,089	1,000	-0,206	0,189	0,274	0,051	0,054
Opinion on Husband's Doing Housework	-0,292	-0,108	-0,117	-0,161	-0,191	0,041	-0,001	-0,110	-0,206	1,000	-0,083	-0,257	-0,052	-0,067
Opinion on Sexual Violence	0,117	0,096	0,028	0,049	0,058	-0,008	-0,006	0,020	0,189	-0,083	1,000	0,142	0,010	0,066
Internet Use	0,476	0,184	0,179	0,158	0,245	0,062	0,016	0,146	0,274	-0,257	0,142	1,000	0,123	0,126
Mother alive	0,166	0,057	0,030	0,009	0,045	-0,042	-0,076	0,025	0,051	-0,052	0,010	0,123	1,000	0,230
Father alive	0,171	0,068	0,029	0,004	0,029	-0,057	-0,094	0,014	0,054	-0,067	0,066	0,126	0,230	1,000

Correlation

	Female Education	Education Differences between Spouses	Age at First Marriage	Female Employment	money	House Ownership	Land Ownership	Car Ownership	Opinion on Decision Making	Opinion on Husband's Doing Housework	Opinion on Sexual Violence	Internet Use	Mother alive	Father alive
Female Education		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,010	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
Education Differences between Spouses	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,049	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
Age at First Marriage	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,180	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,022	0,000	0,015	0,016
Female Employment	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,254	0,379
money	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,018
House Ownership	0,000	0,049	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,001	0,000	0,285	0,000	0,001	0,000
Land Ownership	0,010	0,000	0,180	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,450	0,469	0,323	0,128	0,000	0,000
Car Ownership	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,070	0,000	0,032	0,157
Opinion on Decision Making	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,001	0,450	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
Opinion on Husband's Doing Housework	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,469	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
Opinion on Sexual Violence	0,000	0,000	0,022	0,000	0,000	0,285	0,323	0,070	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,233	0,000
Internet Use	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,128	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,000
Mother alive	0,000	0,000	0,015	0,254	0,000	0,001	0,000	0,032	0,000	0,000	0,233	0,000		0,000
Father alive	0,000	0,000	0,016	0,379	0,018	0,000	0,000	0,157	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	

Sig. (1-tailed)

NOTES

- 1- This study builds upon the MA thesis of Neriman Başak Altan submitted to Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, Department of Demography in 2023 under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşe Abbasoğlu Özgören.
- 2- The qualitative study of this research was approved by the Hacettepe University Ethics Commission with decision no. E-85844849-300-00002485335 dated 17.11.2022.

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