

THE WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT AND DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

The Case of Turkey

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1. Introduction

In the last decade, the world has seen a rapid increase in authoritarian modes of governance (Puddington, 2017). As the real-world examples, such as the election of authoritarian leaders, increased levels of drawbacks in democratic institutions and principles, show a trend of moving towards authoritarianism. According to Freedom House's annual report on the Freedom of the World (Puddington, 2017), global democracy had been facing with a backlash; the "*decade of decline*". The "*decade of decline*" represents the diminished state of freedom in terms of political and civil rights all around the world from 2006 to 2016. This report states that several indicators of democracy were under attack within the specified ten-year period. Furthermore, 105 countries have suffered from net democratic declines, and the "*decade of decline*" has been the most long-drawn democratic setback for forty years of Freedom House analysis (Puddington, 2017).

According to this report, Turkey has the highest decline score in the graph of major declines for influential countries (Puddington, 2017, p. 2). This decline is significant when the country's history with democratization is concerned. According to Lewis (1994), Turkey has been different from the rest of the Middle Eastern countries regarding the country's willingness to improve the level of democracy. Considering the modernization process that has been put into force in between 1923-35, the country has made progressive changes, including the empowerment of people through the introduction of political and civil liberties (Ahmad, 1993). Further, Turkey's democratization process started with the introduction of the multi-party system in 1945 (Heper & Landau, 1991). Even though this process has been disrupted by military interventions, at the beginning of 2000 the country showed its eagerness to move towards further democratization as well as the desire to join the European Union (Özbudun, 2011; Gençkaya & Özbudun, 2009).

However, several scholars argue that there is a considerably different picture of democracy in Turkey today. According to Freedom House, Turkey is performing poorly on civil liberties and freedom of the press that are important features of liberal democracy (Freedom House, 2019). Especially from 2008 on major constitutional amendments led up to gradual changes in Turkey's political system (Gençkaya & Özbudun, 2009). The decline in democracy became more evident with the incidents such as the measures taken to cope with the fail attempt of coup d' état in 2016 (Öktem & Karabekir, 2016) and the constitutional and electoral system changes in 2017 (Freedom House, 2019).

Consequently, the declining trend of democracy in the world and specifically in the case of Turkey have attracted most of the scholars to study the institutional implications of democratic backsliding (Bermeo, 2016; Greskovits, 2015; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Özbudun, 2015; Özbudun, 2014). However, there is a

considerable lack of research into the implications of this trend on women's political empowerment (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). While the literature provides extensive knowledge on the effect of democratic development on political empowerment of women, not many studies have explicitly engaged with the effect of democratic backsliding on women's political empowerment.

In theory, the increase in democratic development improves the living conditions of women by providing the necessary conditions for the development of women's overall political empowerment. In other words, a high level of democratic development context would positively influence women's political empowerment by increasing the level of representation of women in labour force and parliaments, increasing the level of women's political participation and by shaping the attitudes of societies positively towards gender-equality understanding. However, some scholars have questioned the generalizability of this theory since country-specific factors may downplay the effect of democratic development such as traditional religious customs and political culture (Inglehart, Norris, & Welzel, 2002).

Furthermore, our knowledge about the effects of democratic backsliding on women's political empowerment is limited compared to the democratization and women's political empowerment literature. One of the most influential studies in the literature that sheds light on the effect of democratic backsliding on women's political empowerment belongs to Krizsan & Roggeband (2018). According to these scholars, the significant global progress that has been initiated since the 1995 Beijing Women's World Conference might be under attack due to the growing authoritarian tendencies. The significant global progress is achieved through the proposal and implementation of gender-equality policies in various fields such as women's political participation, labour markets, health care and violence against women. As this study argues, the backsliding trend in democracy may take the effect of backsliding in the proposal and implementation of gender-equality policies (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). Furthermore, the authors argued that women's rights are particularly defenseless in developing countries where such rights have been newly introduced.

The crucial reason behind the lack of research into the effect of democratic backsliding on women's political empowerment might be that the rarely defined nature of the concept -women's political empowerment- makes it difficult for it to be studied (Alexander, Bolzendahl, & Jalalzai, 2016). However, the definition that Women's Political Empowerment Index provided has been one of the most prominent advancements in the literature of women's political empowerment (Sundström, Paxton, Wang, & Lindberg, 2015). It is because the authors definition of the concept puts it into measurable standards and makes it easier to be studied comparatively across time and many countries. Thus, the authors define the concept as follows:

"a process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making (Sundström, Paxton, Wang, & Lindberg, 2015, p. 4)".

However, while this research mainly follows the definition of Women's Political Empowerment Index; it is also using several definitions from women's empowerment literature, and by the application of the concept *"power"* into women's political empowerment, this study aims to define the indicators of women's political empowerment specifically for this research: *attitudes of society towards gender equality; women's organizations; political parties and gender equality policies.*

This thesis; therefore, investigates the effects of the democratic backsliding on the political empowerment of women in Turkey on the basis of the main research question:

What happens to women's political empowerment when a country moves from democracy to autocracy?

The main research question will be answered through two sub-questions: what is women's political empowerment and what is the relationship between women's political empowerment and democratic backsliding. In this way, this research will be able to analyze what has changed in terms of women's political empowerment when a country has moved towards authoritarianism.

In order to answer this research question, this research will use the method of comparative time analysis of two time periods in which the country was considered to be a promising democracy and the country showed a democratic backsliding trend. In the first time period, this research will test the theory that democracy and democratization process promote better conditions for women's political empowerment. By doing so, this research will present the improvements made on the indicators of women's political empowerment within the context of democratic development. In the second time period, this research will evaluate the changes in the indicators of women's political empowerment and will show the effect of backsliding.

With regards to scientific relevance, this research will add to the literature by studying a causal relationship that has not been studied that often. Therefore, this research will address the gap in the literature of de-democratization and women's political empowerment by adding a new in-depth case study. Furthermore, this study is contributing to the literature by studying the case of Turkey; therefore, increases the knowledge about this country.

The societal relevance of this thesis is centered at the core of the thesis since it concerns many women whose political and civil rights are attacked by the global trend towards authoritarianism. Regarding the case of Turkey, Turkish women have had a particular struggle that may appear much complex due to the religious and traditional beliefs in the country. However, there are many cases, especially in the global

south, that women's rights are being attacked through the same line of discourses. Therefore, by examining the case of women's political empowerment in Turkey, it is possible to reflect on the authoritarian measures that put into force to constrain women's political empowerment as well as women's human rights.

The thesis is structured as follows: the second chapter will provide a theoretical framework in which a theoretical discussion of the meaning and indicators of women's political empowerment as well as the further elaboration of the literature on democratization/de-democratization and its effect on women political empowerment will be presented. The third chapter will explain the methodology and operationalization of the concepts that are used to test the hypotheses in this research. The fourth chapter will outline the historical and current situation of democratization in Turkey. The fifth chapter entails the empirical analysis: this chapter firstly analyses the effect of a high level of democratic development on women's political empowerment secondly analyses the effect of democratic backsliding on women's political empowerment in the case of Turkey. Lastly, the concluding chapter will, summarize the main findings, present the answer to the research question, discusses the strength and weaknesses of this research and will present recommendations for further research.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides the theoretical framework for the research. The first section is an overview of the meaning of the concept of women's political empowerment and discusses the essential elements of women's political empowerment. The second section, illustrates the relationship between democratization and women's political empowerment through the discussion of first; the meaning of democracy in this research; secondly, the underlying conditions that are beneficial for the growth of women's political empowerment in a democratic process; and lastly, discusses the effects of democratic backsliding on gender equality policies and women's rights. The fourth and last section provides the analytical design for the research with a clear outline of the expected causal connections between independent and dependent variables based on the theoretical arguments presented in the previous sections.

2.1 What is Women's Political Empowerment?

The concept '*empowerment*' has been studied by many scholars and developmental organisations (Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender., 2002; Sen, 1993) within several domains such as health (Kishor, 2000), resources (education) (Kabeer, 1999), politics (Leyenaar, 2004). Therefore, the understanding of the concept empowerment varies due to its widespread use (Oxaal & Baden, 1997). Thus, several studies in the literature aim to define the concept of '*empowerment*'. Since its rarely defined nature makes it harder for the phenomenon to be studied (Alexander, Bolzendahl, & Jalalzai, 2016; Oxaal & Baden, 1997; Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender., 2002; Manuh, 2006).

The definitional ambiguity is also argued as evident when the definition of '*women's political empowerment*' is concerned (Alexander, Bolzendahl, & Jalalzai, 2016). Alexander, Bolzendahl & Jalalzai (2016) claimed that there is no substantial definition of *women's political empowerment* that academicians and practitioners agreed on. It is noticed after reviewing the studies that aimed to define women's political empowerment that most of the definitions derived from the development literature and its focus on "women's empowerment" (Alexander, Bolzendahl, & Jalalzai, 2016). Therefore, this study will first attempt to discuss the general definitions of women's empowerment. Secondly, drawing on the literature on women's empowerment, we will present the studies where women's political empowerment is defined. Thirdly, based on the definitional discussions in the previous sections, we will introduce the essential elements of women's political empowerment.

Women's empowerment is a concept that regarded as a process which starts when the status quo of disempowerment challenged through the agency of individuals and structural improvements within institutions. The phenomenon mainly studied within the contexts of developing and economically distressed

countries (Kabeer, 2005; Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender., 2002; Batliwala, 1994). It is acknowledged that the starting point in the empowerment process addresses a point of human misery, which can interchangeably be referred to as powerlessness, oppression, or deprivation (Carr, 2003). Therefore, when thinking of women's disempowerment, it can also be argued that this may be the result of the lack of recognition of women's right in the context of human rights (Bunch, 1990).

Moreover, it is argued by Oxall & Baden (1997) that the idea of "**power**" constitutes the grassroots of the concept of "empowerment"; therefore, it is crucial to first deal with the ways power operates. According to the authors, the first way that power operates is "**power over**". In line with Carr's (2003) arguments, this power refers to a relationship which involves subordination/domination of one part over the other one. This relationship involves threats of violence and intimidation to the ones whose behaviours are posing a threat to socially accepted norms/rules (Oxaal & Baden, 1997). For this reason, the dominant social discourse is continuously altered and maintained by individuals intentionally or unintentionally by their active or passive resistance (Oxaal & Baden, 1997). This line of thought can be applied within the framework of women's political empowerment. Men who dominated the political areas were able to perform power over women through legislative and formal actions since women were excluded from the positions of power (Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013, p. 2).

Before moving into a discussion of other forms that power operates, it is appropriate to briefly discuss several theories aimed to explain the women's underrepresentation or women's lack of presence within the political sphere. These theories are **situational factors (marital status, motherhood, homemaking) sex-role socialisation, and structural (socioeconomic variables)** (Bennett & Bennett, 1992; Sapiro, 1983). It is observed that the old studies relied on traditional assumptions. Several empirical studies have accounted for **situational factors**, and studied the impact of children on women's political participation and stressed that the duties of motherhood discourage women's participation in politics (specifically among less-educated women with low income) (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Lane, 1965). A later study by Jennings (1979) have presented more elaborate descriptions of the impact of motherhood and concluded that women with school-age children are more likely to participate in politics.

Welch, however, found little support for the **sex-role socialisation theory** and concluded that women are less likely to participate in politics than men since *"they are less likely to be found in those categories of people who participate in politics"* (Welch, 1977, pp. 727-28). The findings of Welch's study (1977), allow us to move to the second theory that is mentioned above – **structural socioeconomic variables**. Structural factors considered as the enabling factors such as education, labour force participation, or material resources for women to participate in politics (Rosenbluth, Salmond, & Thies, 2006). However, one might argue that the underlying

reason behind women's lack of political participation should not only be considered through the perspective of inadequate resources for political involvement. It should also be taken into consideration that it was harder for women to obtain higher education and professional career compared to men because of the dominant masculine discourses (Oxaal & Baden, 1997).

Indeed, Dahlerup (2005) stated that the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 has a significant meaning since it shifted the focus for the explanation of women's underrepresentation from traditional discourses to the **discrimination of women** (Dahlerup, 2005). The traditional discourses, as mentioned earlier, have accounted for women's lack of resources to take their place in the political sphere. However, the Beijing Platform for Action from 1995 represents a change of discourse since it accounts the cultural and institutional mechanisms that systematically excluded women by making it harder for women to have access to positions of power (Dahlerup, 2005).

Moreover, the extension of suffrage can be regarded as the first step in women's political empowerment since it enabled women to participate in elections (Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013, p. 2). Women's enfranchisement enables us to move to the discussion of the second way that power operates- "**power to**" (Oxaal & Baden, 1997). This power refers to having the authority to make decisions as well as having the power to solve problems. Therefore, it can work in ways of creating new forms of development to challenge the status quo or making changes in the current system to enable access to resources or positions of power. Drawing on Oxaal & Baden (1997), then, with the establishment of women's enfranchisement, women gained the ability to develop policies that can solve or challenge the structural problems that were preventing them from holding positions of power. In other words, with the entrance of women into the political sphere, they gained access to the legislative power to enforce laws regarding the improvement of their political and economic rights and put pressure in the male-dominated parliaments for women-friendly social reforms.

The third way that power operates is "**power with**", this power is about the capacity of people to organize with a common purpose and understanding to achieve collective goals (Oxaal & Baden, 1997). This line of reasoning applied in several studies which have accounted for the agency in defining the concept of women's political empowerment (Gutierrez, 1990; Staples, 1990). These studies described '*empowerment*' as a process of advancing personal, interpersonal, and political power so that individuals and communities can take action to improve their circumstances (Gutierrez, 1990; Staples, 1990). Therefore, one may argue that taking action or having an agency in bringing change in the empowerment process is essential.

In other words, women must be the crucial actors in the process of empowerment that are being described or measured (Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender., 2002). Therefore, even though, gendered power relations may weigh down women's ability for dynamic engagement with public debate (Charmes & Wieringa, 2003), women

must have the "*freedom to express any political opinions in any media and the freedom to form or to participate in any political group (Bollen, 1986, s. 568)*". Thus, it can be inferred from Bollen's (1986) statement consequently, agency in women's political empowerment not only includes active political participation of women but also concerns the ability to alter public agenda towards the interests of women and women's freedom (Lukes, 1974) to express their political opinions in any media (Hashemi & Schuler, 1993).

Indeed, several scholars stressed the importance of civil society organisations for women's political empowerment (Young, 1993; Welzel, 2013). Welzel (2013) states that if women are not able to express their policy preference publicly, then they cannot exercise "*civic agency*". Young (1993) argued that if women are not able to have access for public expression of their demands, then they cannot make demands to the state for support and cannot mobilise society itself for a change. As Malhotra et al. (2002) stress the mechanisms to look for political empowerment of women are "*the growth of civil society and participatory development methods*" both at the macro and micro level.

Thus, in light of the discussion raised above, this research follows the definition of women's political empowerment of the Women's Political Empowerment Index (Sundström, Paxton, Wang, & Lindberg, 2015). The authors define the political empowerment of women as following;

"a process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making (Sundström, Paxton, Wang, & Lindberg, 2015, p. 4)".

2.1.1 Indicators of Women's Political Empowerment: Attitudes

This research will focus on the attitudes of political parties and society on women's issues. It is essential to focus on **political parties'** attitudes towards women's issues since they are the institutions that regarded as the bridge between society and the state in democracies (White, 2006). In other words, political parties act in this research as institutional factors that can mirror the organisation of **society**, its norms, and values (Leyenaar, 2004, p. 58). Therefore, it is assumed that the **informal, traditional perceptions** and practices regarding women's empowerment will be reflected in the **formal bodies** through political parties (Paxton & Kunovich, 2003).

Moreover, it is argued by Dahl (1992) that one of the fundamental requirements of being a democracy is the protection of human rights. Earlier it was mentioned that the reason behind women's disempowerment might be the result of the absence in perceiving **women's right** as a part of human's right (Bunch, 1990). Therefore, the attitudes of political parties and society towards women's issues are crucial indicators in the sense that through the recognition of women's right as human rights and enhancement of women's rights through legislative actions, can bring about improvements in women's political empowerment.

Furthermore, as far as the fundamental preconditions in the process of women's political empowerment are concerned, political participation and representation of women might also be influential in bringing a change in women's political empowerment. Therefore, we will move to the second essential element, which is the concept of *descriptive representation*.

2.1.2 Descriptive Representation

Descriptive representation is defined in Pitkin's (1967) influential work named *The Concept of Representation*, as following: a person or a thing standing for others "*by being sufficiently like them.*" Therefore, *descriptive representation* is about the overlap or match between characteristics of the representatives and represented (Pitkin, 1967). What is meant by characteristics, refers to gender, ethnic background, socio-economic class (Pitkin, 1967). Advocates of descriptive representation argue that the elected officials who share similar characteristics with their constituents such as race, sex, age, class, occupation, gender, ethnicity or geographical area will be more likely to construct sufficient levels of empathy to be able to promote representative policies (Young, 1993; Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1998). Following that, it is also argued that descriptive representation is one of the critical concepts to reduce representational inequality and through the descriptive representation of historically marginalised groups such as women, the interests of disadvantaged can be defended within the legislative framework.

Indeed, the increased number of women in parliaments is an indicator that women are taking their part in politics both by representing and being represented (Dahlerup, 2007). Furthermore, it is argued by Dahlerup & Leyenaar (2013) that the political arena has drastically changed as a result of the presence of women in political systems and enabled the disruption of “*male monopoly*” in political life by fulfilling the need for representation of women for gender equality issues.

Furthermore, as stated earlier by Dahlerup (2005), the Beijing Platform (1995) signifies a ground-breaking change in the discourse of gender inequalities in politics. The introduction of the new discourse of exclusion shifted the focus in the study of women in politics, towards the institutional and the cultural mechanisms that prevented the inclusion of women to politics (Dahlerup, 2007). Therefore, the new discourse of exclusion made visible what was hidden before, and the critical mass plan put forward the implementation of the **gender quotas** to cope substantively with the under-representation of women in power positions. Thus, the idea of **gender quotas** serves as a tool to balance out the gender inequalities in politics in a wide range of countries.

Nevertheless, the concept of descriptive representation has been criticised because descriptive representation would not lead to the substantive representation since there is no direct relationship between descriptive characteristics and substantive action (Mansbridge, 1999; Wängnerud, 2009; Dodson, 2006). This discussion allows us to move to the discussion of substantive representation.

2.1.3 Substantive Representation

While descriptive representation is considered a type of representation in which representatives are standing for the constituents whom they shared similar characteristics with, substantive representation is defined as “*acting in the interests of the represented in a manner responsive to them*” (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209). It is prominent to draw attention to the substantive representation since it concerns the kind of policies women representations support and affect the society at large (Wängnerud, 2009).

An influential study which is conducted by Erzeel & Celis (2016) contributed to the literature of women’s substantive representation by arguing that ideologies also define the opportunities for women’s substantive representation. In other words, political parties’ ideology might have an impact on their understanding of ‘women’s substantive representation’ (Erzeel & Celis, 2016). The authors followed the critical distinction between substantive representation of *feminist* interests and of *gendered* interest, which is made by Celis and Childs (2014).

According to Celis & Childs (2014), the first category involves claims that have the aim to challenge existing roles in support of gender equality and social justice. The second category, however, consists of claims that are about women and for women; therefore, do not consider feminist interests but concerns material and

non- feminist traditional women's interests and gender roles. Therefore, Erzeel & Celis (2016) argued that political parties with left-wing ideology contribute to the substantive representation of feminist interest. Having defined what is meant by substantive representation in this study, I will now move on to discuss the role of women's organizations in women's political empowerment.

2.1.4 Organizations

Welzel (2013) emphasized on the importance of civil society organizations in democracies since they put pressure on governments to enhance civil liberties in societies. Welzel (2013) argued that "*emancipative values*" are universal because all people have the strive to be free from external domination. Therefore, "*emancipation values*" are common all around the world. However, the findings of his country-level analysis confirmed that there is a considerable amount of variation regarding the levels of these values from one country to another.

According to his sequence thesis, the levels of emancipation values are increasing when the growing action resources – which involves *knowledge, networks of exchange, and material values*- increases. Furthermore, the increase in the emancipation values and its comprehensively shared status across the population will lead people to press their governments for more freedom (Welzel, 2013). Therefore, people will become empowered to act together to bring about political change and protection of these changes.

Drawing on Welzel' (2013) arguments, we can regard women's organization as crucial actors in the process of women's political empowerment since the emergence and growth of women's movements enabled women to become aware of their oppression and quest structural changes in power relations between men and women (Bodur & Franceschet, 2002). An example of the critical role that women's organization played might be women's suffrage movements, which brought about a gradual change in political life by breaking of male monopoly in politics. It can be said that today, women's suffrage is universally accepted and the majority of women in the world hold the same rights as men, in standing for elections and voting in elections. However, in line with Welzel's (2013) statements, women's suffrage did not occur simultaneously all around the world. The reason behind this variation may be because women's organization from different countries with different political and cultural positions have different levels of knowledge, ability to exchange network and material resources.

2.2 The Relationship between Democratization and Political Empowerment of Women

Several studies in the literature studied the mechanisms of democratisation that could bring about women's political empowerment (Inglehart, Norris, & Welzel, 2002; Fallon K. M., 2012; Fallon K. , 2003; Fallon K. , 2010). These studies have tested the theory that of democratic development leads to further improvement of women's political empowerment in different contexts (consolidated & unconsolidated democracies) and aside from democratisation they took into consideration other influential variables (religion, democratic transition, and ideology) that may have an impact on women's political empowerment. Before going into the discussion of the relationship between democratisation on women's political empowerment, first, it is appropriate to discuss what is meant by democracy in this research.

2.2.1 What is Democracy?

This study follows Robert A. Dahl's definition of democracy, which is introduced in his inspiring work *On Democracy* (1998). First and foremost, Dahl (1998) emphasises the importance of the assumption that; all people are equally qualified to participate in the debates of policymaking and the process of decision-making. According to him, this assumption constitutes the basis of forming assemblies to arrive at political decisions. In other words, based on this assumption, people form assemblies to discuss, deliberate and decide on policies.

Furthermore, Dahl highlights the importance of constitutions; while acknowledging the variety of different constitutions (regarding differences in political systems such as parliamentary, presidential) all around the world, he points out the one element that enables us to categorise these countries as democracies (Dahl A. R., 1998). According to him, the democratic constitutions must confirm one elementary principle that is; *"all the members are to be treated as if they were equally qualified to participate in the process of decision making in the parliaments (Dahl A. R., 1998, p. 37)"*. Therefore, one can argue that the essence and uniqueness of being a democratic regime based on the assumption that all people have equal political rights that are protected by the constitution.

Thus, Dahl's (1998) answer to the question *"what is democracy"* is then;

" a set of rules and principles, a constitution that determines how the associations' decisions are to be made (p. 37)".

Moreover, Dahl portrayed five criteria of the democratic process': *effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda, and inclusion of adults* (1998, pp. 38-39). Effective participation refers to the equal and sufficient opportunities that all citizens must possess to make their views

known to other citizens before a policy is adopted. Voting equality refers to the point when decisions about policies are made; every citizen must have an equal and effective opportunity to participate. Enlightened understanding means that within reasonable limits of time, citizens must have equal and effective opportunities to learn about relevant policy alternatives and their expected consequences. Control of the agenda refers to the idea that citizens must have the opportunity to decide on how and, if they choose, on what matters to be placed on the public agenda. Thus, policy discussions must always be open to change by the members of the association if the members choose to do so. Inclusion of adults means that with minimal exceptions, all permanent adult residents must have full rights of citizenship.

One might question the necessity and importance of these criteria; however, these criteria enables us to determine whether the policies are discussed and formed by the politically equal members of an association. In other words, these criteria enable us to make evaluations about the democratic nature of assemblies to the extent that if any of these preconditions are violated, the members will not be politically equal. Furthermore, Dahl acknowledges that no state has ever had a government that fully be measured to the criteria of the democratic process, and none is likely to (1998). As in real-world politics, it is not likely that every member of an association will genuinely have equal opportunities to participate, to achieve an essential understanding of the issues, and to influence the agenda (1998, p. 42). Therefore, these criteria are defining the standards of an ideal democracy and provides a framework to measure the performance of actual associations that claim to be democratic (1998, p. 43).

Dahl states that the *effective participation* criterion is breached when some representatives are given greater opportunities to express their views than others since it is more likely that their policies will prevail (Dahl A. R., 1998). When this line of thought is applied to male-dominated parliaments, one might argue that when the principle of political equality of all members is not respected, this might result in the violation of women's political equality within parliaments where women constitute a minority group. Moreover, Dahl draws particular attention on *the control of the agenda* criterion since a political party that holds the majority of the seat in a parliament can violate the political equality principle by preventing any proposal to be brought forward that acts on the contrary to that political party's line of thinking (1998, p. 40).

The statements above are presented as examples of violation of the political equality principle that democratic countries have been charged to uphold. Thus, the five criteria of a democratic process can serve as guides for shaping and improving concrete arrangements, constitutions, practices, and political institutions. Having discussed the meaning and the essential foundation of democracy, now we will move to the discussion of the effects of democratisation on women's political empowerment. To be able to establish why democracies are

more beneficial to promote women's political empowerment than authoritarian regimes, we will briefly mention the theory of modernisation (Lipset, 1959).

2.2.2 The Democratic Transition

What determines political transition (democratisation) is a crucial question that needs to be answered. According to Lipset's 'modernisation theory' *"all various aspects of economic development -industrialisation, urbanisation, wealth and education – are so closely interrelated as to form one major factor which has the political correlate of democracy* (Lipset, 1960, p. 41)". Furthermore, it should be noted that the factors listed above are necessary but not sufficient conditions for democracy (Lipset, 1959).

To Lipset, for any democratic regime to survive, citizens' equality both in socio-political and economic terms must be provided by the government so that in return sufficient levels of perceived legitimacy can be provided to the government by its citizens (Lipset, 1960). Therefore, the process of modernisation demonstrates itself predominantly by altering social conditions that advance democratic culture (Lipset, 1960, p. 49).

One might ask how altering social conditions could improve countries' democratic culture. According to Diamond, Linz & Lipset (1989), economic development influences the democratic development in three steps. First, the economic growth is more fundamental for democracy when it is compared to the given levels of socio-economic development. Secondly, socio-economic development leads to societal changes that can potentially promote democratisation. Furthermore, socio-economic development facilitates other changes, such as the organisation of the middle class, which constitutes the backbone of democracy (1989, pp. 44-46).

Confirming to Lipset (1959, p. 84), as a country grows further in human capital, particularly in education and exposed to broader and more diverse audiences, workers in developed countries are more receptive towards democratic values and less so towards regime-hostile ideologies. This argument is particularly evident when workers are granted economic and political rights. Furthermore, primarily through one of its central features - *secularism*-, modernisation provides further receptiveness to the type of norms and values that reduces conflict by constituting a ground for penalising extremist groups (Lipset, 1959, pp. 83-84).

All in all, according to Lipset's (1959) modernisation theory, economic development and the aspects of modernisation are leading to an increase in citizen socio-economic and political equality, therefore; people strive for more freedom and a greater say in political decisions.

Thus, drawing on Lipset's modernisation theory (1959), one might assume that the growth in democracy and economic development would improve the well-being of women as reflected by increases in their representation in labour force and parliament, equal educational opportunities and increase in the share of women's political participation; therefore, increases women's overall political empowerment. In order to

explore these factors, and their relevance within the framework of women's political empowerment, the relationship between democratisation and women's political empowerment will be specified below.

2.2.3 The effects of Democratization on Women's Political Empowerment

Inglehart, Norris & Welzel (2002) have tested the theory that the process of modernization leads concurrently towards both democratization and a rise in the share of women in public life. They argue that *"relative gender equality in parliament is closely linked with democracy; neither variable seems to be a direct cause of the other (p. 21)"*. In other words, even though there is no causal link between the two variables, the norm of gender equality is inherently involved in the process of democratization (Inglehart, Norris, & Welzel, 2002).

Moreover, it is argued that religion has been one of the predicting factors for the level of women representation (Rule, 1987; Reynolds, 1999). Furthermore, they have also taken into consideration the effects of religion on both women's representation in parliament and the level of democracy in a country. When the authors test the effect of religion on the level of women representation, findings demonstrated that the effect of religion in a country's cultural heritage explains higher percentages of the variance than the factors of modernization combined since religious traditions were established long ago (Inglehart, Norris, & Welzel, 2002). Furthermore, according to the findings of their study:

"Historically Protestant societies have higher proportions of women in parliament than historically Roman Catholic ones; Catholic societies generally rank above societies with Orthodox or Confucian or Islamic cultural traditions (Inglehart, Norris, & Welzel, 2002, p. 7)".

Moreover, it is stated that economic development is conducive to democracy; however, countries with high levels of economic development are not necessarily democratic (Inglehart, Norris, & Welzel, 2002). The authors acknowledge the modest reciprocal effect regarding the help of democratic institutions on reshaping the culture (Inglehart, Norris, & Welzel, 2002). However, they argue that the main causal sequence starts when a society's traditional culture heritage is transformed by economic development into relatively high levels of emphasis on **self-expression values** (post-materialistic) (Inglehart, Norris, & Welzel, 2002). According to Inglehart (1990; 1997), a shift from **survival values** (materialistic)¹ such as economic and physical security to self-expression values (post-materialistic) such as subjective well-being and quality of life concerns, reflects a transformation from traditional values to secular/rational values in advance industrialized societies that took place during the past 25 years.

¹ Inglehart, Norris & Welzel (2002) argued that material values emphasize women's economic and physical security and the traditional values emphasizes the importance of parent-child ties (women as mothers) and deference to authority, along with absolute standards and traditional family values therefore rejects divorce (women as wives) and abortion.

Consequently, in countries where religious traditions still have a place, the following issues predominantly holds the agenda in these countries: parent-child ties, deference to authority with absolute standards and traditional family values and reject divorce and abortion (Inglehart, Norris, & Welzel, 2002). Contrary to the previous statement, in societies where the transformation from traditional to secular-rational values completed, women had the conditions to move from narrow subordination toward full equality. Thus, it can be said that a revolutionary change took place in women's education, career opportunities, fertility rates, sexual behaviour, and worldviews. Having established the effects of democratization and other influential factors (such as religion, modernization) on women's political empowerment, now the effects of democratic backsliding on women's political empowerment will be discussed in more detail.

2.2.4 The effects of Democratic Backsliding on Women's Political Empowerment

The 1995 Beijing Women's World Conference has initiated significant global progress regarding the adoption of gender equality policies in various fields such as women's political participation, labour markets, care, and violence against women. Nonetheless, a study that is conducted by Krizsan & Roggeband (2018) argues that this process is currently under attack. The tendency towards democratic backsliding and de-democratisation is apparent all over the world (such as in Europe and the Americas) which is concurrent with the recent economic and financial crisis (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). Thus, in their study, the aim is to investigate the effect of democratic backsliding on gender equality policies and women's movement. Thus, the authors follows the argument that women's rights are especially vulnerable in fragile and developing democracies in which such rights have been introduced recently and where the sphere of influence of civil society actors to protect and support such rights is constrained even decreased (Baker, et al., 2017; Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014; Rutzen, 2015; Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018).

The definitions of democratic backsliding that is presented in this study carry three key aspects of such: *institutional* (Bermeo, 2016), *developmental* (Greskovits, 2015) and *cultural* (Fomina & Kucharczyk, 2016; Norris, 2016). According to Bermeo, democratic backsliding refers to the "*state-led debilitation or elimination of any of the political institutions that sustain an existing democracy* (2016, p. 5) ". Compared to Bermeo (2016), Greskovits' definition is less institutional: "*destabilisation or even a reversal in the direction of democratic development* (Greskovits, 2015, p. 28)". However, it is stated that both authors perceive the concept of democratic backsliding as an ongoing process rather than a fixed critical point that can be pinpointed in time. Thus, the authors borrowed the view that democratic backsliding is an ongoing process for their analysis of the effects of democratic backsliding on gender equality policies and feminist's response to it (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). Furthermore, the third key aspect is argued by Fomina & Kucharczyk (2016) and Norris

(2016) who view democratic backsliding as a cultural backlash against the social changes that have been put in the progress including gender equality policies.

Moreover, it is stressed that '*de-democratisation*' studies mostly focused on institutional aspects of democracy and failed to put attention to backsliding in terms of representativeness and inclusiveness of gender policies and gender interests in such contexts (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). Therefore, to analyse gender equality policy backsliding in fragile democracies, they followed the argument that "*the quality of democracy can be assessed on the degree of its inclusiveness and representativeness of societal interest and more especially its responsiveness to women's interests* (McBride & Mazur, 2010, p. 10)". Thus, to capture the quality of democracy in terms of representativeness and inclusiveness, they have operationalised Pitkin's (1967) concepts of representation: *descriptive, symbolic and substantive representation* (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018).

Furthermore, since the authors aim to contribute to the literature by analysing the gendered aspects of '*de-democratisation*', they have developed a conceptual framework to be able to map the implication of democratic backsliding on gender equality policies and feminist mobilisation (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018).

The authors stated that gendered aspects of '*de-democratisation*' could be examined through two realms: ***backsliding of gender equality policies*** and ***changes in feminist engagement with the political realm*** (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). In their research, the focus is on Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, since these countries demonstrate particularly strong but also various patterns of austerity measures (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). However, it is stated that they use these empirical cases not to explain causality in a neat comparative model, but rather to specify the patterns of gender equality policy backsliding where those emerge, and feminist responses to it. To analyse backsliding in gender equality policies, they have distinguished it in four dimensions: *discursive de-legitimisation of gender policies, policy dismantling, undermining implementation, and erosion of inclusion & accountability mechanisms* that are interrelated and complementary to each other (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). However, the authors stated that all dimension does not need to take place simultaneously for gender equality backsliding to occur.

The authors expect the *de-legitimisation of gender equality policies* to be the critical element in the current processes of backsliding (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). According to the authors, the de-legitimisation of gender policies occurs when oppositional statements on gender equality made by top-level political actors (who are part of the governing structure or governing political party) to question the legitimacy of gender equality as a goal and discredit existing policies. Therefore, backsliding means that increasing hostility towards gender equality policy processes in which anti-gender equality claims negatively influences how policies are perceived and implemented (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018).

Secondly, backsliding of gender equality policies may occur in the form of *dismantling and reframing of existing policies*. In this form, backsliding occurs when a policy problem is radically reframed in a way that is contradictory to gender equality meanings. For example, instead of targeting equal opportunities for men and women, the new frame may target protecting family values, or refusing care around the family unit while allowing continued subordination of women's place both within the family and therefore society at large (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018).

The third dimension of backsliding of gender equality policies is *undermining implementation arrangements* and should be considered in relation to *reversal and dismantling of policies* because it also affects the level of the institutional design of a policy regime ((Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). The authors argued that institutional design might include various mechanisms such as coordinating authorities, intergovernmental, and other partnerships, networks of private and public entities, and contractual relationship (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). Furthermore, they claimed that backsliding in this dimension can occur relatively easy since policies can be abandoned simply by suspending the programmatic process of policies to an unsettled date or making the funding of policies impossible while arguing for the necessity of these actions due to austerity measures (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018).

The fourth dimension of backsliding in gender equality policies is *the erosion of inclusion and accountability mechanisms*. In this form, the accountability of process is reached, mainly through inclusive policy-making and consultation process that includes women's rights advocates when discussing and deciding on gender equality policies. To the authors, backsliding in this form occurs when women's rights advocates are not involved in policy processes beyond the agenda-setting. Further, they also expect a backsliding in the form of constrained or decreased level of communication between civil society groups representing gender equality and government (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018).

Regarding the second realm, *changes in feminist engagement with the political realm*, the authors argue that backsliding can engender a decreased level of inclusion of women's rights advocated in policy processes. It is noteworthy to mention that for women and other marginalised groups in formal politics, alternative forms of representation such as consultation and inclusive policy process carries the utmost importance (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). This study claims that as the backsliding goes further, they observe a decline in the alternative forms of participation, exclusion from consultative platforms, defunding or political persecution of women's groups. However, according to the authors, backsliding and threats on gender equality policies could also trigger an increase in feminist mobilisation. In other words, they argue that as the blocking of institutional channels of representation and policy consultation grows, this backsliding trend may force feminists to seek other unconventional forms of political participation such as street protests (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018).

Furthermore, it is argued that mass protests and building new inclusive coalitions can be regarded as the necessary means to publicise the underrepresentation of women. Moreover, women's movement resistance to backsliding may demonstrate arising possibilities for re-democratisation by the robust connection of protests and by forming new alliances (Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018).

The discussion of the study presented above is crucial for this research since it is closely related to the research topic of this study. Furthermore, it is focusing on concepts that will also be used in this research such as democratic backsliding and its effect on gender equality policies and feminist mobilisation.

2.3 Expectations & Conceptual Framework

In this section, the expectations regarding the effects of democracy and democratic backsliding on women's political empowerment will be discussed. The expectations that are formulated in this chapter are based on our overview of the literature. We will first briefly discuss the approach taken in this research to answer the research question. Further, a classification of the key aspects of women's political empowerment which are also derived from the overview of the literature will follow. Following that, we present the expectations and hypotheses of this research.

The research question of this study: *What happens to women's political empowerment when a country moves from democracy to autocracy* will be answered through two sub-questions;

- *What is political empowerment of women?*
- *What is the relationship between women's political empowerment and democratic backsliding?*

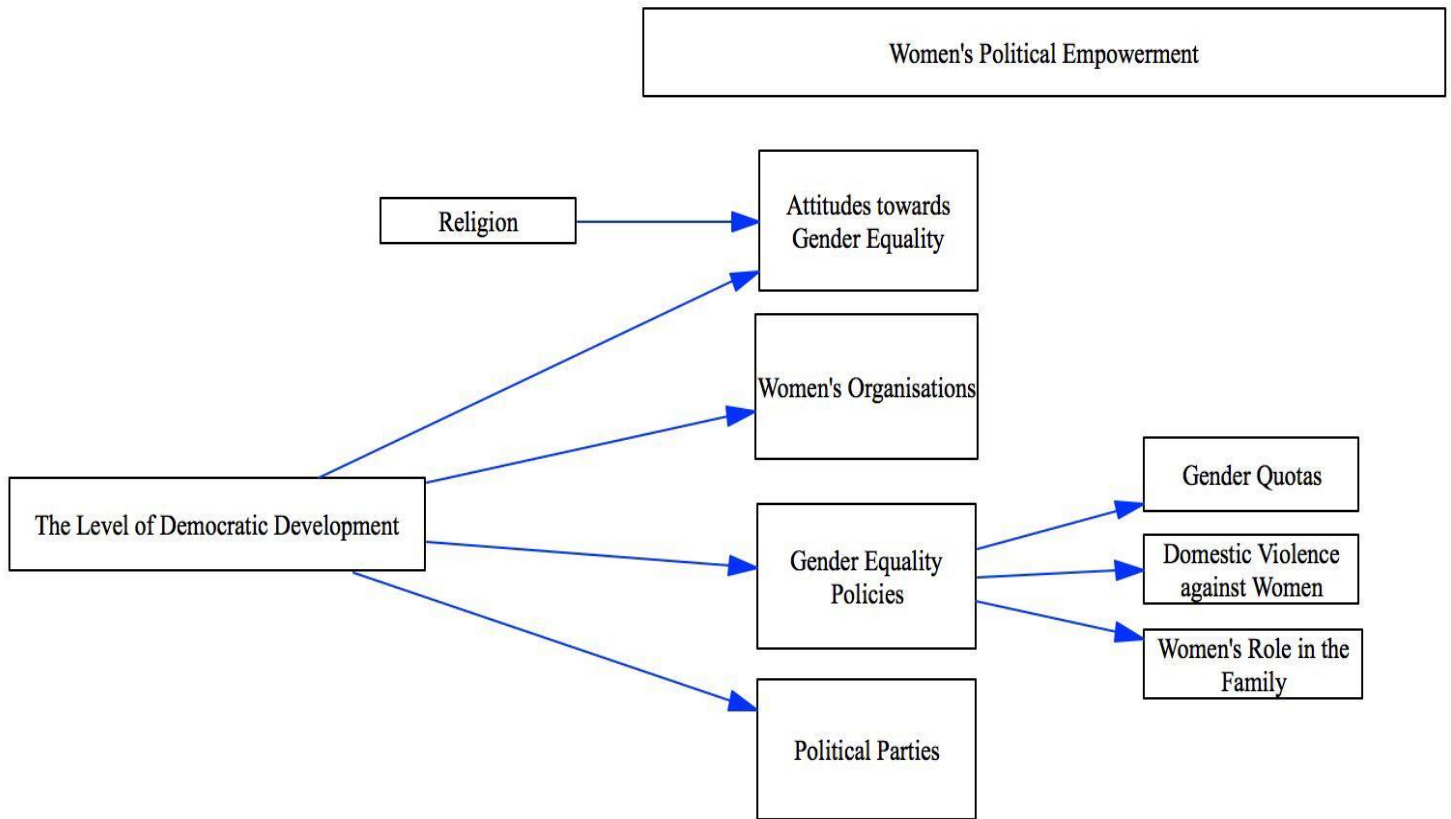
In this way, this research will be able to analyse what had changed in terms of women's empowerment when a country's regime moved towards authoritarianism.

Expectations

Thus, based on theoretical approaches that have been discussed earlier, one might assume that while democratization enables further development of women's political empowerment, a trend towards democratic backsliding might lead to stagnation of women's political empowerment in a country. In other words, this study expects an increase in the emphasis and developments regarding women's political empowerment in a country with a high level of democratic development. Following that, it expects a decline in women's political empowerment in a context where democracy is backsliding. To examine these causal relationships between the level of democratic development and women's political empowerment (see conceptual framework below), this study has formulated hypotheses which are presented in the list below.

Furthermore, drawing on the literature, the key elements of women's political empowerment can be listed as following: *attitudes of society towards gender equality, women's organizations, gender equality policies, attitudes of political parties towards gender issues.*

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



2.3.1 The list of hypotheses

H1: *In a country with high level of democratic development, **attitudes towards gender equality;***

a:** will be less likely to be shaped by **religious and cultural traditions

***b:** will move towards **self-expression values**.*

H2: *In a country with high level of democratic development, women's organizations;*

***a:** are more likely to **change the agenda** in favour of gender- equality policies(policy-making)*

***b:** are more likely to **influence on decision making** in a feminist way.*

H3: *In a country with a high level of democratic development, gender-equality policies (domestic-violence, gender quotas, women's role in the family) are more likely to **be proposed and implemented**.*

***a:** In a country with a high level of democratic development, **political parties** will be more inclined to implement gender-equality policies (domestic-violence, gender quotas, women's role in the family) in their party programs.*

***b:** In a country with a high level of democratic development, **political parties** will aim to achieve gender-equality **regardless of their ideological stands**.*

3. Methodology

This chapter presents an outline of the methodology used in this research. This first section explains the decision behind the case selection and defines the mechanism used to investigate the hypotheses. The second section specifies the data collection and discusses the limitation of the methods.

3.1 Case Selection

Since this research aims to estimate the effect of different political contexts: high level of democratic development and democratic backsliding on women's political empowerment, the case of Turkey seems to fit perfectly. It enables this research to investigate both conjunctures in one country. Furthermore, Turkey is a unique country to examine women's political empowerment because compared to its exemplars in other developing countries, particularly the ones with high Muslim population, Turkish women have enjoyed political and civil rights and entered in to the public arena since 1920' which was considered as radical at the time (Arat, 2008; White J. B., 2003). Therefore, it is a "crucial" case to study the effects of democratic development and backsliding on women's political empowerment.

The 'crucial' case refers to conditions that the observable case confirms or disconfirms the causal explanations based on general assumptions or theories (Gerring, 2017, p. 74). If the observable case, with the application of the selected theoretical approaches, confirming the general theoretical assumption, the crucial case turns into a 'least likely case' (Gerring, 2017). However, if the observable case, with the application of the selected theoretical approaches, disconfirming the general theoretical explanations, then the crucial case is known as a 'most likely case' (Gerring, 2017). Regarding the case of Turkey, the effect of a high level of democratic development on women's political empowerment seems to disconfirm the direct positive effect of democratisation on women's political empowerment. Furthermore, the democratic backsliding in the case of Turkey seems to confirm that the backsliding trend is effective on women's political empowerment.

3.2 Method of inquiry

The main advantage of the qualitative research method is to reveal the effect of country-specific conditions on the studied phenomenon. Thus, in order to demonstrate the effect of a high level of democratic development and democratic backsliding, this research will examine "two time periods" by employing a descriptive comparative analysis of the indicators of the women's political empowerment. Since women's (political) empowerment is not a static but a dynamic concept that evolves through time and can be altered positively and negatively according to the political conjuncture, the comparison of two time periods becomes highly relevant.

Thus, we will use two periods: the period that Turkey could meet the requirements of being a democratic country (2000-2008) and the period when the country demonstrates the tendency of democratic backsliding (2015-2019). Furthermore, a comparative analysis of the indicators of women's political empowerment – policies, organisations, party systems, attitudes towards gender equality (considering the effect of religion) between these two periods will take place. These indicators are based on our overview of the literature on women's political empowerment. It is primarily in the interest of this paper to investigate whether there are changes in women's political empowerment in a context of democratic backsliding and particularly to examine whether these changes can be traced back to the trend of democratic backsliding in the case of Turkey.

The First Period 2000-2008

The period that is starting from 2000-2008 is taken specially to explain the effect of a high level of democratic development on women's political empowerment. This time period is chosen because, between 2000-2008, Turkey was seen as a promising democratic country since the government initiated several political reforms to demonstrate its commitment to become a member state of the European Union. Thus, as the credibility of Turkey commitment to the EU's accession process appeared high, it was confirmed by the European Union's decision, in 2005, to open accession negotiations (Kubicek, 2011).

The specified time period implies this research will focus only on the parties that were present in the parliament at that time namely: the governing party- Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party, AKP) and the main opposition party- Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican Peoples Party, CHP). For the second period, the examination will be restricted to these parties not only to arrive at a consistent and accurate comparison but also considering the seat shares of the two parties in the parliament they are the most effective ones to finalise policy proposals (Müftüler-Baç, 2012).

The Second Period 2015-2019

The conditions presented above worsened after 2008 (Özbudun, 2011). As the governing party (AKP) increased its influence over the democratic institutions and felt less inclined to implement political reforms (Kubicek, 2011). From 2015 to 2019, AKP's ideology has shifted from "*conservative-liberalism*" to "*conservative-Islamism*" (Altuntaş & Demirkanoğlu, 2017). As the governing party increased its influence over the democratic institutions and democratic principle, these changes might be effective on women's political empowerment (Altuntaş & Demirkanoğlu, 2017).

Furthermore, it is essential to formulate hypotheses in order to connect the relations between independent (the level of democratic development) and dependent (women's political empowerment) variables (see the list of hypotheses in chapter 2). As demonstrated in the theoretical chapter, the concept of women's political

empowerment will be evaluated through four indicators in order to establish a measurable standard for the examination of the hypotheses. Therefore, in the following section, we will present the operationalisation of the indicators of the dependent variable.

3.3 Operationalisation

Attitudes towards Gender Equality

The first hypothesis is formulated to examine the attitudes of Turkish society towards gender equality. Drawing on the theoretical approaches presented earlier in the study of Inglehart, Norris & Welzel (2002), one can assume that as the countries' level of democracy increases the attitudes towards gender equality moves from *"traditional/religious values"* towards *"secular/rational values"*. Since the well-established democratic institutions shape the perception of gender equality in societies, in a high level of democratic development context, women will be more likely to present *"self-expression values"* and will move away from *"survival values"*. Thus, to examine the attitude towards gender equality the indicators arranged as follows: *"traditional/religious values", "self-expression values"*.

Women's Organisations

Several scholars stressed the importance of civil society organisations for women's political empowerment (Welzel, 2013; Young, 1993). Welzel (2013) states that if women are not able to express their policy preference publicly, then they cannot exercise *"civic agency"*. Young (1993) argued that if women are not able to have access for public expression of their demands, then they cannot make demands to the state for support and cannot mobilise society itself for a change. Therefore, in order to examine the strength of the women's organisations' agency in bringing a change in women's political empowerment, this research will use the following indicators: *"ability to change the agenda", "ability to influence on decision making"*.

Gender Equality Policies

Based on the literature, it can be argued that gender equality policies meant to bring the necessary changes to eliminate the challenges that are posed by the institutional and cultural mechanisms to prevent women from reaching the positions of power. In other words, various gender equality policies are being implemented in multiple dimensions to enhance the positions of women in the family and society, for them to reach the enabling resources to their rightful place in positions of power. In this research, the gender equality policies will be categorised as; *"gender quotas"* and *"women's role in the family"*, as well as policies on *"domestic violence against women"*.

Gender quotas are the means to ensure the quality of democracy in a country since it enables further development of the principle of “*political equality*” (Dahl A. R., 1998). In other words, gender quotas are implemented to cope with the under-representation of women in power positions.

Moreover, it is argued that the violation of women’s rights is embedded in formal and informal culture (Sundström, Paxton, Wang, & Lindberg, 2015). However, the latter is more important to consider since it enables regular violation of women’s rights daily that is more likely to exist in the domestic and local life of women (Sundström, Paxton, Wang, & Lindberg, 2015). Following that, the effect of household and family relations of women is what makes them different from other underprivileged groups whose rights have not violated and disempowered in this way (Manuh, 2006). In line with these arguments, policies that are concerning to enhance women’s role in the family and to decrease the domestic violence against women; aim to demolish the violation of women’s rights are embedded in the formal and informal culture. Therefore, this research expects that gender equality policies are more likely to be proposed and implemented, in a highly democratic context, since it enables the democratic country to meet the principle of “*political equality*”.

Political Parties

This research will also focus on the attitudes of political parties on women’s issues. It is essential to focus on political parties’ attitudes towards women’s issues since they are the institutions that regarded as the bridge between society and the state in democracies (White J. K., 2006). In other words, political parties act in this research as institutional factors that can mirror the organisation of society, its norms, and values (Leyenaar, 2004, p. 58). Drawing on the literature, one might assume that regardless of the ideological stands of political parties, political parties will feel more inclined to cooperate on gender equality issues in a high democratic context. In other words, political parties may demonstrate congruence on the issue of gender equality to meet the principle of “*political equality*”.

Moreover, it is expected in this research that, in a democratic context, political parties will adapt itself to the requirements of gender equality policies to increase women’s political empowerment.

3.4 Data and Limitations

3.4.1 Data Collection

Data that this research relies on to the test the hypotheses consist of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are mass survey data, official documents from political parties, official state statistics and documents, Turkish laws, official reports. The secondary sources are empirical studies, statements of politicians, unofficial documents, newspapers which are predominantly used for the second period since the primary data was impossible to find.

Attitudes towards Gender Equality

In order to examine the attitudes of Turkish public towards the concept of gender equality, the primary data sources will be: in the first time period (2000-2008) the country-specific survey data of the World Values Survey (wave four, 2001) which is designed by JD Systems Institute in collaboration with Bogazici University and Birim Arastirma (Bogazici University & Birim Arastirma, 2014). This survey was conducted with 3401 people (at the age of 18 and older, both sexes) and represents the national population of Turkey (Bogazici University & Birim Arastirma, 2014).

For the second time period (2015-2018), the public opinion survey will be Public Perceptions of Gender Roles and the Status of Women in Turkey used (Gender and Women's Studies Research Center, 2018). This survey was conducted among 1205 people (at the age of 18 and older, both sexes) by Gender and Women's Studies Research Center of Kadir Has University. It represents the urban population of Turkey (Gender and Women's Studies Research Center, 2018). According to the addressed based- registration data of 2017, 92 per cent of the total population is represented by the urban population in Turkey (Gender and Women's Studies Research Center, 2018). The sample choice was made by random sample selection based on cluster sample (Gender and Women's Studies Research Center, 2018). Furthermore, the fieldwork of this research was conducted in collaboration with Frekans Research between January and February 2018 (Gender and Women's Studies Research Center, 2018).

Organisations

In order to examine the second hypothesis, this research will use secondary sources: empirical studies since it is impossible to find data on the state and women's organisations relationship. First of all, we will examine the role of women's organisations in between 2000-2008. Furthermore, to make it more concrete for the reader, one of the most influential feminist women's organisations KA.DER's vision and actions will be examined.

An examination of the status of women's organisation will follow to reflect on the changes regarding the status of women's organisations in 2015-2018. In order to reflect on the status of women's organisation in the context of democratic backsliding, one of the most well-known Islamist women's organisation KADEM's vision and its relationship with the government will be evaluated.

Gender Equality Policies & Political Parties

In order to examine the third hypothesis, this research will analyse the party programmes, statements of the party leaders and members regarding gender equality policies, from two mainstream parties namely: AKP (conservative democrat) & CHP (social democrat) in the period of 2000-2008. In doing so, this research will be to reflect on the effect of the political parties' ideological stands on gender-equality policies. Furthermore, this

research will also reflect on the implementation of gender equality policies by evaluating specific laws and policy reports.

However, as AKP has not changed its party programme since the year it was founded (2001), we analysed the party's 2023 political vision document to see the changes regarding the party's attitudes towards the concept of gender-quotas. CHP has also not changed its party programme since 2008. Therefore, the party's approach will be examined in line with their policy promises in 2008 and their reactions to AKP's policies or implementation in the given period of time.

To examine the changes in the approaches of the parties towards gender-equality policies, several official documents, amendments in particular laws, the statements of the politicians, (un) official reports and research results will be used. In order to reflect particularly to the implementation of the domestic violence policies, this research will use the unofficial statistics of the feminist platform known as *We Will Stop Femicide Platform*. This platform prepares annual reports, by compiling with the murders from the news and direct personal briefings made to their assemblies (We Will Stop Femicide Platform, 2019).

Furthermore, due to the difficulty in finding primary sources, particularly for the examination of gender equality policies, this research will rely on both mainstream and independent newspapers and communication networks. However, considering the status of media in Turkey today, we mostly relied on independent media sources such as *Bianet* and *T24*. Additionally, this research also uses the report from a website called *Dogruluk Payi* (In English: Accuracy Rate) which is measuring the accuracy of the statements of the politicians based on a fact-checking system.

3.4.2 Limitations

This research has respected the time limitations of the two-time period as specified earlier: 2000-2008 & 2015-2019. However, this research has a few drawbacks. Due to the inaccessibility and nonappearance of similar data for both time scales and the limited resources in this study, we used different data sources and secondary sources for our comparison when necessary. These problems may lead to raising questions about the validity of the causal inferences and predictions in this empirical study.

However, the measurement standard (see the section on operationalisation) enabled us to seek for specific patterns for each indicator in both periods. Thus, this qualitative case study research presents an in-depth analysis of the studied phenomena's in both time scales: therefore, more likely to capture internal validity than external validity. Following that, by acknowledging the limitation in external validity, we also recognise that generalizability of this research becomes an issue since by looking at certain tendency of patterns we cannot

make generalisations. However, this research aims to contribute to the literature by investigating specific patterns of women's political empowerment in a country that has not been studied frequently.

4. The Case of Turkey

This chapter will discuss the history of the democratic processes & setbacks and will present an overview of the contemporary democratic situation in Turkey. The framework of the discussion will be based on the constitutional changes and amendments in Turkey, to enable the readers to better understand the shift towards democratic developments (and democratic decline) in the country. At first, a discussion about the foundation of the Turkish Republic will be represented. Following that, the start of a competitive party system, therefore the beginning of the democratisation will be discussed. Thirdly, Turkish history with military interventions will be presented. Lastly, a discussion about the highlights of Turkish democratic development and democratic decline will be discussed.

The Birth of The Republic

Turkey has had four constitutions in its history, which were adopted in 1921, 1924, 1961 and 1982, the latter changed gradually by the amendments and in force. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss each constitutional process in sequence.

On 3 February 1921, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT) was officially established, and the principles of the new government of Ankara needed clarification; therefore, *Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu* (the Constitution of 1921) came into force (Özbudun, 2011). However, when the Constitution of 1921 came into force, the Ottoman Constitution of 1876 was not abolished; thus, a “*dual constitutional period*” began (Özbudun, 2011). The Constitution of 1921 was a simple document in the sense that it included 23 articles and used for a brief period, from 1921 to 1924 (Özbudun, 2011). The 1921 constitution was considered as a constitution for wartime (*The War of National Liberation, 1919-1922*) and outlined the main framework of the government; however, within its context, there was no reference to civil rights and freedoms (Gençkaya & Özbudun, 2009). Furthermore, with the 1921 constitution, the right of sovereignty was unconditionally invested in the people, and it is expressed that the GNAT was solely the true representative of the nation. The Turkish Republic founded on 29 October 1923, and several reforms took place to construct modern Turkey (Ahmad, 1993).

Thus, after the announcement of the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the state needed a new constitution since the 1921 constitution was not intended to be a full constitution (Gençkaya & Özbudun, 2009). Therefore, the 1924 constitution replaced the Constitution of 1921, and its characteristics were in line with the Turkish modernisation project, which was initiated by Atatürk and his colleagues (Heper & Lanadu, 1991). The 1924 constitution was drafted by all powers in the unicameral legislature that was entirely dominated by a single-party- *Republican People's Party*, (CHP). On the grounds of the 1924 constitution, a

republican system of government was established, and certain fundamental liberties were recognised (Heper & Lanadu, 1991).

In the early Republican period, several reforms took place to transform society into a modern society since the newly established state wanted to cut its ties with the traditional and religious emphasis of the Ottoman Empire (Heper & Lanadu, 1991, p. 47). Therefore, one of the most crucial acts of the newly established state was the abolishment of the office of Sultanate-Caliph (Ahmad, 1993). With an amendment in 1928, the reference to state religion was removed from the text of the Constitution (Heper & Lanadu, 1991). These reforms included changing headgear and dress codes (in 1925), new penal law and civil code (in 1926), adoption of the new Turkish alphabet (in 1928), establishment of women's enfranchisement (in 1934) and the inclusion of the principle of *laïcité* in the constitution (Ahmad, 1993; Heper & Lanadu, 1991, p. 13). Thus, under the single-party rule of CHP rapid modernisation (from 1923 to 1935) has started through cultural, legal and social reforms (Heper & Lanadu, 1991).

Having discussed the actions of the Republican state, in the following parts, we will present information regarding the introduction of the multi-party system and military interventions in Turkey.

Multi-Party System

In 1945, Turkey was still a closed society since CHP was in power without contestation. Thus, since there was no separation between party and government, the party was the government (Ahmad, 1993). However, in November 1945, the leader of the CHP, İsmet İnönü, in his presidential speech stated that he was prepared to make significant political adjustments to keep up with the changed circumstances of the time by agreeing on the argument that the primary deficiency in the system was the lack of opposition party (Ahmad, 1977).

On 7 January 1946, the Democratic Party was established. Even though the general elections in 1946 was not a success for the newly formed DP, the 1950 elections; the party attained a great victory against the CHP that has been in power for 27 years (Ahmad, 2003). Thus, this peaceful democratic transition of power marked the beginning of a competitive party system in Turkey (Ahmad, 1977).

Therefore, the democratisation process has started in Turkey with the first genuinely free elections in 1950 and a competitive multi-party system (Mousseau, 2006). The DP won the following 1954 and 1957 elections, but when they increased suppression of the opposition and even attempted to outlaw the opposition party (CHP), the military assumed power in 1960 (Mousseau, 2006). This military intervention was supported by some bureaucrats in the state, by university circles and student movements (Mousseau, 2006).

Military Interventions

The proclaimed reason behind the coup d'état in the 1960s was the anti-democratic actions of the governing party' (the DP) such as the violation of the principle of *laïcité*, the growing unrest within the society and the worsening economy (Ahmad, 1977). The military immediately formed a committee to make a new constitution that included university professors, researchers, and various professionals (Mousseau, 2006). The new Constitution stipulated a typical parliamentary system and an electoral law guaranteeing proportional representation (Heper & Lanadu, 1991). The 1961 constitution was a radical departure from its predecessor. It provided for a *bicameral parliament with the lower chamber: The National Assembly and The Senate* (Ahmad, 1993). The two chambers together constituted the Grand National Assembly (Ahmad, 1993).

Even though the Constitution of 1961 was a result of the military coup, under the 1961 constitution, Turkey enjoyed a higher amount of freedom than ever before (Mousseau, 2006; Ahmad, 1993; Heper & Lanadu, 1991, p. 186; Gençkaya & Özbudun, 2009, p. 114). Turkish people had broad civil rights; the universities had extensive autonomy, and students had the freedom to organise their associations. Workers were given the right to strike in a state which the constitution described somewhat ambiguously as a '*social state*' (Ahmad, 1993). In such an environment, trade unionists and sympathetic intellectuals organised a party to represent the interests of workers and peasants (Ahmad, 1993). The independence of the judiciary was strengthened with the creation of several independent courts such as the Constitutional Court and the Council of State, the proportional representation system was adopted to facilitate multi-party systems, and the scope of individual freedom and liberties were expanded to allow people's broader participation in politics. In this context, the 1961 Constitution stayed in force until 1980.

The second military coup in 1980, made profound changes in mainly all areas of Turkish life (Ahmad, 1993). The explanation behind the second military takeover was to ensure the security of life and property; the happiness and prosperity of the people (Ahmad, 1977). During the 1970s and 1980s, the social division in Turkey increased, the economic breakdown was at the place, and the anarchy and violence were growing day by day (Ahmad, 1977). The military officials mainly hold the political parties and politicians responsible for the aggravated circumstances. Thus, the 1980 military coup declared all political parties illegal and crushed the left-wing parties who had close connections with the worker strikes and university protests (Ahmad, 1993).

The 1982 constitution severely restricted civil rights and liberties, such as freedom of expression and organisation (Mousseau, 2006). Organisational and political activity based on ethnicity and class was also banned, and academicians, students, and civil society organisations were prohibited from engaging in political activity (Mousseau, 2006). State Security Courts were instituted to try cases related to the security of the state, including threats posed from ethnic nationalism (the Kurdish issue), the extreme left, religious fundamentalism,

and others (Mousseau, 2006). The role of the military in politics was further strengthened with the National Security Council giving regular opinion and advice to the government, particularly on national security issues (Mousseau, 2006).

The military junta stayed in power until 1983 and in line with the 1982 Constitution, supervised the emergence of new political parties and particularly encouraged the establishment of the National Democracy and Populist Parties (Heper & Lanadu, 1991, p. 19). Furthermore, the 1982 Constitution modified the electoral law of the 1961 Constitution in the way that the earlier parliamentary supremacy combined with extensive executive powers (Heper & Lanadu, 1991). Additionally, the new electoral law was enforced with 10 percent electoral threshold (Alkin, 2011) to prevent the excessive party polarisation and fragmentation in the parliament (Heper & Lanadu, 1991). The electoral threshold stands still as an institutional barrier for further democratisation in Turkey since minority parties (such as Kurdish political parties) had difficulty in meeting the 10 percent electoral threshold requirement in parliamentary general elections (Alkin, 2011, p. 355). Consequently, it can be concluded that the electoral threshold gives leverage to the mainstream parties and by preventing the formulation of coalition governments, emphasize the importance of political stability in forming governments (Alkin, 2011).

The Beginning of 2000s

The 1982 Constitution has been amended several times till this date, and it has transformed entirely, particularly with the *“harmonisation packages”* passed within the framework of the EU accession process in 2001 and 2004 (Gençkaya & Özbudun, 2009, p. 114). Thus, under the influence of the EU, these constitutional changes enabled further democratisation and liberalisation in Turkey. However, these reforms were not just an outcome of the desire of joining the EU, but also it corresponded to the needs and wishes of the Turkish society (Gençkaya & Özbudun, 2009).

The *“harmonisation packages”* introduced specific improvements in terms of freedom of expression, association, assembly, religion and the abolition of the death penalty, a penalty of torture and mistreatment. Turkey has agreed to abide the conditions of international protection of human rights, and this enabled the retail of some of the questionable civil and criminal courts decisions. Furthermore, civil and military relations were restructured in the sense that the executive powers of the military were limited (Gençkaya & Özbudun, 2009, pp. 73-78).

Moreover, in the years of 2007 and 2010, the constitution was amended extensively by the suggestion of the conservative, moderate Islamist party AKP. In 2007, the constitutional amendment package led up to the popular elections of the Presidency (Özbudun, 2011). In 2010, AKP proposed to make gradual amendments in

the 1982 Constitution claiming that since the military junta prepared the constitution, it was damaging and preventing the country's further democratisation (Özbudun, 2011). Thus, in the following paragraphs, the foundation of AKP, the constitutional discussions and the current political system of Turkey will be discussed.

The Rise of AKP and Constitutional Amendments

The AKP founded in 2001 by the departed members of traditionally Islamist oriented party: Virtue Party (In Turkish: Fazilet Partisi, FP) (Gökalp & Ünsar, 2008). Ideologically, AKP defined itself as "*conservative democrats*" of Turkey and devoted supporters of EU membership (Gökalp & Ünsar, 2008). In the 2002 general elections, AKP got 34 percent of the votes and won nearly two-thirds of the seats in the parliament as a result of the 10 percent national threshold for representation (Başlevent, Kirmanoğlu, & Şenatarlar, 2005). CHP had constituted the only other party in parliament after the general elections (Başlevent, Kirmanoğlu, & Şenatarlar, 2005). Turkish voters who were frustrated by previous experiences of the established parties and economic hardships in 2002 (Mardin, 2005; Erisen, 2018, p. 23) overwhelmingly voted for the AKP to make it a centre-right party.

Gençkaya & Özbudun referred to the year of 2007 as "*constitutional battles*" since AKP proposed a constitutional amendment package that involved the popular election of the President of the Republic for a maximum tenure of two five year terms and the proposal was vehemently opposed by the CHP (Gençkaya & Özbudun, 2009, p. 99). The CHP argued that the main object of the proposed change was to create a semi-presidential system, and that it would result in a decrease in the political weight of the parliament (Gençkaya & Özbudun, 2009). Furthermore, reading the constitutional amendments package in 2010, AKP government was congratulated by the Western countries in terms of it was enabling the country to move towards further democratisation especially because the changes were in line with the EU (Özbudun, 2014, p. 161). However, CHP, the main opposition party argued that the reforms, particularly regarding the changes in the judicial bodies, were undemocratic since it was giving the AKP government too much influence over the courts (Özbudun, 2014).

However, constitutional amendments were accepted, and the first popular presidential election (a two-round system) was held in 2014; the Prime-Minister Erdoğan became the President with 52 percent of the votes (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016, p. 1853). Election after election until 2013, the AKP was able to obtain enough votes to form the single-party government and appeared as the dominant party for more than a decade (Erisen, 2018). However, in 2013, large-scale social mobilisation (*Gezi Park protests*), corruption charges disturbed the governing party, particularly its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Erisen, 2018). The widespread unrest was also felt in 2015 (June) general elections, the AKP lost its single-party majority. Since the seat shares of all political parties in the parliament had changed when a (Kurdish) minority party-Halkların Demokratik Partisi (In English: People's Democratic Party, HDP) -passed the 10 percent threshold for the first time by winning 13,2 percent of

the votes. However, parties in the parliament failed to form a coalition government, and the country went for the re-elections in 2015 (November), and AKP won 49,9 percent of the votes and was able to form a single-party government (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016).

However, not only the 2015 general elections but also a failed coup attempt disrupted the AKP rule as well as democracy in Turkey. The Turkish state faced with a failed coup attempt on 15 July, 2016, by a cleric-led group, Fethullah Gülen Terror Organization (FETO), designated as a terrorist group by the government that had infiltrated itself to the Turkish army, education system, justice system, the police, and the academia over the decades, especially during the AKP governments (Erisen, 2018). In the aftermath of the failed coup attempt, the AKP began to eliminate the supporters of FETO from public services. However, as several authors argued, this act turned in to a “*witch hunt*” and enabled AKP to eliminate all its opponents (targeting secular groups, journalists, Kurds) from positions of power in public services (Öktem & Karabekir, 2016; Erisen, 2018).

According to Öktem & Karabekir, the democratic decline in Turkey became even more visible in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt (2016, p. 471). The military junta attempted to throw Erdoğan and the AKP government from power by killing 250 civilians and injuring hundreds. The AKP government as a result of its parliamentary majority declared a state of emergency in July 2016 and President Erdoğan exercised his control over the cabinet as de facto head of the state and the executive. Therefore, he began to rule by decrees without much parliamentary supervision (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017). Öktem & Karabekir (2016) argued that a constant state of emergency enabled AKP’s tendency towards capturing forms of the state by weakening the most fundamental democratic institutions. They refer the mode of governance in Turkey after 15 July coup attempt as “*state of exception*” (p. 472) which means the temporary abolition of the separation among legislative, executive and judicial power. The state of emergency in Turkey continued for two years, and the Turkish public was asked to vote in 2017 for a constitutional referendum under the state of emergency (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017).

The Change in the Political System

This referendum included a set of constitutional amendments that would *replace the existing parliamentary system with an executive presidency* (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017, p. 306). Turkey has been ruled by a non-partisan President serving alongside a legislative Prime Minister since at least 1923. According to Esen & Gümüşçü (2017), the main aim of this referendum was to establish an executive presidency which would ensure and institutionalise Erdoğan’s (then) unconstitutional power and influence over the executive. Before the 2017 referendum, the AKP government was campaigning for ‘yes’ by using the argument that in order to establish political stability and effective governance, Turkey needed a strong presidency. The minor opposition party,

MHP², also supported the ‘yes’ campaign with the argument that Turkey would be a stronger country under an executive presidency. However, the main opposition, CHP and minor opposition (pro-Kurdish) HDP ran a counter-campaign and tried to convince people to vote ‘no’ to the new changes in the constitution (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017). CHP argued that these changes would create a one-person rule while HDP also agreed with this statement, they added that Turkey should remain as a parliamentary system for democracy, human rights and pluralism (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017).

The Turkish public approved the proposed constitutional amendments in 2017: 51 percent said *Yes*, and 49 percent said *No*. However, considering the result of the 2017 Constitutional Referendum one can conclude that there was a substantial number of votes who did not give their consent to the proposed changes (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017). Furthermore, since the referendum held in the context of the state of emergency, it enabled provincial governments and security forces to limit the freedom of speech, movement, and assembly (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017). According to the report of OSCE (2017), the two blocs of the referendum (‘yes’ & ‘no’) did not share equal amounts of resources and media support during the campaign, since ‘yes’ campaign had disproportionate access to the media, private and public resources.

With the increased executive powers, the President is now given the power to *rule by decree, unilaterally call new double elections, appoint some senior judges and prosecutors* as well as *heading a political party in parliament* (Freedom House, 2019). Therefore, it enables the President to hold excessive powers in one hand which can be viewed as violation of the democratic principles such as the separation of powers and checks and balances (Freedom House, 2019). Furthermore, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) criticised the new electoral system, *two-round system, for presidential elections* and argued that the new electoral system is promoting the interest of the ruling party even though the voters were free to express their choice at the ballot box (Freedom House, 2019). Thus, considering the changes in the constitution and electoral system, one can conclude that the regime in Turkey is signalling democratic backsliding (Freedom House, 2019). Indeed, the findings of several studies have confirmed the democratic backsliding in Turkey. Some even argued that Turkey is now a rising competitive authoritarian regime and not even an ‘*illiberal democracy*’ (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Özbudun, 2015).

² Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi- MHP (In English: Nationalist Action Party)

5. Women's Political Empowerment in Turkey 2000-2008 vs 2015-2019

5.1 Attitudes towards Gender Equality

In 2000, Turkish public opinion demonstrated a traditional approach towards gender equality and showed mixed materialistic/ post-materialistic values. The results of this survey will be presented in a table to demonstrate the perception of Turkish society on gender equality (see appendix A).

The national public opinion survey demonstrated that: 97 percent of the respondents identify themselves as Muslim, 78 percent indicated that God is very important in their life and 92 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that they *"get comfort and strength from religion"* (Bogazici University & Birim Arastırma, 2014). Thus, looking at the results, one may conclude that the respondents are placing a great deal of importance to religious traditions in their life.

Besides showing patterns of religiosity, the respondents demonstrated a patriarchal cultural approach towards gender equality. Indeed, most of the respondents expressed the importance of stereotypical gendered roles and have placed a great deal of importance in family life and the institution of marriage. For example, 77 percent of the respondents agreed on the statement that a woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled. Further, 97 percent of the respondents indicated that they perceive family life as a good thing. Following that, 90 percent of the participants disagreed with the statement that *"Marriage is an outdated institution"* (Bogazici University & Birim Arastırma, 2014). Further, most of the respondents (88.6 %) disapproved of the idea of being a single mother without having a stable relationship. In light of these, it can be concluded that women's existence is still being defined within the framework of traditional family values through which subordination of women is legitimized.

Moreover, the result of this survey showed that the respondents perceive man as the real bread owner and the head of the family. Indeed, 46 percent of the participants agreed with the statement that *"Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay"* (Bogazici University & Birim Arastırma, 2014). Following that, 59 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that *"When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women."* In contrast to the previous statement, it is also indicated by a significant number of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that *"Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income"* (Bogazici University & Birim Arastırma, 2014).

However, not only the public life but also the political arena is considered as a place of men: While 60 percent of the respondents approved, 36 percent of the respondents disapproved the statement that *"On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do (Bogazici University & Birim Arastırma, 2014)"*. Thus, it can

be said that Turkish society has gendered perceptions of socialisation. While men's natural locus is attributed to working life, private home life is women's natural place to be.

It is observed from most of the participations' responses that the family structure is traditional and patriarchal. It is demonstrated by them in their opinion about the essential traits of a woman. For instance, the respondents mainly viewed that it is crucial for a woman to be a good wife. Also, 88 percent of them had the opinion that being a good mother is very important for a woman. 73 percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that it is crucial for a woman as a wife to obey.

Furthermore, earlier, it was mentioned that political participation is not limited to the conventional forms such as voting and being a member in a political party. Therefore, people can also use unconventional forms, such as joining movements and protesting. The alternative forms of political participation are considered as an attribute of post-materialistic values. The responses of the participants are allowing us to confirm that society shows not only materialistic but also post-materialistic values. Most of the respondents placed a high level of confidence in the women's movement (see appendix A). Following that, most of the respondents disapproved the statement indicating that obtaining higher education is more important for boys than girls (Bogazici University & Birim Arastırma, 2014). Furthermore, 61 percent of the respondents believed that it is essential for a woman to be educated.

However, the respondents also placed higher importance on survival values such as economic well-being and they believed that economic policies should carry the utmost importance instead of policies aim to promote political participation of citizens (Bogazici University & Birim Arastırma, 2014).

Table 1: Post-materialistic Index

	TOTAL	Sex		Age			
		Male	Female	up to 29	30-49	50 and more	Don't know
Materialist	23.2	23.0	23.3	19.2	23.0	32.1	22.1
Mixed	53.9	53.7	54.1	55.2	54.7	49.3	24.1
Postmaterialist	17.2	20.4	14.0	21.3	16.6	10.3	-
Missing; Unknown	5.7	2.9	8.6	4.2	5.8	8.4	53.8
(N)	(3,401)	(1,720)	(1,682)	(1,247)	(1,566)	(586)	(3)

Source: Country-specific survey data of World Values Survey- Turkey 2001

All in all, even though Turkey was one of the promising democracies and economies (Jarosiewicz, 2013) in the world (2000-2008), the effect of a high level of development in the country seemed rather moderate since the public showed mixed perceptions towards materialistic and post-materialistic values (see table above).

However, what can be seen from the perceptions of the respondents that the effect of religious and cultural traditions is significant in shaping their attitudes towards gender equality. Following that, as mentioned earlier, since the political arena is still viewed as a men's place, religion might be effective in explaining the underrepresentation of women in Turkey.

Therefore, this research cannot support the argument that there is a direct positive relationship between democratic development and gender equality when considering the attitudes towards gender equality. However, this research acknowledges that the investigated period may be too short to see the effects of democratic development on attitudes towards gender equality, particularly in a country where the dominant religion is Islam. Indeed, as Inglehart argued (1990; 1997), the transformation from survival values to self-expression values in advanced industrial societies took more than 25 years. It should be highlighted that not only the time but only the country-specific conditions matter (such as religion particularly the perception of gender-equality in that religion). Thus, considering the interventions in Turkey's democratic history and economic instability, the country may need longer time to reach substantive changes in its democratic and economic system in order to enhance public perception on gender equality. Thus, we cannot confirm our first hypothesis.

2016-2018 Attitudes towards Gender Equality

In a public opinion survey (2018), the respondents are asked to identify their political positions. The results indicated that there is a decrease in the number of women and men who identify themselves as “religious” compared to the results of the same research conducted in 2017 (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). However, the number of women and men who identified themselves as “traditional” is increased compared to 2017. While the increase in the number of women is rather moderate, the increase in the number of men is significant (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018).

Furthermore, it is noticed that male respondents still view women as secondary to them when it comes to private life. For instance, most of the male respondents agreed with the statements such as *“Women should always be protected by men,”* *“Women should not work without husbands’ consent”* and *“The primary responsibility of women is to take care of housework”* (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018) (see Appendix B). Therefore, it can be argued that the patriarchal family structure and gender roles within the family are still present.

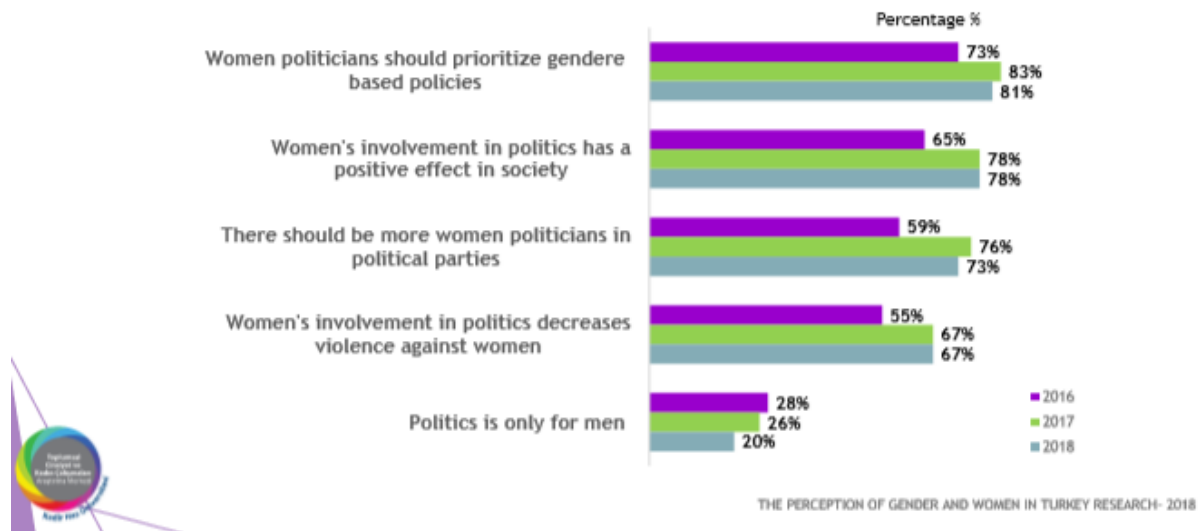
However, it is seen that the respondents change their perception about the importance of family life when it comes to domestic violence: 61 percent of the respondents viewed that violence is the biggest problem in the country (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). It is worthwhile to mention that this number has increased continuously when it is compared with the years of 2016 (53%) and 2017 (55%) (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). Following that, public opinion showed the problem of violence should be considered in relation to divorce. Indeed, the majority of the respondents did not agree that domestic violence can be an ignorable behaviour in order to protect the continuation of the family (94 % women- 90 % men) (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). In addition to that, while 62 percent of the female respondents agreed with the statement that *“To protect her rights, a woman should oppose her husband when necessary,”* the number of male respondents agreed was 58 percent (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). It is also noticed that abortion constituted one of the taboos in society, and the attitudes towards abortion have changed negatively over the years of 2016,2017,2018 (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018).

Furthermore, there is considerable progress in the gender perceptions between men and women in terms of women’s engagement with the public life; however, women have a more egalitarian perception than men (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). For instance, most of the respondents agreed with the statements: *“Women can be managers”* (84% of women- 81% of men) and *“Women politicians can also be successful”* (85% of women- 81% of men). Furthermore, more women respondents (68%)

agreed with the statement that “*A working woman enjoy her life much more*” when it is compared to the male respondents (58%) (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018).

Moreover, this research showed that the number of respondents who disagreed with the statement that “*Politics is only for men*” has continuously decreased over the 3 years (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). Also, compared to 2017, the number of respondents who expressed that they would support a political party lead by a woman is increased in 2018 (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). However, there has not been a meaningful change regarding the perception of women’s involvement with politics when it is compared to the previous year (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). (see the figure below)

Figure 2: Women’s Involvement in Politics



Source: The Perception of Gender and Women in Turkey Research, 2018 (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018)

The public has also shifted their attitudes towards post-materialist values since public awareness with the concept of feminism has increased, and attitudes towards feminism and gender equality have changed positively. For example, it is indicated that in 2018 (62 %), more men have heard the concept of feminism than in 2017 (55%) (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). Following that, the number of respondents who agreed with the statement that “*Women and men should have the same opportunities*” have increased continuously over the years of 2016,2017, 2018³ (Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center, 2018). Also, the respondents believed that women and men should receive the same amount of salary and

³ In 2016: 74% - In 2017: 84% - In 2018: 87 %

instead of economic security, the respondents believed that state should prioritise '*ensuring gender equality in its agenda*' (Gender and Women's Studies Research Center, 2018). Nevertheless, in 2018 more women than in 2017 argued that there are no equal rights and possibilities between men and women and men are in a privileged position (Gender and Women's Studies Research Center, 2018).

All in all, according to the results of the public opinion poll, the awareness of Turkish public's gender perception has increased compared to the 2000'. Furthermore, in the context of democratic backsliding, even though the public still shows mixed orientations of materialistic and post-materialistic values, it seems to be shifted more towards post-materialistic view compared to 2000. As reflected by the answers of the respondents, the traditional culture (patriarchy) and religion are still highly effective on their gender equality perceptions (primarily among men). This is particularly evident when it comes to the controversial subjects that touches upon religious beliefs such as abortion. However, there is a considerable amount of progress regarding the increase in the level of awareness of the respondents towards concepts: gender equality and feminism.

Even though it is not in the scope of this research; the explanation behind the positive change in gender-equality perception might be the effect of macro level variables such as: globalisation and the effect of European Union (Aldikacti Marshall, 2009; Bodur & Franceschet, 2002). On the other hand, micro-level variables such as women's organisations might also explain the progressive change on Turkish public attitudes towards gender equality. Consequently, in the next section, this research will analyse the effect of women's organisation on the women's political empowerment within the framework of the second hypothesis.

5.2 Women's Organisations

The Status of Women's Organisation in 2000-2008

In the 2000s, women's organisation were influential at increasing the legal status of Turkish women by putting pressure on the government to bring forward the New Civil Law (2002) and the amendment of the Penal Code (2004) (Ayata & Tutuncu, 2008). Indeed, according to the empirical study of Ayata & Tütüncü (2008), the women's movement has had a crucial role by lobbying and forming a dialogue with the political parties, particularly with the women representatives in the parliament, to improve women's legal status. However, the findings of this study also indicated that not only women's organisations, but also international conventions such as CEDAW⁴, and the engagement of women legislatures form different political parties with each other were also effective bringing these changes to improve women's legal status (Ayata & Tutuncu, 2008).

The New Civil Code resulted in the abolition of the article which stated that women needed their husbands' consent to work outside the home (1990) (Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways, 2005). Furthermore, the amendments in the Penal Code resulted in the annulments and brought forward new articles: a) reduced punishment for rapists by one-third if the victim was a sex worker (1990); b) a new law enabling a survivor of domestic violence to file a court case for a protection order against the perpetrator of the violence (1997) (Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways, 2005). Thus, we can conclude that these changes were feminist in the sense that without these changes in the legal framework, women's subordination to men would be still legitimated and re-manifested by law.

Moreover, the activities of women's organisation were not limited to the aim of improving the legal status of women by also enhancing women's political representation in the parliament. For instance, a women's organisation named, KA.DER aimed to disrupt the male dominance in politics and began to train women candidates for joining in the arena of politics as the representatives of women's issue. Tekeli (2010) who was one of the leading feminist scholars in Turkey and one of the founders of KA.DER stated that:

"In the light of my experience, I can say that the political system, with its sexist rules and the 'men's club' culture shared by male politicians in practically all political parties, is one of the last bastions of male power in this society (Tekeli, 2010, p. 123)."

Thus, to break the male dominance in Turkish politics and to ensure women's political representation in the parliament, KA.DER, take the mission of increasing the number of women representatives up to 10 percent in

⁴ CEDAW: *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* endorsed by UN in 1979 and this treaty regarded as the bill of rights for women. Turkey ratified this treaty in 1985 (Acar, 2000).

the 1999 & 2002 elections (Tekeli, 2010). However, the organisation was not successful at reaching its aim since the percentage of women representatives only doubled (4.5%) (Tekeli, 2010).

Nevertheless, the organisation continued to follow its aims and concluded that without “*positive discrimination measures*,” the gridlock that women are facing to enter the world of politics may last forever (Tekeli, 2010). Therefore, KA.DER suggested enforcing a 30%-gender quota by law for each gender among the candidates standing for election (Tekeli, 2010). However, none of the leading political parties felt inclined to support this suggestion even though public opinion was more in favour of women in politics than before (Tekeli, 2010).

All in all, in the 2000s, it can be concluded that women’s organisations were successful at raising awareness and changing the agenda towards women’s issues in a feminist way. As stated by Tekeli (2010) that the women’s movements have been one of the most successful movements in civil society in the last decades since more than 350 organisations has been working on a variety of issues leaving no field of interest to women is left untouched. Furthermore, it can be argued in that the women’s organisations were active on the policy-making and decision making processes considering their success in pressuring the government to enhance the legal status of women in a feminist way. Thus, in light of the examination presented above, we can confirm our second hypothesis.

The Status of Women’s Organisation in 2015-2019

2015 onwards, however, there has been a concerning change about the status of women’s organisations. The declaration of a state of emergency in 2016 constituted a turning point for most of the civil society organisations. During the state of emergency, over a thousand civil society organisations were closed ⁵, which included women’s organisations as well (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018). Even though it was impossible to reach the official statistics on the number of women’s organisations then (2000-2008) and now (2015-2019), by looking at the situation of civil society organizations, we can argue that the government increased its aggressive attitudes towards women’s organisations that are critical (feminists) to the actions of the government.

However, not all the women’s organisations felt the government pressure upon them, since the government, particularly President Erdoğan, were supportive of Islamists women’s organisations. The most well-known example of such an organisation is KADEM (Women and Democracy Association). KADEM is an organisation established in 2013 with the vision of “conversing the essential values of women in Turkey” (Akyüz & Sayan-Cengiz, 2016). In contrast to the post-1980’ feminist women’s organisations, KADEM supports the idea of

⁵ The state of emergency has led to considerable limitations of the civic space. The Government permanently closed 1,719 organizations - human rights, humanitarian, lawyers’ associations, foundations, NGOs.

“gender justice” instead of gender equality. It is argued by Yılmaz (2015), who is one of the founders of KADEM, gender equality is fostering a “*blind assumptions of universal equality*” and advocates discriminative policies between men and women. According to Yılmaz (2015), the concept of “*gender justice*”, however, supports the establishment policies “specifically focused on women and justice, and based on the particular values and cultural dynamics of a society” and can contribute to eliminating unjust treatment resulting from differences. It is also stated by Yılmaz (2015) that men and women are not equal but equivalent to each other and argued that the Islamic belief also supports this argument.

Thus, considering the vision of KADEM and the support that it receives from the incumbent and the President, it can be said that, some of the women’s organisations were able to influence the agenda towards women’s issues but not in a feminist way. Indeed, the study of Akyüz & Sayan (2016) sharply criticised one of the campaigns of KADEM: “Overcome your anger if you are a man” that aimed to reduce domestic violence against women in Turkey. However, according to the authors, this campaign promotes “cultural patriarchy” discourse and risks marginalising women who seek empowerment through women’s solidarity (Akyüz & Sayan-Cengiz, 2016).

Thus, we can conclude that 2015 onwards, women’s organisations and movement have significantly weakened by the authoritarian measure of the government. This drawback resulted in the shrinking space, particularly for the feminist women’s organisations and their policy dialogue and decision-making process (UN Women- Europe and Central Asia, 2017). The women’s organisations began to waste a considerable amount of time and effort to survive as organisations instead of working towards their mission (UN Women- Europe and Central Asia, 2017). It can also be confirmed that the government is violating the principle of “*effective participation*” by favouring greater opportunities for Islamist women organisations while ignoring the views of the critical ones when making decisions about the future of women in Turkey. Furthermore, considering these pieces of information, one can also question the accountability of gender policies since it does not include the views of particular (feminist) group of women.

5.3 Gender Equality Policies

5.3.1 Political Parties Approaches towards Gender-Quotas

Political Parties' Approaches towards Gender-Quotas in 2000-2008

It is examined in AKP's party programme (2002) that as a '*conservative democratic*' party, AKP had a negative attitude towards the proposal and the implementation of gender quotas. The following arguments are confirming to the party's negative attitudes towards gender quotas. Firstly, in the party programme, under the heading of '*women's policies*', none of the clauses addressed the concept of gender quotas (AKP, 2002). Further, it is only one sentence that refers to encouraging women to participate in politics. Additionally, the party mentions to ensure the principles set forth by CEDAW. However, it is contradictory in the sense that the party is overlooking one of the principles (gender-quotas) of CEDAW while arguing that it is one of the aims of the party to ensure the application of these principles.

Nevertheless, when looking at the statements of (then) Prime-Minister Erdogan, it is observed that he has been verbally supporting women to join politics. However, the inclusion of women into politics is accepted within certain limits. For instance, Erdoğan supported the increase in the number of women in the intra-party decision-making positions. As stated by Erdogan in the first ordinary party congress of AKP⁶, at least 20 percent of the members of the central executive committee must be constituted by women (Sitembölükbaşı, 2007). After this declaration, ten women members were included in the party's executive committee (Sitembölükbaşı, 2007). Following that, before the 2004 (March 28) local election nominations, the AKP executives demanded to apply 30 %-gender quota to its candidate selection system (Sitembölükbaşı, 2007). However, due to the pressure within the party organisation and with the argument of the lack of a woman; candidate that could attract sufficient level of votes, this decision was abandoned (Sitembölükbaşı, 2007, p. 25).

Furthermore, in April 2004, Erdoğan expressed his concerns about the AKP's Women Branches efforts to include gender quotas in the party bylaw (IHA, 2004). As Erdoğan stated at the Women Branches' Central Decision-Making Executive Council meeting:

"I perceive gender quota mechanisms as a humiliation to women. There is no need for gender quotas. Women who are qualified and educated deserves to take part in politics. However, women lack certain qualities to participate in politics, that is why women stay away from politics (IHA, 2004)".

⁶ (2003, October 12)

Thus, considering Erdoğan's discourse, it can be said that he is explaining the underrepresentation of women in politics through traditional assumptions that are mentioned earlier. In other words, the leader of the party does not seem to acknowledge that women were systematically excluded from accessing the enabling resources (such as education) to join in politics. Indeed, his rejection to gender-quotas with the argument that it is discriminating and humiliating women, is also confirming that. Additionally, the following statement of Erdogan regarding women's participation in politics showing that women are encouraged through sex-role socialisation discourse:

"Women should take the responsibility not only in their homes but also in the politics (Hürriyet, 2004)".

The CHP, on the other hand, as a 'social democrat' party, showed positive attitudes towards the proposal and implementation of gender quotas. Since 1989, the party had been applying a 25%-gender quota on the selection of the party executive committee (Kılıç, 2000, p. 36). However, since the application of quota is conducted in a top-down manner within the party structure, it is not empowering the women in the party, but increasing the power of the party itself (Kılıç, 2000, p. 36).

Furthermore, for 2004 (March) local elections, the CHP had decided to apply the 25%-gender quota in its candidate selection (Sitembölükbaşı, 2007). However, some of the nominations allocated to women were filled by male candidates since the party argued that they could not find women candidates who would pay the nomination fee and have the potential to bring a sufficient level of votes (Sitembölükbaşı, 2007). It is essential to highlight that the latter argument (the potential to bring a sufficient level of votes) had also been used by the AKP's politicians in 2004 to abandon the decision of the implementation of the 30%-gender quota in the local elections.

All in all, while CHP included the 25 %-gender quota in its party bylaw, AKP only verbally supported 20 percent gender quota on their selection of party executive committee. Thus, even though the CHP (social democrat) is more inclined to apply gender quotas in its party programme and its party bylaw compared to the AKP (conservative Democrat), these parties showed similar tendencies such as the protection of the male-dominated party structure and vote-seeking behaviour. Both the patriarchal political culture and the arbitrary decision making within the party organisations (which is favouring men over women) are examined as preventing factors in the way of further inclusion of women politicians in CHP and AKP.

Thus, considering the discussion presented above, we can conclude that the ideological stands of both parties were present in their attitudes towards gender quota. CHP, as a social democrat party was already applying gender quotas in its party by the law, while AKP as a conservative democrat party showed negative attitudes towards the concept of gender quotas. Furthermore, our evaluation enabled us to confirm that not only the

ideological stands of political parties but also the patriarchal party systems were influential in their application of the gender quotas.

Political Parties' Approaches towards Gender-Quotas in 2015-2019

In its 2023 political vision, AKP merely gave place to women's policies. The party's 2023 visions for "Women"⁷ were discussed under the heading of "Social Policies" and comes later than "Family" policies' section (AKP, 2012). Further, no clauses found to be referring to the concept of gender quotas. However, not only the concept of gender quotas but also none of the articles mention the importance of participation of women in politics which is striking when compared to the party's programme in 2002.

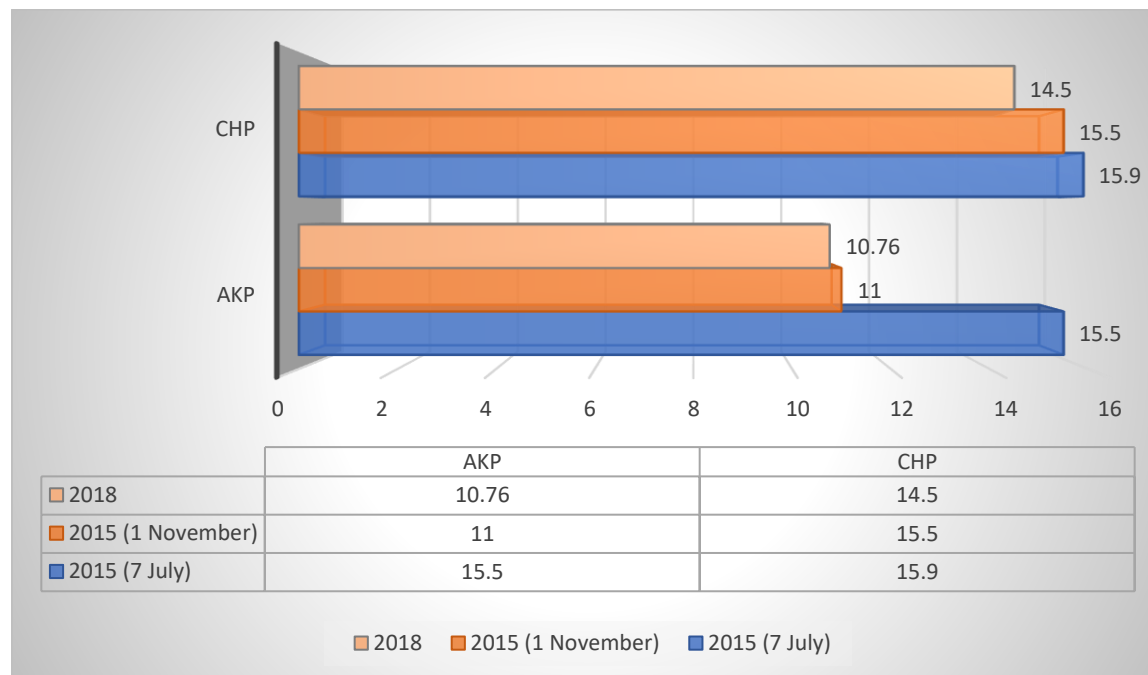
Moreover, Salan Gül & Altındal (2015) argued that, since President Erdoğan wanted to change the parliamentary system into a semi-presidential system, he needed to re-gain its single-party majority for forming a government in the 2015 (November) general elections (Sallan Gül & Altındal, 2015). Therefore, candidates with potential to bring sufficient level of votes were given priority and women did not belong in that category since the percentage of women representative of AKP in the parliament was decreased compared to the July (see the graph below) (Sallan Gül & Altındal, 2015).

The CHP, on the other hand, adopted a 33%-gender quota in its party bylaw in 2012 (CHP, 2018). According to this amendment, the CHP will apply a 33%-gender quota in its parliamentary candidate selection, provincial and city council chamber candidates and in the elections of administrative boards within the part structure (CHP, 2018). However, as it is demonstrated in the graph below, CHP is not implementing its 33 %-gender quota policy in practice since the ratio of women representatives from CHP has decreased over the last three general elections and has never met the 33-% gender quota requirements (Bianet, 2015) (KA.DER, 2018).

Additionally, the CHP has been sharply criticised by KA.DER due to using the gender quota mechanisms in favour of male candidates in its intra-party elections (KA.DER, 2014). According to KA.DER, the CHP is considering the 33%-quota as an upper limit because some of the women politicians were replaced with male politicians even though they have received more votes in the party' executive committee elections in 2014 (KA.DER, 2014). Thus, it can be said that CHP is appealing as a party that is for promoting equal representation of women, however in practice it is strengthening the party's male-dominant structure by using gender quota mechanism which is there to ensure political equality of women.

⁷ In the original document the heading is in Turkish: "Kadınlarımız", it translates in English to: "Our Women".

Table 2: Parliamentary General Elections & The Ratio of Women Representatives by Party



Source: (Bianet, 2015) & (KA.DER, 2018)

5.3.2 Political Parties Approaches towards Women's Role in the Family

Political Parties' Approaches towards Women's Role in the Family in 2000-2008

The women policies section of the AKP's party program, starts with the following statement:

"AKP will prioritise to tackle with all the problems that Turkish women face not only because women are making up half of the population but also because they are primarily effective in raising individuals and healthy generations (AKP, 2002)".

Furthermore, the party defined its aims to increase awareness towards human rights issues and improve the conditions on this matter in Turkey with almost no mention of women's human rights:

"International standards on the rights and freedoms of women, children and working life will be fully implemented in our country (AKP, 2002)".

Additionally, when the policies in the party documents regarding women and family are examined, it is seen that women's rights become a marginal topic (AKP, 2002). Indeed, within the content of the programme, women's place in the family structure was not referred. Further, the party want to ensure social security of the

housewives and create new areas of employment for women while maintaining the ‘*dignity*’ of domestic labour (AKP, 2002). It can be argued that this statement cannot improve women’s status at home since it implies women’s natural place to be at home. The finding of the following empirical study is confirming this assumption. According to the study of Coşar & Yeğenoğlu (2011) women are expected to join labour market as long as it does not challenge their ‘*obligations*’ in the household and family which is in line with the party’s neoliberal conservative ideology. Thus, it seems that AKP’s attitudes towards women’s role in the family structure are in line with traditional patriarchal family structure since gender essentialist tendencies are present in its programme and policies.

Furthermore, this study argued that the AKP politicians are holding feminists responsible for the increase in divorce rates. Feminists were, mainly, blamed for coming up against the nature and the morals of the society (by empowering women within the family structure) which is resulting in the disruption of the natural (patriarchal) order of the family. It is also demonstrated in their analysis of the policy preferences of ASAGEM (Aile ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Genel Müdürlüğü—General Directorate of Family and Social Research)⁸, that the AKP is using the state’s apparatus to reinforce and maintain the patriarchal family structure and therefore, promoting disempowerment women by defining the familial space as women’s natural locus (Coşar & Yeğenoğlu, 2011).

When the CHP’s discourse regarding the women’s issues in the party programme (2008) is examined, it is noticed that the discourse is in line with the frequently mentioned concepts such as “*democracy*” & “*laïcité*” within the content of the overall programme. The following arguments are confirming this. The first part of the party program under the headings of “*Change for Modern Turkey*” and “*Aims & Priorities*”, the importance of laicism for CHP is highlighted (CHP, 2008). The principle of laicism for CHP is the protector of the “*human rights, gender equality and modernisation process in Turkey*” (CHP, 2008). Following that, one of the priorities in the party programme is “*democracy*”, and the portrayal of what they understand from democracy included: “*liberation of women through education and culture*”.

Following that, in contrast to AKP, the CHP gives extensive coverage to women’s policies, and it was explicit that the party considers women’s right as a part of human rights. The discourse of gender equality is at the center of women’s policies in the CHP’s party programme. Moreover, compared to AKP’ programme, it is examined that the party is not referring to gendered roles as much as AKP does. It is observed predominantly in the policy discussions regarding women in the workforce that the party aims to improve the working conditions for both “*women in the labour market*” and “*working mothers*”. Therefore, unlike the neoliberal

⁸ ASAGEM is subsidiary to the State Ministry Responsible for Women and Family (Coşar & Yeğenoğlu, 2011).

conservative discourse of the AKP, the CHP does not perceive women solely as “mothers” or “wives” (CHP, 2008).

All in all, it can be concluded that the ideological stands of both parties were present even in a high level of democratic development context. As a neoliberal conservative party, the AKP is observed to protect and enhance the patriarchal family structure instead of women’s human rights and their place within the family. In contrast to AKP, CHP as a social democrat party approached women’s role within the family in line with gender-equality discourse. Following that, the CHP’s women’s policies overall have the potential to increase the status of women within the family as well.

Political Parties’ Approaches towards Women’s Role in the Family in 2015-2019

Since both CHP (2008) and AKP (2001) did not change their party programmes in the given period, this research will examine the activities of the AKP through the official party and state documents. Following that, we will compare the parties’ reactions to a controversial law proposal: ‘*indefinite alimony*’⁹ which seem as particularly affecting the status of women within the family.

It is seen in its 2023 political vision that the AKP continues to promote neoliberal conservative policies on women (AKP, 2012). Furthermore, it can be said that the party did not change its perception towards women since it still considers and defines women through gendered roles. For instance, it is stated in this document that: “*Work and family lives of women will be harmonized. Nursery assistance will be provided to working mothers (AKP, 2012)*”. These statements are confirming that the party considers women only as “mothers and wives” since it is not solely aiming to develop better working conditions for women as individuals.

Furthermore, in the 2019 Presidential Annual Program, the increase in the number of single-parent, single-living families and divorces were identified as “problems” (Official Gazette, 2018, p. 101). Following that, most of the policies and measures referred to strengthening the family structure, reducing the divorce rates, and strengthening the economic and social life of women (Official Gazette, 2018, p. 102). Considering the policy aims in this official document, one can argue that AKP is aiming to maintain the patriarchal family structure through state apparatus.

Moreover, a recent controversial debate is going on in the parliament about abandoning the ‘*indefinite alimony*’. The AKP is supporting the proposal of abandoning the indefinite alimony and limiting it to minimum 1 year and maximum 5 years in consideration of the age, the blame for the divorce, the number of children within the family (if any) and the socio-economic situation of the spouses (t24, 2018). The underlying argument

⁹ Article 175 of the Civil Code

of the government officials is that it is not fair for the spouse who makes the payment because even after a short-lived marriage one of the spouses receives indefinite alimony (t24, 2018).

When Article 175 of the Civil Code examined, it is seen that this article does not specify any gender. Thus, both women and men may request alimony (Turkish Civil Code, Article 175). However, in practise the indefinite alimony is mostly attributed to women, because gender inequality in Turkey is usually caused by women being poor (Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation, 2018). Indeed, according to the official statistics on *“reasons for not joining the work force”* in 2016, 11 million of women in Turkey said that they are *“busy with housework”* (doğrulukpayı, 2018). Therefore, when a simple logic is applied to this statistic, it can be assumed that most of the women are financially depended on their husbands, and the annulment of indefinite alimony would lead them to reconsider the idea of a divorce.

Further, a women's organisation, called *Purple Rood Women's Shelter Foundation*, argued that the appreciated amount of alimony is not an amount that will eliminate poverty of women (Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation, 2018). Poverty alimony is not a blessing of men to women. It is in the right of women who are impoverished due to gender inequality to receive this alimony to maintain their post-marital life (Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation, 2018). Furthermore, the organisation criticized the government and argued that the solution of the problems caused by gender inequality could not be solved by ignoring the rights that women have gained through years of struggle (Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation, 2018). It is argued by the organisation that this problem will only be achieved through the establishment of gender equality in the country (Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation, 2018).

In line with the arguments presented above, a CHP women representative in the parliament stated that this law proposal is being framed that is against the nature of gender-equality, because the government is portraying the ones, who pay the poverty alimony as the real victims. However, she argued that the underlying message of this proposal is telling women: *“Do not divorce! Even if your husband is using violence. Because if you file a divorce, you will face financial hardships. So, women are wanted to be imprisoned at home and to violence (Şimşek, 2019)”*.

To conclude, in the context of democratic backsliding, it can be said that the AKP increased its influence to maintain the traditional structure of the family through state apparatus.

5.3.3 Political Parties Approaches towards Domestic Violence

Political Parties' Approaches towards Domestic Violence in 2000-2008

The AKP gives priority to the issue of “*violence against women*” (AKP, 2002). While defining what they mean by “violence against women”, the party includes other forms of violation such as “economic and sexual” next to “physical” violence. Furthermore, it examined that the party place a high level of importance for the protection of women who lack financial means and women who are subjected to violence (AKP, 2002). It can be said that the party sees a correlation between the socio-economic situation of women and the likelihood of being subjected to violence.

Additionally, the party expressed its aims to prepare policies to reduce and prevent female suicides, honour killings (AKP, 2002). The party wants to achieve this goal by implementing educational programmes for women and their families. Moreover, it is stated in the party program, a monitoring committee for domestic violence against women will be established, and a national action plan will be prepared to combat against violence against women.

The CHP, on the other hand, viewed “violence against women” as the most widespread and most common form of violation of human rights. As AKP, CHP also promised to implement a nation-wide plan to fight against every form of “*violence against women*” and stated that legitimisation of honour killings with the excuses of traditions and the family integrity, will not be tolerated (CHP, 2008). Furthermore, to prevent domestic violence and honour killings, they proposed to raise awareness in the younger generations by adding gender-equality courses to the curriculums.

In the given time, it is seen that both political parties' promises were being implemented. The following actions are confirming this trend. In 2007, a national action plan “*National Action Plan for Combatting Violence against Women (2007-2009)*” was set up to develop gender equality and eliminate violence against women and children through following steps: taking measures and making changes in legal regulations, building public awareness and altering mind-sets , enhancing the socio-economic position of women and protection, treatment and rehabilitation services for women and children (Directorate General on the Status of Women, 2007-2010).

Thus, we can conclude that parties' policy proposals and implementation of these policies are observed to be eager to fight against domestic violence. However, both parties' ideologies were reflected in their approach to the issue of violence against women. The CHP's program compared to the AKP is carried more sustainable and substantive trend since it aimed to educate the younger generations while the AKP is seen as holding on the patriarchy with the family structure. For example, it is striking that while the AKP is continuously referring to

the education of women and their families for the prevention of the female suicides and honour killings, they do not explicitly refer to the education of the 'male' relatives in the family.

Indeed, a national research on domestic violence against women in Turkey in 2008 shows that overall 39 percent of women reported having experienced physical violence from their husbands or partners (BNB Consulting (Turkey), ICON-INSTITUTE Consulting Group, Institute of Population Studies Hacettepe University, 2009, p. 7). In other words, 4 out of 10 women have been subjected to physical violence from their intimate partners at least once in their life (BNB Consulting (Turkey), ICON-INSTITUTE Consulting Group, Institute of Population Studies Hacettepe University, 2009). Thus, even though several initiatives to fight against domestic violence took place under the AKP government, they have been criticized in the sense that it fell short addressing gender-based inequality and the measures taken to prevent the problem of violence have been not sufficiently determined since the main emphasis was on family instead of women.

Indeed, the European Parliament's policy report of Gender Equality in Turkey, highlighted the limitations in the implementation of laws to combat violence against women (Müftüler-Baç, 2012, p. 9). The law (Article 4320) to protect women and children amended as to include all members of extended family and put into force in 2008 (Müftüler-Baç, 2012). The report draws attention to the fact the law points out the domestic violence within the family and not against "women" as an individual. Furthermore, it is stated that the law does not accord enough protections for non-married women who might also experience domestic violence without necessarily being married (Müftüler-Baç, 2012).

It was also evident that the AKP government was not responding to this issue effectively since the numbers given by the state officials were contradicting with each other: According to the statistics given by the Ministry of Justice in 2009: 66 women in 2002, 83 women in 2003, 164 women in 2004, 317 women in 2005, 663 women in 2006, 1011 women in 2007, 806 women in 2008, 953 women in the first seven months of 2009 were killed (t24, 2015). Numbers given by Fatma Şahin, former Minister of Family and Social Policies, indicated that 171 women were killed in 2009 (t24, 2015).

Thus, we can conclude that even though both parties proposed and implemented policies to fight against domestic violence, AKP's conservative democrat ideology was undermining the implementation of the policies substantively. Therefore, we cannot support our third hypothesis.

Political Parties' Approaches towards Domestic Violence in 2015-2019

Before going into the discussion of the situation of policies on domestic violence against women in this period, the importance of the Istanbul convention of the Council of Europe (2011) should be mentioned. The official name of this convention is: "the convention of European Council to prevent and combat against violence against women and domestic violence" which was held and signed in Istanbul (Council of Europe , 2011). According to the requirements of the conventions, all signatures should make sure to implement gender-sensitive policies to fight against violence against women and domestic violence. Further, all signature countries must implement policies that will foster equality between men and women and the empowerment of women (Council of Europe , 2011).

Turkey is the first country to sign this treaty. Based on the framework of the convention, crucial changes brought along within the legal framework in Turkey. One of the most crucial changes made in the legal framework and the Article 4320 (mentioned above) on Protection of Family was replaced with Law 6284 on Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women. The law 6284 is more extensive compared to the previous law, and gender discriminative use of language was eliminated such as the division between "married and unmarried women". Furthermore, what is meant by "domestic violence", "violence against women" and "violence" itself made explicit (Official Gazette, 2012).

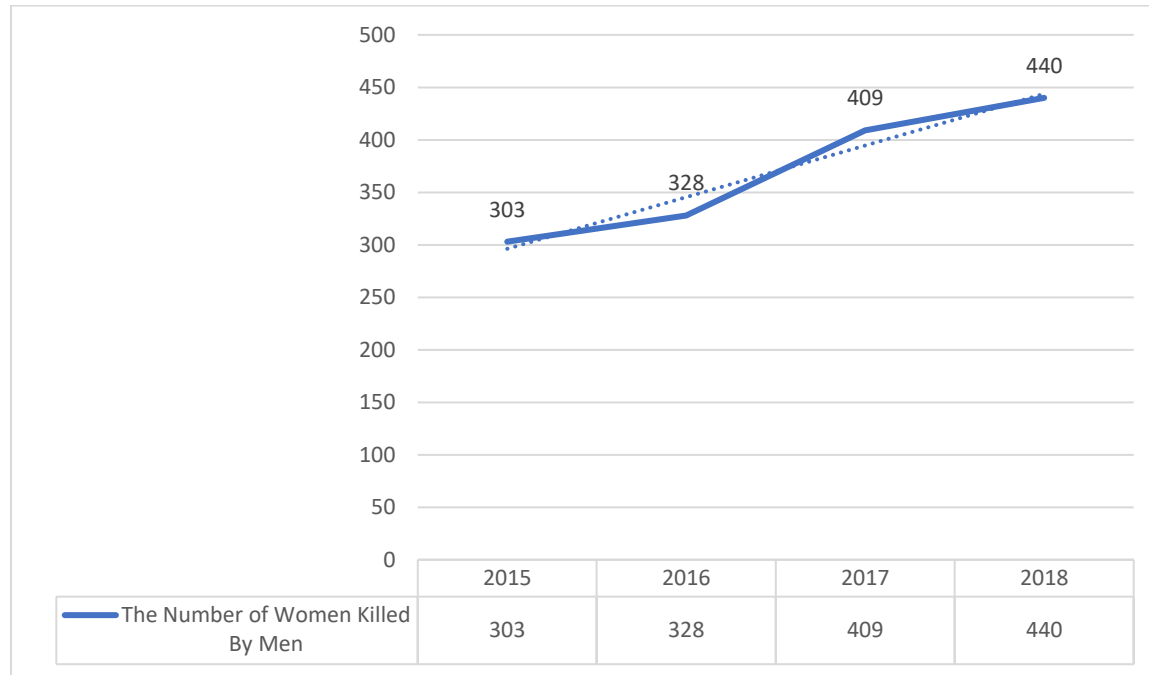
The situation in the given period (2015-2019) and recent developments show that the violence against women in Turkey has increased drastically despite ongoing implementations of the measures discussed in the period of 2000-2008. However, it is difficult to make a clear judgement on the issue since the official numbers on violence against women were not publicly shared by the state. For instance, it is observed that in the 3rd follow-up of the National Act Plan on Combatting Violence against Women (2016-2020), the figures from 2014 national research on domestic violence against women were presented (General Directorate on The Status Of Women, 2016, p. 9).

Indeed, in the 1st evaluation report of GREVIO¹⁰, it is stated that "*the lack of data has significantly affected its ability to evaluate Turkey's implementation of the Istanbul convention (GREVIO, 2018, p. 34)*" since the government argued that releasing the official data might be contradictory and could create problems. In 2018, the Minister of Interior gave the official statistics of domestic violence for the first time (Bianet, 2018). According to the official numbers, in 2017, 133 thousand 809 women were subjected to domestic violence, and in the first 7 months of 2018, 96 thousand 417 women were recorded subjected to the violence, and 393

¹⁰ GREVIO is the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) by the Parties.

of these women had died (Bianet, 2018). Thus, since it is difficult to find the official numbers on this matter that is covering the given time period, we have created a graph to present a clear image of the status of violence against women over the last 4 years (see the graph below). However, these numbers are unofficial and taken from the annual reports of a women's organisation that is dedicated to fight against femicide in the country. The graph shows that there is a significant amount of increase in the number of women killings in Turkey from 2015 to 2019.

Figure 3: The Number of Women Killed by Men (2015-2018)



Source: We Will Stop Femicide Platform (see: <http://kadincinayetlerininidurduracagiz.net/for-english>)

Moreover, earlier it was mentioned that, one of the policy proposals of CHP is to include gender equality education programmes in the curriculums to raise awareness in the younger generations. In line with CHP's proposal, The Ministry of Education¹¹ (MEB) has carried a project called "*The Promotion of Gender Equality in Education (ETCEP)*"¹² in 2014-2016 (Öztürk, 2019). The project was being implemented in pilot schools and districts and ended in September 2016. Following that, MEB announced that a new project would be implemented in cooperation with UNICEF in the 2018-2019 education year, for the proliferation of the outcomes that is received with ETCEP (Öztürk, 2019). However, some associations raised their opposition to the gender equality education projects with the argument that gender equality is "*breaking the families*" and

¹¹ (In Turkish: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, MEB)

¹² (In Turkish: Eğitimde Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği'nin Geliştirilmesi Projesi- ETCEP)

“carrying the aim of raising secular generations” (Öztürk, 2019). After that, MEB made a public statement that *“there is no ongoing project regarding the promotion of gender equality in the agenda of ministry”* (The Ministry of Education, 2019). Considering this development, we can conclude that the policies are being framed in a way that is against gender equality. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the government declared the upcoming projects on promoting gender equality in younger generations invalid by favouring certain groups.

The second development is rather much concerning since it raises doubts about whether the Istanbul Convention will be implemented in the future as well. In a meeting organized by National Will Platform¹³, President Erdogan made concerning statements regarding the implementation of the convention (Bildircin, 2019). The mentioned platform is known publicly by their hateful statements about gender equality, primarily, against the Istanbul Convention (Bildircin, 2019). The chairperson of this platform stated during his opening speech that: Istanbul Convention is aiming to create a society without families as well as threatens the future of Muslims. Following to him, a female representative of KADEM wanted to make a speech about the Istanbul Convention. However, she was booed by the crowd and could not give her speech (Bildircin, 2019). After that, President Erdogan said that there is no need for such things, and he understands the concerns about gender-equality policies. For the Istanbul Convention, he said, *“the convention is not an absolute decision; it can be voidable* (Bildircin, 2019)”.*”*

Thus, considering the discussion raised above, we can argue that in the context of democratic backsliding, a quite concerning picture is at stake for the implementation of policies against domestic violence. It is observed that the proposed and implemented policies are being framed in a way that is against the gender-equality understanding. Following that, this situation would allow us to confirm that a process of de-legitimation of the established policies is taking place in the democratic backsliding context.

¹³ See: <https://milliiradeplatformu.com/>

6. Conclusions & Suggestions for further research

This research aimed to explain the effect of the level of democratic development on women's political empowerment by taking the case of Turkey. In order to examine the causal relationship between the level of democratic development and women's political empowerment, this research analysed the indicators of women's political empowerment in two time periods in which the country was considered as a promising democracy (2000-2008), and the country showed a democratic backsliding (2015-2019).

Table 3: Summary of the Findings

Hypotheses	The First Period: 2000-2008	The Second Period: 2015-2019
Hypothesis 1	-	+/-
Hypothesis 1a	-	+/-
Hypothesis 1b	-	+/-
Hypothesis 2	+	-
Hypothesis 2a	+	-
Hypothesis 2b	+	-
Hypothesis 3	-	-
Hypothesis 3a	-	-
Hypothesis 3b	-	-
Hypothesis can be confirmed: + Hypothesis cannot be confirmed: - No Change: +/-		

The findings of this research showed that a high level of democratic development does not have a direct positive effect on women's political empowerment. The attitudes of society towards gender equality are only moderately affected by the high level of democratic development. Furthermore, it is examined that the religious traditions are more influential in shaping the views of society towards gender equality. The high level of democratic development, on the other hand, had a positive effect on increasing the capability of women's organisations to promote women's political empowerment.

Furthermore, the examined political parties'- AKP (the governing party) and CHP (the main opposition party), ideological stands were present in their approach towards gender equality policies even in a high level of democratic development context. While both parties are examined to be proposing and implementing policies regarding women's role in the family and domestic violence against women, AKP's policy proposals were in

line with its conservative neoliberal (democrat) ideology. Therefore, the party was examined to be promoting the further reinforcement of traditional patriarchal culture instead of promoting gender equality. AKP was also examined to be using the leverage of being the governing party since this reinforcement was supported through the state apparatus. Unlike AKP, CHP as a centre-left party proposed policies on women's role in the family and domestic violence against women, that was more in line with gender-equality discourse. The ideological orientations of both parties were also present in their proposal and implementation of gender-quotas. While AKP remained distant to the institutionalisation of gender quotas within the party bylaw, CHP has been implementing gender quotas for 40 years. However, the implementation and proposal of gender quotas were observed to be skewed towards the patriarchal systems of both parties.

For the second time period, the findings of this research suggest a negative causal relationship between democratic backsliding and women's political empowerment. The attitudes towards gender equality have changed positively in the context of democratic backsliding, but the effect was rather moderate, and the religion continued to influence the gender-equality perceptions of the Turkish public. However, the capabilities of women's organisations have diminished as the authoritarian measures of the government increased in the context of democratic backsliding. Furthermore, the government seems to be favouring Islamist women organisations that are in line with the ideological orientation of the governing party.

The main difference examined in the context of democratic backsliding regarding the effect of ideological stands of political parties towards gender equality policies was the increase in AKP's influence to maintain the traditional patriarchal culture through state apparatus. Indeed, the proposed and implemented gender-equality policies have backlashed as the governing party increased its executive power over the years. Furthermore, AKP felt less inclined to promote the participation of women in politics due to its vote-seeking behaviour. Similar to AKP, the ratio of women legislatures in the parliament from CHP has continuously decreased in the given period of time. Therefore, as AKP CHP is observed to be implementing gender-quota mechanisms in a way that is against gender-equality. Additionally, the vote-seeking behaviour and the protection of masculine party organisation are examined as the preventing factors for further inclusion of women politicians in both parties.

Furthermore, it is observed that public opinion is less influenced by the effect of democratic backsliding since the long-standing cultural traditions such as religion remained as the significant factor that influences the gender equality perceptions of the Turkish public. However, institutions such as women's organisations are more influenced by the effect of democratic backsliding since the government's financial support, and engagement for gender-equality policy discussion with them either decreased or was skewed towards in favour of particular women's organizations.

Thus, based on the findings and the discussion presented above, this research has two expectations for the future of women's political empowerment in Turkey. While the first expectation draws a positive picture about the future of women's political empowerment, the second expectation is quite concerning. Additionally, the critical actors in both expectations are women's organizations and the Turkish public's perception of gender equality and feminism.

Firstly, the public opinion towards gender-equality perception has not declined due the effect of democratic backsliding because the main factor that influences the gender perceptions of the Turkish public remained as the cultural traditions. However, the Turkish public' awareness towards the concepts such as feminism and gender equality showed an increase in the context of democratic backsliding. Therefore, considering these developments, the current situation is observed as constituting the necessary conditions for the start of a women's mobilization against the authoritarian measures of the government to protect their rights. Furthermore, even though the government has increased its control over women's organizations, it is observed that women's organizations are the main protectorate of women's rights in Turkey since most of the data and source that is used in this research is derived from the official websites of these organizations. Thus, this shows that women's organizations' capabilities are diminished but not destroyed. Therefore, with the capabilities and experience of women's organizations, this women's movement has the potential to become more consistent and stronger.

Furthermore, considering the ideological blocs of women's organizations (feminist/ Islamist) and polarization among women in Turkey (secular/ Islamist), we expect that a women's movement is more likely to achieve its goal if both women's organization and women protesters representing different ideological stands can come together with a common purpose such as combatting violence against women. This resilience would also put pressure on political parties such as CHP to feel more inclined to act in line with gender-equality understanding while proposing and implementing gender equality policies. Thus, the expected women's mobilization with the leadership of women's organization has the possibility of being the re-democratization force in the country.

Second expectation of this research for the future of women's political empowerment in Turkey is rather concerning. due to the decrease in the status and the capabilities of particular (feminist) women's organizations, they might not have adequate power to change the agenda in a feminist way. In other words, instead of putting effort to change the agenda and to raise the awareness of Turkish public towards gender-equality policies, the diminished power of the women's organizations may only be enough for their survival in the context of democratic backsliding. Therefore, considering the weakened status of women's organizations, we expect that the Turkish public's perceptions of gender equality may change negatively.

Additionally, considering the vulnerable situation of women's organizations', political parties may feel less inclined to propose and implement gender equality policies in the future. Following that, when the decrease in the ratio of women representatives in the parliament and the government's hostility towards international organizations are taken into account, both the internal and external pressure on the government to enhance gender equality is expected to weaken in the future. Therefore, since in the democratic backsliding context (differently from the high level of democratic development context) policies are turned more towards the East than the West, in the future we expect an increase in the effect of backsliding on women political empowerment in Turkey.

Suggestions for further research

The major limitation of this research was the difficulty in accessing the official statistics and substantive evidence to confirm or disconfirm the hypotheses. In consideration of this fact, we argue that the main weakness in the research concerns the strength of causal inferences and predictions. The other shortcoming of this research is that it did not evaluate the effect of political parties' ideology on women representatives since conducting interviews was not possible and the empirical studies that this research could refer to was not conducted within the studied time periods. Therefore, further research should examine this causal relationship by doing interviews with the women legislatures from both parties as well as the leaders of the women's movements. Additionally, given the scope of this research we did not take into account the effect of economic development; therefore, a further research should examine the relationship between democratic backsliding and women's political empowerment in consideration of the impact of the level of economic development.

However, this research has mainly met its objectives and demonstrated the effect of de-democratisation on women's political empowerment in Turkey. It presents an in-depth analysis of the indicators of women's political empowerment; therefore, shows the country-specific implications on them. Furthermore, it is contributing to the literature by doing a case study of a country that has not been studied very often. Additionally, this research also contributes to the literature on women's political empowerment by trying to present a clear definition. All in all, it presents a good overview of what happened to women's political empowerment in Turkey when the political regime has transformed towards autocracy. Therefore, this research may open the doors for further research on the relevant topic and the country.

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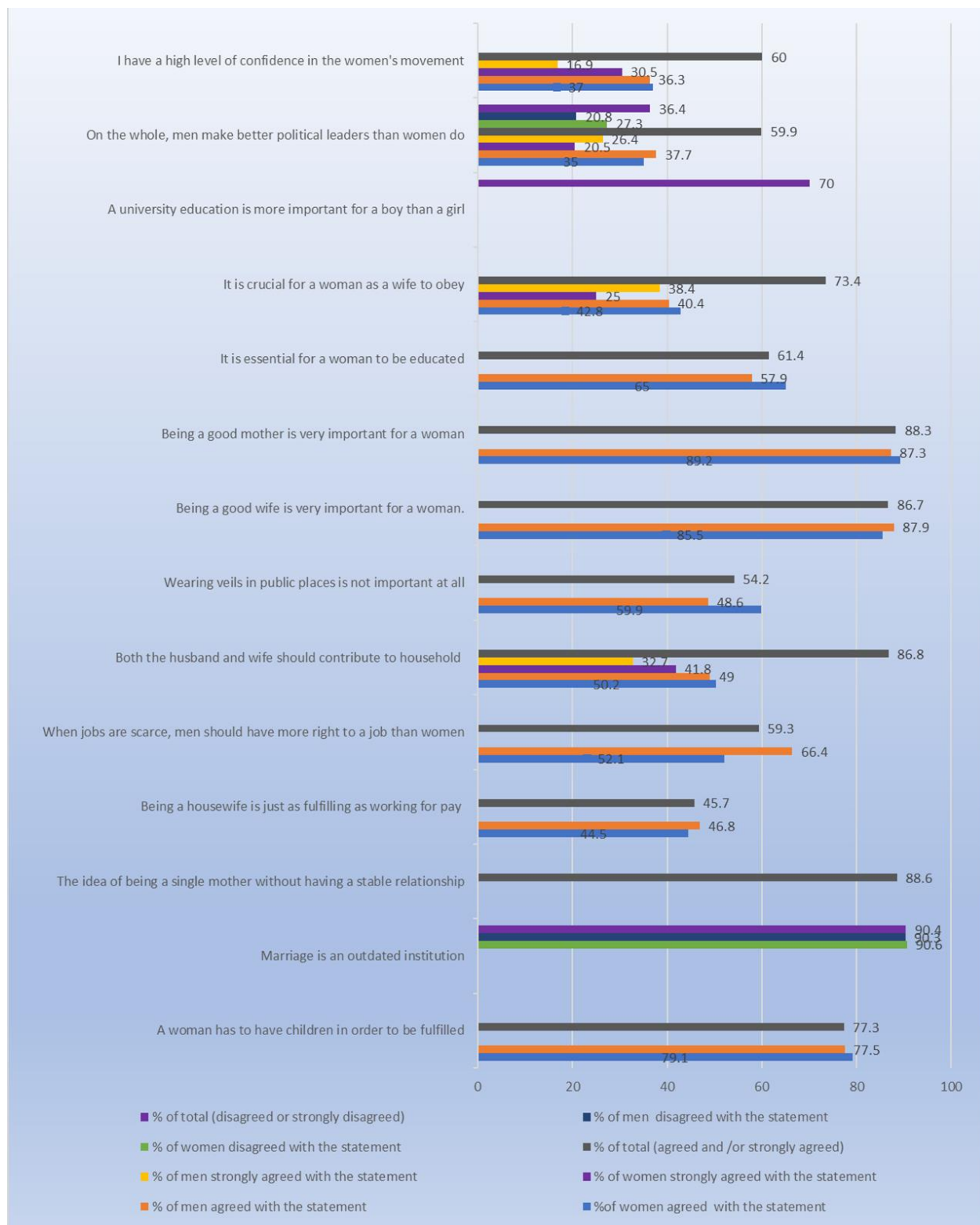
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Appendix A: Country-specific survey data of World Values Survey – Turkey 2001



Appendix B: The Perception of Gender Roles and the Status of Women in Turkey, 2018

