

***Gender ideology among ever-married women in Turkey:
The pervasive strength of patriarchy?***

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The family has been at the center of the modernization process in Turkey. The Islamic society of Turkey has undergone substantial change due to westernization and industrialization since the early 1920s when the Ottoman Empire was replaced by the Republic of Turkey. During the modernization era, Ottomans were criticized for arranged marriages and for women's inferior position in society. Moreover, ideals for western family, domestic manners and new concerns for children and childbearing had begun to be discussed (Duben and Behar, 1991). Women's empowerment was one of the main goals of the modernity target of the Turkish Republic. It was encouraged by increasing educational level of women, employment opportunities as well as politics. Less male dominant and more egalitarian attitudes and relationships have been encouraged, even though gender equality is far from having been achieved (Kavas and Thornton, 2013).

No doubt rapid and considerable changes in family structure have occurred in the ninety years since the establishment of the Republic. Nevertheless, it has been argued that "the Turkish family as a whole has retained its authoritarian patriarchal character" (Kiray, 1976). As this judgment was made almost 40 years ago, it seems relevant to ask whether this is still the case. Has the relation between husbands and wives in Turkey in reality become more similar to the modern Western family, presumably characterized by (near) equality between the spouses and a more symmetrical power distribution (Wagner et al 1990) or can Turkey still be characterized as a decidedly patriarchal society?

We are able to shed some light on this question by using data from the 2008 Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS), which contained an interesting set of statements intended to capture attitudes towards gender roles. The respondents, ever-married women aged 15-49, were asked to agree or disagree with these statements. Unfortunately, no male respondents were included in the survey, neither were never-married women. However, 67 percent of women in this age group were ever-married, and 95 percent of the ever-married women in the survey were currently married.

Interestingly enough, the statement which an overwhelming majority of women agrees with (92%) is “Married women should work outside if she wants to”. It is of course likely that men would not agree with such a statement to the same degree; nevertheless, it is clear there is an unquestionable acceptance of female labor force participation (in theory, one might add, since female labor force participation in Turkey is very low). We also find a high degree of acceptance for women’s involvement in politics (again, the reality looks quite different), and a strong norm that women should be virgins when they get married. On the contrary, only 12 and 15 percent, respectively, thought it better to educate sons rather than daughters or agreed that men generally are wiser than women. The latter two statements would seem to belong to the category of items used to measure gender ideology which has been labeled ‘acceptance of male privilege’ (Davis and Greenstein 2009). A majority of the items included in the TDHS would seem to capture some dimension of ‘male supremacy’ or ‘male dominance’.

There is a distinct rural-urban dimension in the response pattern; for most items women living in urban areas are much less likely to express ‘traditional’ gender role attitudes. There is also a strong educational gradient: the higher the educational level of the woman the less likely she is to agree with the statements, meaning that highly educated women generally express less ‘traditional’ gender role attitudes. Studies in Western countries, primarily the United States, have generally found a strong association between education and gender role attitudes (Harris and Firestone 1998), a relationship that seems to have weakened in more recent cohorts (Brewster and Padavic, 2000). Of course, there is a connection between the rural-urban dimension and education, also in Turkey, where it has been found that a girl’s chances of post primary schooling are greater if she lives in a metropolitan area (Rankin and Aytac 2006).

We performed factor analysis on the nine items in TDHS using the Principal Components method with Varimax rotation. Two factors were retained (see table 1) which we have chosen to label *male authority* and *female autonomy*. We then divided the women into two groups according to their acceptance or non-acceptance of male authority and supporting female autonomy respectively: *traditional*, and *non-traditional*¹. Finally we ran logistic regression separately for attitudes to male authority and female autonomy, with the traditional group as the reference category (see table 2).

¹ For factor 1 score-male authority- the top 65 percent is defined as non-traditional and for factor score 2-female autonomy- it is 40 percent.

Clearly, there is a straightforward positive gradient for the relationship between level of education and non-traditional views of male authority: the higher education she has, the more likely the woman is to reject strongly traditional attitudes to male authority. Religious practice (based on the two variables of performing namaz and wearing headscarf) has the opposite effect: the more practice the more likely the woman is to hold positive views of male authority. The effects of education and religious practice on attitudes to female autonomy look somewhat different. Only women with post-secondary education are significantly more likely to be in favour of female autonomy (but the effect is strong). Religious practice, on the other hand, has the same straightforward negative effect on attitudes to female autonomy, as was shown for male authority. It is also worth mentioning that both father literacy and mother literacy had a significant negative effect of holding traditional views on male authority, while this was not the case for female autonomy (results not shown).

In conclusion, women's level of education and their religious practice work in opposite direction on attitudes to male authority and female autonomy. More education makes women more likely to hold non-traditional views (although for female autonomy this is true only for women with post-secondary education), while religious practice is associated with more traditional views, both regarding male authority and female autonomy. While this is a cross-sectional study and we cannot say anything about trends over time, it would seem that acceptance of male authority is still relatively strong in Turkey. However, it seems to co-exist with considerable belief in female autonomy.

<u>Table 1. Rotated component matrix. Factor loadings</u>		
	Factor 1	Factor 2
Women should be more involved in politics	.138	.534
Women can go anywhere without husbands permission	.013	.683
Better to educate son rather than daughter	.710	-.035
Married women should work outside if they want to	.380	.255
Women should not argue with husband even if she disagrees	.406	.362
Men should also do housework	.328	.519
Important family decisions should be made only by men	.692	.162
Women should be virgin when they get married	.020	.589
Men are wiser than women	.711	.066

Table 2. Logistic regression of attitudes to male authority and female autonomy
(Non-traditional versus traditional)

	Male Authority	Female Autonomy
Education		
No education	0,199***	1,070
Primary level	0,499***	1,047
Secondary level	1	1
Post-secondary	1,793***	1,636***
Practicing religion		
No practicing	1,354**	1,682***
Irregular practicing	1	1
Regular practicing	0,873*	0,718***
<i>Also controlling for woman's age, father and mother literacy, region and metropolitan/other urban/rural residence</i>		

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