

The Concept of Honor and Gender Inequality Example of Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine the concept of honor that changes according to each geography and culture. This article will compare gender roles of women and men in the culture of honor. Turkey's honor concept is usually defined over a woman's body or sexuality and it protects by their husbands or men in the family. Some reasons deemed sufficient for the commitment of honor killings: the virginity of women, the way they dress, not following the rules set by the society for women. If women do not follow these rules, these women will be seen by society as a contaminated property or a damaged item. Women in some regions in Turkey; are subjected to many abuses and pressures such as, forced marriage, polygamy and bride price. This study will discuss the reasons why honor killings continue even in 2021 and will review efforts to stop honor killings. The purpose of honor killing that committed as a result of women not abiding by these rules is to remove the source of shame and to clean the dignity of their families. *If you live in Turkey, you wake up every day with such headlines: "The court acquitted the father, who abused his 6-year-old daughter, on the grounds that her daughter's virginity was intact", "Ayşe A. was burned by her husband with gasoline", "92-year-old Hanım Pınarlı, who lives alone in Aydın, was raped by her 23-year-old neighbor. Strangled to death after being raped.", "The father who allegedly raped his three daughters and marketed his wife has been released", "The woman victim of violence lives in her car because she is afraid of her husband".* Also it's common to see people whose joking about rape and saying "Today is Rape Day" on Twitter with the hashtag April 12th. *Why is this woman living in her car with fear? Why were female killer rapists released? Do they have to live with this psychology all their lives because they were born as a women?* This article will focus on women who have been killed or subjected to violence for their behavior that considered dishonorable by society in Turkey.

Key Words: Gender Roles, Honor Killing, Patriarchal Societies, Women's Right

1. Introduction

Due to the multinational social structure in Turkey, there has been a confusion of ideas since the Ottoman period. These differences of opinion often cause internal conflicts and social divisions. Some people want Sharia regime. These people also argue that everyone who living in Turkey should live according to Islamic rules. This is one of the reasons for the complexity in Turkey. On the other hand, there is another section that defends Atatürk's reforms and modern Turkey. These

people want to protect the values Atatürk gave us. Equality and tolerance between these two groups were almost never achieved. According to the estimates of the United Nations Population Fund (2005), an average of 5,000 or more than 20,000 women are killed for honor every year in the world. In the honor culture, women are generally seen as dependent with men, so the behavior of women is very important for the honor of the family. It is believed that when women act against the rules or traditions of society, the honor of all in the family will be damage and stain. Since Turkey is a mostly patriarchal society, men feel that women should stay at home and do housework. Every year, little girls and women are killed by their families or forced into suicide for the various reasons mentioned in the article. It is believed that in order to cleanse the family's honor, the person whose dishonor has been dishonored must be killed. While the murderers are declared heroes by the society, if the so-called dishonorable person is not killed by the family, the whole family is seen as dishonorable and excluded by the society. There is no age limit for murders committed in the name of honor. 16-year-old Turkish girl buried alive for talking to young men (2009). Medine Memi had tried to inform the police that she had been beaten many times by her father and grand father before she was killed. She had no pictures and she was not sent to school. Medina had 10 more siblings. Her mother, grandmother and sisters were beaten like her. The accused father and grandfather exercised their right to remain silent in the court where they were referred. Autopsy revealed that the young girl was buried alive with her hands tied. Medina's father and grandfather could not tolerate even the slightest chance for Medina's life. These women, whose right to life are not defended even in court, are forced to submit to the pressure of society by the state. In Turkey where honor is defined through the female body, millions of women whose names are not mentioned in this article are struggling to survive every day. Honor killings happen all over Turkey, not just in small towns or villages. In this article, the causes of honor crimes and people's opinions on this issue will be examined through surveys and reports. These violence, restrictions and murders that continue even in 2021 are tried to be covered up under the name of honor. The aim of this article is to shed light on the struggles of women who are restricted by the understanding of honor, who are subjected to violence and whose fundamental rights cannot even be protected by the state. This article will examine how the understanding of honor and gender inequality has changed from past to present in Turkey.

1.1. The first appearance of the concept of honor

In some countries the concept of honor is associated with honor and good morals, while in some countries such as Turkey, concepts of honor is usually defined over women's bodies and sexuality. The origin of the word "honor", which is translated from Arabic to Turkish, is based on the concept of "nomos", which means "founding principle "or" general principle" in Greek. Honor is explained in two different ways in the dictionary of the Turkish Language Association. First, it means "loyalty to moral rules and social values in a society, chastity"; secondly, it means "honesty and correctness". The concept of honor is an unwritten order created by society and sometimes imposed on the person nThe term of nomos, mentioned in the book "Nomos and the Beginning of Athenian Democracy", written by Martin Ostwald (1969), constitutes the etymological origin of the concept of honor in Turkish. The author found the thoughts of some medieval thinkers (many philosophers such as Herodotus, Aristophanes and Hippocrates) about the concept of honor in the medieval period and transferred these thoughts to the book. As an example, the author mentions in his book (p.43): "Aristophanes uses honor in a religious sense only rarely and always in a joyous context. Thus we hear that it is honor for women to have fun at the celebration of the orgies in

honour of Demeter and Kore and to invite Athene to join their dance and when sacrifice is offered it is honour that the gods get the entrails.” Therefore in the medieval, honor is a word used to please Goddess Demeter, the oldest known meaning.

1.2. The place of Turkish women in society before the conversion to Islam

Before the adoption of Islam, there is “Shamanism”, that is, belief in God and Goddesses. The name of the most powerful God in Turks was “Mother Goddess” In shamanism, men and women are equal. In pre-Islamic Turkish society, Hakan-Hatun (the person who ruled the state and his wife) was making decisions about the state together, and both were in charge of the administration. In Turkish mythology, women are depicted in a very high position. According to the Creation Epic, the woman was seen as the source of the creation of the universe. In Turkish epics, women are in a divine class. It is not possible to reach, touch, smell or perceive with five senses. (Tellioglu, 2016). The first female ruler of the Saka Turks was an extremely brave, intelligent woman named “Tomris”. From the time of Motun (Mete), we can see that Turkish women and men have equal rights. In all of the Central Asian Turkic states (Scythians, Huns, Uighurs, Gokturks) women had important rights and authorities. For example, in the Scythians there was a tradition of upbringing, in which every woman fought like men. Women fought alongside their men even in wars. In political life, Mete Han's wife signed the first peace treaty with China on behalf of the Great Hun Empire. (Karatay, 1946) Ramazan Şeşen's book “Ibn Fadlan's Travel Book” gives us information about the Turks who lived before the adoption of Islam. Şeşen translated the travel book of Arab traveler Ibn Fadlan and published it in 2015. Arab traveler Ibn Fadlan's Travel Book mentioned the lives and cultures of Turks (Oghuz tribes) who had not yet accepted Islam, by comparing them with Arab culture Fadlan also touched upon issues such as the place of Turkish women in society and the understanding of honor of Turks in the period he lived among Turkish tribes. In his travel book, Fadlan explains the place of Turkish women in society and the way of life of Turks: “Men and women go to the river and bathe naked together. They don't run away from each other. However, they never commit adultery. If one of them commits adultery, they will tie this person up and hang him on a pole, regardless of who he is”. In addition, Fadlan mentioned in his work that Turkish women had the right to freedom and action at least as much as a man: “Turkish women do not wear veils and do not cover their bodies when they are with their men or strangers. One day we were sitting in the house of an oguz Turkish. His wife was sitting next to us. While we were talking, the woman opened and scratched a side of her body that should not be seen (sexual organ). We all saw her and immediately closed our eyes with our hands and begged God, “Lord, protect us from sins.” Her husband looked at us, then turned to the interpreter and laughed, “Tell them, my wife can open her body in front of you. You saw this and protected it. Nothing reached her. This is better than covering it up and offering it to others.”

1.3. The process of change under the influence of Islam

The most important reason for Turks to convert to Islam is that belief in the Sky God (Tengri belief) is similar to Islam. Turks, accepted Islam in a period of 400 years between 7th to 11th centuries. Due to conservative interpretations of Islamic rules, women were socially and politically deprived of their rights. During the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, the Turkish family structure was a patriarchal structure. As of 1500 to 1800, the Turkish Empire was among the three major Islamic

empires that dominated the southern Europe to the far north of India. It was known as the Ottoman Empire. It was made of the Balkans, the Middle East, North Africa and part of Eastern Europe. The Ottoman Empire used Islamic laws to stabilize and govern society.

Urban women's extroverted behaviors such as veiling and dressing were restricted. As Islam prohibits women from appearing in front of men except their husbands and close relatives, women's outdoor clothing was subject to strict rules. Women were prohibited to interact with men especially during their daily chores. This was because they were expected to uphold a level of dignity and integrity that met the standards of the society and complied with the sharia law of the Islamic teachings. While rural women had the right to earn money by working in the fields provided that they had no relationship with men, urban women were imprisoned at home regardless of their social status. Depending on their skills and ability, women had different opening from which to conduct their duties. However, the type of job that one landed depended on the choice of working location. The predominant forms of employment that required women were embroidery and weaving. While rural women had the right to earn money by working in the fields provided that they had no relationship with men, urban women were imprisoned at home regardless of their social status. For example, in 1610, women were prohibited from getting on the same boat with men. This attitude continued until the Tanzimat Period and this situation changed a little with the understanding of equality brought by the Tanzimat period. In the Ottoman period, the first positive regulation for was the 1858 land regulation. With this regulation, women, whether married or not, have the right to receive equal shares from the inheritance with men.

In accordance with the famous “Law of the Conqueror” in the 15th century, a fine was stipulated for adultery. In the following periods, prostitutes were sentenced to mass murder (murder, massacre). At the end of the 17th century, when women began to wear wide-necked overcoats, the Ottoman declared that “they should not wear wide collars, otherwise they will look like madams (non-Muslim women). In this case, the Ottoman declared that the janissaries would slaughter women”. However, the Ottoman woman did not listen to these words, and continued to wear wide-necked overcoats. Thereupon, the janissaries tried to cut off the women's collars with scissors in the middle of the street. However, Ottoman women resisted and the state gave up in this way. The restrictions on women were not limited to these.

During the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid (1768-1774), the state began to interfere with women's clothes because they were long or uncovered. Thereupon, peasant women rioted in Izmit. Peasant women said, “They should never interfere with our clothes, if they get mixed up, we will not send vegetables and fruits to the capital, we will cut off all commercial routes to Istanbul.” As the peasant women continued their resistance, the state withdrew this decision.

1.4. The founder of modern Turkey, Ataturk's impact on human rights in Turkey (1881-1938)

Atatürk was a military leader who founded modern Turkey through innovative reforms. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was called “Atatürk” by the Turkish people. In Turkish, “Atatürk” means the ancestor of the Turks. Ataturk was born in Thessaloniki (now a Greek city, but at that time belonged to the Ottoman Empire) in 1881. With the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, a democratic modern social structure that defends women's rights has been formed. Ataturk strongly advocated for a secular and scientific education system. He said “If someday my words conflict with science, choose science”. He was a leader who opposed dogmas

and superstitions. To give his nation a modern outlook, Atatürk introduced many reforms: European hats replaced the fez; women stopped wearing the veil; all citizens took surnames; and the Islamic calendar gave way to the Western calendar. He created a new alphabet (corrected version of Latin) from the Arabic alphabet, as he aimed to abandon Arabic culture and traditions. With the law enacted on 3 March 1924, women and men had the right to equal education. In 1927, religion classes were excluded from obligation. In all reforms that Atatürk made, the priority is national education; Because he saw national education as the foundation of development. Mustafa Kemal wanted an education system with the values of the modern world. He believed “The greatest war is against ignorance.”

As a result of Atatürk's reforms, women of Turkey had become socially equal to men and acquired all the basic liberties and rights. Atatürk believed that a society that does not educate its women cannot rise. In the diaries that Atatürk kept while being treated in Vienna-Karlsbat on July 1-28, 1918, he says: “In short, let's be brave in the women's issue, let's leave the illusions, let's decorate their minds with science, let's give priority to their honor and pride.” We understand from these diaries that Atatürk thought that women should be educated at that time. Atatürk never dictated what to wear on women and encouraged them to dress in a modern style.

In 1926, based on the Swiss Civil Code, the Turkish Civil Code was enacted. With this law, Turkish women had attained many of their fundamental rights at the most advanced level of civilization. The most important rights provided by the Civil Code for Turkish women were the abolition of multiple marriages and the granting of women the right to divorce. Atatürk believed that all citizens, regardless of gender, should take advantage of the opportunities. Turkish women became equal with men, with the right to elect and be elected to the municipality on April 3, 1930, and to parliament on December 5, 1934. Atatürk greatly admired the support that the national liberation struggle received from women and praised their many contributions: “In Turkish society, women have not lagged behind men in science, scholarship, and culture. Perhaps they have even gone further ahead.” He gave women the same opportunities as men, including full political rights. In the mid-1930s, 18 women, among them a villager, were elected to the national parliament. Later, Turkey had the world's first women supreme court justice. The first international women's congress in the world was held in Istanbul on April 18, 1935 under the auspices of Atatürk. In all walks of life, Atatürk's Turkey has produced tens of thousands of well-educated women who participate in national life as doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, writers, administrators, executives, and creative artists. Atatürk was diagnosed with cirrhosis in 1937. His health problems could not be cured and he died on Thursday, November 10, 1938 at the Dolmabahçe Palace at 09:05. Every year at 9.05 o'clock, sirens start to ring and all cars and businesses stop, everyone stops respectfully, then sings the national anthem.

At the 20th General Assembly of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, it was decided to celebrate 1981 as the Year of Atatürk. On the occasion of the centenary of Atatürk's birth, various events were organized with the initiatives of UNESCO to introduce Atatürk's personality, actions and views to the world. A small part of UNESCO's article about the year of Atatürk with the decision of the United Nations and UNESCO, is as follows: “Gathered round their teacher, Turkish schoolchildren wave books and portraits of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the centenary of whose birth is being celebrated this year throughout the country. There is not a village which does not cherish the memory of the great reformer who created modern Turkey.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, father of modern Turkey, was born one hundred years ago. To mark the centenary, the Turkish permanent delegation to Unesco organized a series of cultural events in Paris earlier this year, including exhibitions, concerts and dancing displays. It was through the educational and cultural reforms brought about by Atatürk that the Turkish people, especially young people and women, were introduced to the twentieth century world.

Turkey's unremitting struggle to pursue its development in the last half century constitutes a particularly notable chapter in the history of the modern world. The reason for this lies in the circumstances of Turkish history. The Ottoman empire is the first and only case of an Islamic empire which, having survived until the early part of the twentieth century, was transformed into a modern secular republic.”

1.5. In the 2000s, the concept of honor in the Turkey.

Survey conducted in Turkey, has revealed interesting results related to this topic. The survey conducted on March 8, International Women's Day, sheds light on murders committed in the name of honor and custom. A joint survey of the Women's Center (KAMER) and Diyarbakır and Mardin governorates revealed interesting results on honor killings. In Diyarbakır and Mardin, 46.3 percent of the participants in the survey with 423 people were in city centers, 16.3 percent in villages with predominantly Kurdish origin, 22 percent in Zaza villages, 7.1 percent in Arab villages and 8.3 percent in Alevi villages. Of the participants, 78.5 percent are men and 21.5 percent are women, 53.4 percent are married, 44 percent are single, and 1.9 percent are widows. The questionnaire consists of 12 questions in total and the first question is “What is honor?” starts with the question. In the face-to-face survey, 32.9 of them answered in honor of “my wife, sister, mother and family”. While the rate of those saying "honor of man" was 13.7 percent, the rate of those who said “the virginity of women” was 10.2 percent. To the question “What is dishonesty” asked in the survey, 48.5 percent of the participants answered “women who committed adultery”, 10.6 percent answered women who lost their virginity” and 12.3 percent answered “women who lost their virginity and committed adultery”.

In the answers given to another question of the survey, 83 percent of the respondents stated that a woman who was forced into marriage by her family should be punished if she committed adultery with the son of her aunt who lost her wife. Another question asked in the survey is “How should they be punished?”. The answer to this question, clarifies the mentality that underlies many murders. Participants in this question; 37.4 percent said “to kill”, 25.8 percent to “divorce”, 3.3 percent “I would made her commit suicide”, 1.9 percent “I would poison”, 1.2 percent said “I would starve them”. 2 people said that they would lock the woman who committed adultery in the barn or cut her nose, 3 people said that they would stone her. 76 percent of the participants stated that even if this woman is a relative, their decisions will not change. Another survey on this subject was conducted by Kadın and Demokrasi Association (KADEM) with Prof. Dr. Aytekin Sır and his team. The report (2003) included the “We Will Not Get Used to: Murders in the Name of Honor” questionnaire. The answers given to the question “What is honor” in the questionnaire are listed as follows: The most given answer to this question was “my wife, my sister, my mother”. While the second most given answer was "woman's virginity", this ranking continued with "women's obedience to social rules" and “male honor”. Other different answers were “women who obey men” and 'ordered by religion’.

To the question "What is dishonesty" the answers given are listed as follows: While the most given answer was "the woman who lost her virginity", this sequence continued as follows: women who do not wear things to cover their body, women who talking with men, women who falling in love, Other answers are as follows, from high to low: women who don't marry who their family wants, women who go out without permission, commit adultery, women engaging in gossip-inducing behavior. Finally, the answers were given such as the woman talking a lot and the sexuality of the woman. It was revealed that the socio-economic level and literacy rate are low in the provinces of Diyarbakır and Mardin where the research was conducted. As a result of this survey, we observe that; people in southeastern Turkey, defines the concept of honor through the behavior of women. Every year, little girls and women are killed by their families or forced to commit suicide for various reasons included in the survey.

1.6. Gender Inequalities in Turkey

The first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are equal, regardless of gender and race. Article 1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Article 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey states that everyone is equal before the law, regardless of gender. All individuals are equal without any discrimination before the law, irrespective of language, race, colour, gender, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such considerations. The following statements were included in the Turkish women's rights declaration published in 1971. Article 1: Women are born free and have equal rights with men. Everything looks good up to here. But are these laws that defend women's rights actually implemented in Turkey?

Can Dünder shares her thoughts on this issue as follows (2007): One out of every 3 women is a victim of violence. 87 percent of domestic crimes are committed against women. 20 percent of women are illiterate. Only 2 out of every 100 educated women can get higher education. The rate of women in the parliament is 4 percent, and the rate of women in provincial councils is 2.5 percent. In a report published by the Prime Ministry General Directorate on the Status and Problems of Women in December, it tells us that 97 percent of poor women are subjected to domestic violence. According to the same report, 34 percent of women in Turkey are subjected to physical violence.

The labor force participation rate of women in Turkey is extremely low. The rate of women working in a job is 25%, the rate of work for men is 70%. While the number of working men is about 17 million, the number of working women is around 6 million, that is, one-third of men. Also Turkey ranked 130th among 153 countries in the 2020 Global Gender Inequality Index published by the World Economic Forum (pp.343). Among the educational opportunities provided to women, Turkey ranks 113th among 153 countries. Moreover, Turkey ranks 136th in women's economic participation and 109th in women's political empowerment. According to these data, gender equality will take place after an average of 99.5 years. Misogynist rhetoric and practices still continue. The thoughts of a man, one of Turkey's famous male artists, on women's rights are as follows: "If women are wearing miniskirts, they should not cry because they are being harassed." He said this for Özgecan Aslan, who was raped and burned to death by minibuss drivers and then poured concrete on her. Özgecan Aslan was a girl who got on the bus to return home from college where she studied psychology.

This article will share the following words of someone who served as the deputy prime minister of Turkey in 2014. “Chastity is not only a name but also an ornament for women. Women mustn’t be chaste. Women should know what mahram and namahrem are. Women should not laugh in public, their behavior should not be seductive.” The person who said this was the deputy prime minister that year. Normally politicians aim is to make the state a better place. To protect and defend people's rights regardless of gender or race. These are the people who should protect the rights of women who are subjected to violence, women who were raped and boys who were raped at a young age in Turkey.

1.7. Honor Killings and Femicides

According to We Will Stop Femicide Platform Report (2020), 300 women were murdered in 2020, 171 women were found suspicious death. These murders, which try to legitimize in the society, are interpreted simply as “he can do it because he is a man” or “the woman wouldn't have been killed if she didn't go out at night”, “If she did not wear tight and short clothes, she would not die by burning”. Persons who commit honor crimes are seen as heroes by some people in the society. People who commit honor killings get a penalty reduction when they say “It hurt my pride of manhood” or “I regret it now.”

People who raped their step-daughter and received a sentence discount with the news “The mental health of the girl is not deteriorated” is wandering the streets of Turkey. A man who attacked a woman in the forest, then robbed and beat her, but he was unable to rape her. Because he lost consciousness due to an asthma attack, defends herself as follows: “It was a desolate place, If I wanted to, I would rape anyway.” Thanks to the court (!), he received a sentence reduction with this sentence. The person who was caught red-handed during the rape received a sentence reduction, saying “the rape was interrupted”. The pervert who recorded his rape on camera got a discount for being the girl's ex. There are also penalty reductions “if she does not yell at rape, it is considered to be consent”. There are people who raped and impregnated the girl and received a reduction by saying "the girl was not a virgin anyway”. The man who killed his wife by riddling with holes because his wife asked a man about the time received a penalty reduction, saying “my wife is flirting with others”.

Hüsna Temurtaş is just one of these people. Hüsna Temurtaş was killed with a gun by her husband (2021). Hüsna was a mother of 3 children. Temurtaş, who had been subjected to violence by her husband, was killed this time. Her husband explains the reason for the killing as follows : “She was going out without my permission, I cleared my honor.”

More than half of the femicides in Turkey are due to honor or jealousy. The majority of men physically and psychologically torture women instead of killing them. Community and family pressure is exerted on women to commit suicide. The saddest part is that often the man's mother and sisters pressures the man to kill his wife. This is because, in general, being a mother of a boy is seen as something superior to being a mother of a daughter. In addition mothers of boys think their brides are stealing their sons, so mothers mistreat their sons' wives. This is quite common and is passed down from generation to generation. The woman who tortured by her mother-in-law, will torture the bride if she has a son.

In Siirt, a city in the east of Turkey, tribal leaders came together and made a decision. Tribal leaders announced that they were removing the bride price. The leaders also stated that they made a historic decision. This event happened in 2021. These people, who come 200 years behind the world, are the proof of why Turkey cannot move forward.

As seen from the news and reports, current laws are not deterrent. Many people who mentioned and not mentioned in the reports are killed each year in the name of honor cases. Honor cases that even lawyers do not want to defend are a bleeding wound in Turkey.

We Will Stop Femicide Platform, report on femicides is as follows: 303 women were killed in 2015. 130 of these murdered women were killed for making decisions about their own lives. 50 women were killed because they wanted to divorce. While 24 women were killed for trying to help another woman who was subjected to violence, 65 women were killed for unknown reasons. 16 women were killed because they did not want sexual intercourse. The United Nations Women Unit declared in the World Women Progress report that the most dangerous place for women is their home. While 35% of these women were killed by people who could not be identified, 30% killed by their husbands. 8% were killed by their ex-wives and 5% were killed by their ex-boyfriends. 15% were killed by their family relatives (brother, son, brother-in-law).

The state should do something to reduce these murder numbers. Some of the reasons why these murders are so common is the patriarchal and ignorant structure in Turkey. Murders of women continue as the murderers are given sentence reductions instead of deterrent penalties by the court. The government should do something about these inadequate laws. In addition, public awareness should be created by government. A woman does not have to be killed for these laws to be enforced in the courts. It is very important to inform the Turkish society, especially the new generation, on this issue. In this case, families should instill social equality in their children. The aim of this article is to make Turkey fair and free for everyone. This article wishes a Turkey where people's lives are not restricted and everyone's rights are protected.

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