

GENDER QUOTAS AND COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Meltem İnce YENİLMEZ *

“As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world”

Virginia Woolf (1938)

ABSTARACT

The research aims to investigate the relationship between gender quotas and political institutions. It is evident that gender inequality demands the establishment of gender quotas to help women participate in politics and economic development. Young people in Turkey desire a politically and economically stable country. This could be obtained through the empowerment of women so that they can participate freely in national politics. Moreover, they could contribute to the economic development of Turkey by working in both the private and public sectors. The enhancement of gender equality is a fundamental driver of the economic development of a country. Turkey is ranked among the countries that have widespread gender inequality. Religious and political leaders have largely contributed to gender inequality in Turkey. In the early years, around 80 years ago, women were empowered and significantly contributed to the modernization of Turkey. Turkey has made progress in improving gender equality, for instance, through the abolition of gender violence and the empowerment of women in the family. Despite these tremendous efforts, women's representation in politics is still very low and serious actions must be taken. Initially, Turkey had allowed women to participate in the country's development. The gender quotas established in the parliament remained unofficial. The subsequent government could not implement them since the law did not establish them. For instance, the 4.5% gender quota in place from 1935 to 1950 remained unofficial. After that, different parties made efforts to increase women's representation by establishing gender quotas. Currently, there has been a subsequent increase in demand for the empowerment of women and gender quotas. In the future, there is hope that Turkey will boost gender equality. Otherwise, gender quotas would be established due to the increasing pressure from women and civil society. However, women and civil society must be devoted to their goal due to the hindrance created by cultural beliefs and the oppression of women in Turkish society.

Keywords: gender quotas, democracy, equality, political participation, Turkey

* Doç. Dr., Yaşar Üniversitesi, IIBF, Ekonomi Bölümü, meltem.ince@yasar.edu.tr

Bu makale iThenticate sistemi tarafından taranmıştır

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is a significant pillar for the realization of economic stability and democratization. Stakeholders should enhance the equality of all institutions in Turkey to be in line with 21st-century developments in the European Union and global politics. The stakeholders mentioned here include all people with the ability to ensure gender equality in public and private institutions. They include politicians, academicians, civil society, teachers, the judiciary, businesspersons, and relevant stakeholders in Turkey. Turkey has young, enthusiastic individuals with aspirations to live in an economically stable, developed country (Waylen, 2013). It is, therefore, necessary to enhance gender equality to help women contribute to developments in Turkey, as well as to avoid future discrimination and to help the country focus on important developmental issues.

Kemal Atatürk recognized the vital role of women in Turkey's development in the 1920s. Kemal Atatürk had established reforms directed towards gender equality. During that time, polygamy was stopped and women were granted equal rights in inheritance, custody, and divorce. Moreover, women in Turkey were granted voting rights and the opportunity to be elected members of the parliament. In fact, women in Turkey were granted voting rights forty-five years before women in Switzerland. In the 1930s, eighteen women had been elected to the parliament. In addition, a woman was elected to lead the Supreme Court in Turkey for the first time. The crucial law that ensures the equality of women in Turkey is the civil law that was enacted by the parliament in 1926. During that period, educated women contributed to developments in Turkey while serving in different positions in different professions. The contributions of women to the development of the economy became certain. The bright future of Turkey had become apparent, and there was hope that gender equality would be attained easily and at a fast pace. Before the events of the 21st century, Turkey had made huge progress towards gender equality. For instance, in 2000 women constituted 40% of the labor force.

Nevertheless, the onset of the 21st century has witnessed increased discrimination and gender inequality. Such measures are a threat to democracy, economic development, and the well-being of women. Women must be given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the welfare of families and of the country as a whole. Leaders should avoid practicing discrimination against women since they are servants to all. For instance, in 2010 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the former prime minister and current president of Turkey, uttered words that were discriminatory to women (Sevinc,

2012). He said that men could not be said to be equal to women, and that all women must give birth to at least three children. Considering that he is the current president of Turkey, there arise numerous questions about the pursuit of gender equality under his regime. In fact, as the current president, he was quoted as saying that it would be against nature for men to assume equality between men and women (Dearden, 2014).

It is evident that the current political environment demands the adoption of measures that will enhance equality between women and men in politics, as well as public and private institutions. Politics of the 21st century enhanced equality between men and women in Turkey. Gender equality had been established, and there was no need for demands that gender quotas be created (Waylen, 2013). Currently, it is vital to come up with measures to fight discrimination against women in Turkey. One of these measures is the establishment of gender quotas. This research paper aims to establish the relationship between democracy and equality, as well as consider gender quotas and the reasons why few women are involved in politics in Turkey.

1.EQUALITY AND DEMOCRACY

Gender equality is the key driver of democratic society and socio-economic growth. There is always a close relationship between countries that have eliminated the gender gap and that are economically stable (Müftüler-Baç, 2012). The most developed countries in the world are also the best at implementing gender policies in every sector. Countries that do not invest in educating women so that they can become involved in economic and political realms always lag behind economically (Inglehart et al., 2002). Therefore, investing in women is equivalent to investing in the economy of a country in a competitive word. Countries such as Turkey, which is ranked close to the bottom in terms of the gender gap by the World Economic Forum, can become the world's largest economy only by developing its gender equality. This paper will focus on equality and democracy in Turkey.

Turkey is located in southeastern Europe. It has a secular democracy with a Muslim population of approximately 75 million. However, it is ranked 124 out of 135 countries based on gender equality. It scored 0.6 in the gender gap where 1.0 represents total equality. In the last six years, Turkey has always been ranked between 121 and 129. This does not mean that the country never makes any improvement; instead, it shows that other countries are faster at closing the gender gap. Arat (2010) states that Turkey is functioning through a democratic inconsistency such that the develop-

ment of religious freedom brings threats to gender equality. The government is Islamic and does not support gender equality. Women are therefore given fewer opportunities in all fields. The Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in a meeting said that promoting gender equality goes against nature. He said that it was not possible to make men and women equal. He gave an example of a pregnant woman, claiming that such a woman cannot work in the same conditions as a man. He continued by saying that, according to Islam, the major role of women involves motherhood and he condemned feminists who have not accepted the idea of parenthood. He said that equivalency should be embraced rather than equality (Hurriyet Daily News).

Bozkurt (2007) argues that gender equality is a human right and a requirement for economic development. He also says that equality between men and women promotes social justice. Women's rights in Turkey are very paradoxical. The ratio of educated women is about 30%, while in some areas almost half of women are illiterate (Barro and Lee 2001). Around 80 years ago, women enjoyed equal rights with men in the Republic of Turkey. They started voting in 1934 before women in European countries. Today the ratio of women who participate in politics is 4.4%, which is far below the world's standard. Until the 1980s and 1990s, no move had been taken to improve women's rights. However, a new phase started at the end of the 1990s. The issue of women's rights was deeply affected by the improvement in the relationship between Turkey and the European Union. The Helsinki Summit in 1999 was the major turning point during which Turkey was issued candidate country status. After this, there was a drastic improvement in women's rights (Waylen, 2013).

Women's rights became a key issue in accessing the European Union. Bozkurt (2007) discusses two reports of women's rights in the European Parliament in the Republic of Turkey. The two reports played a great role in making the issue an important agenda item in the country. The first report was in the year 2005; it monitored the progress of women's rights in Turkey. It emphasized areas such as domestic violence against women, the purpose of civil society, women's education, and the inclusion of women in both politics and the labor market. The report also gave suggestions as to how to solve existing problems. The second report in 2007 monitored the findings of the previous report and improvements made in terms of women's rights issues. It also analyzed what still needed to be done. The report outlined developments and areas where effort was needed by clearly describing the status of women's rights in Turkey. The report was implemented in the European Parliament; this indicated that respect for women's rights was an

absolute necessity for membership in the EU.

Recently, Turkey has made tremendous progress in improving women's rights in legal frameworks. The changing legislative framework on the issue has been successful, and the government has shown a lot of commitment. However, Turkish women are still experiencing various problems, such as illiteracy, domestic violence, and low participation in jobs and politics. The process of establishing gender equality is quite challenging and calls for social transformation. The main requirement for the implementation of gender equality is political will, while its effectiveness depends on how the implementation is organized and imposed. The average woman in Turkey does not completely benefit from legislative amendments. Therefore, the country must speed up the implementation process and take more steps. Legislation should be supported using well-built plans, firm institutions, and adequate resources. To institutionalize gender equality and strengthen the commitment of different parties, a strategy consisting of various components should be used. The components consist of data collection, the application of effective policies, and the creation of institutional mechanisms held by a solid legal framework and adequate resources. Effective coordination and cooperation are also essential to reach high levels of society (Gelb and Palley, 2009). In Turkey, data on the situation of women is inaccurate and does not communicate the problems related to women's rights. Actual data should be gathered covering aspects such as the rate of illiteracy among women, the involvement of women in the labor market, and domestic violence. A lack of accurate data is a hindrance to examining the scope of the problem. The data collected aids in the determination of the problematic area, and the right policies could be established. The national mechanisms and women's organizations, therefore, must be strengthened. Financial support should be offered to help establish gender equality, and resources should not be misused.

Turkey has established important programs that are being used to tackle domestic violence against women and to increase the number of girls who attend school. There were two campaigns, namely 'Hey girls, let's go to school' and 'Stop violence against women,' which had a great impact because they helped create awareness. Educating women about their rights contributed to gender equality. A lack of knowledge prevents women from exercising their rights, which in turn makes them dormant. Educating individuals about gender equality is, therefore, important, and necessary funds to do this should be generated. Müftüler-Baç (2012) identifies the major areas in which Turkey has tried to establish gender equality. These include:

•The Family

The civil code is usually the basis of gender policies in family matters. The former civil code in Turkey was not firm in terms of gender equality. A new civil code was adopted in 2001 and was largely influenced by the EU. The new civil code embraced processes that complemented the constitutional changes by strengthening the place of women in the family. For example, it increased the marriage age from 17 for men and 15 for women to 18 for the two sexes. It also introduced the equal sharing of assets in the family in cases of divorce, and equal inheritance to children. In January 2003, family courts were made to impose the civil code and enhance gender equality. A related aspect is the issuance of surnames for married women. Turkey respects the fact that married women should carry their surnames and not those of their husbands. However, the practice is still problematic because those rights are often ignored.

•The Abolition of Gender Violence

In Turkey, violence takes different forms, such as domestic violence and honor killings. Domestic violence is experienced in many parts of Turkey and has a great impact on gender policies. From 2002 to 2009, the number of killings of women increased, with 953 women murdered in 2009. Gender violence has been an issue of concern in Turkey, and substantive measures were introduced by the 2005 penal code to tackle the violence. The penal code brought about a breakthrough, and for the very first time violence against women was considered a crime against a person. A paradigmatic shift was shown in the legislation of Turkey regarding gender policy. Turkey began taking measures to fight domestic violence in 1990. The law of protecting the family was adopted to fight violence against women. It gave every victim a right to appeal a petition in a prosecutor's office that was supposed to protect him or her. The best way to help victims is to give them shelter. The first shelter was built in 1990 in Istanbul. However, there are not enough shelters in Turkey, and those who are in control of them try to reunite the victims with those who abused them. This shows that in some way the state is not able to curb domestic violence. Research shows that around 26% to 57% of married women in Turkey have been exposed to domestic violence at one time in their lives.

Honor killings are a major problem being experienced in Turkey, and can be eliminated only by using legal changes. The penal code is usually in charge of honor killings. In 2003, the Turkish National Assembly adopted a package that changed some parts of the penal code, leading to increased punishments for honor killings and the elimination of any clause

that reduces sentences. In 2004, a new penal code was incorporated; it was put into practice in June 2005. The penal code stated that there should be no discrimination regardless of race, nationality, sex, or any other social status, and that no one was to be privileged when implementing the penal code. The code brought life imprisonment for any person convicted of an honor killing. It also introduced stricter punishments for anyone involved in sexual assault within or outside marriage. The Turkish government established a commission that was supposed to investigate the factors that lead to violence against children and women and to introduce ways to prevent it. The findings were published as a circular. Public officials were also trained to recognize signs of gender violence; the training began to be productive in 2011.

•Decision-making and Equal Political Representation

Despite the fact that women in Turkey had the right to vote—and to be voted for—since 1934, their representation in politics and their access to decision making is very low. During the 2011 elections, 78 women received votes, compared to 2007, when only 50 women were elected MPs. Today the country has only one minister who is a woman, in the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. In the municipal government, only 27 out of 2,948 mayors are women. In 2004 and 2010, women's organizations wanted Article 10 of the Constitution to be revised so that women could be given access to decision-making and to ensure that the government took the necessary steps to increase the number of women in politics. The organizations demanded that the elections should have at least a 30% gender quota system. The system has not yet been accepted, but discrimination against women is currently an agenda in the country.

•Equality in Employment

Article 5 of the Constitution clearly shows that there should be no discrimination in employment regardless of one's gender or any other social status. Regarding equal pay, the Constitution states that in equivalent jobs, pay should be the same for both men and women. Despite this, the participation of women in the labor market is still very low. In Turkey only 22.8% of women work (57.2% of them in the agricultural sector), and 50% are not paid because part of what they do is family work. Their involvement in the professional ranks does not seem to be a problem, although it is still below the European Union's goal of 60%. The country has 27.4% women professors, 39% architects, 36% lawyers, and 50.2% bankers. The main obstacle to women's success in the labor market is the traditional belief

that men are the breadwinners while women are the homemakers. Family responsibilities and a lack of education are also barriers to women in terms of gaining access to the labor market. The civil code (article 192) grants married women the right to work outside their homesteads. Nevertheless, their access is still controlled by their spouses, especially in less-developed areas (Engelstad and Teigen, 2012). Therefore, to improve gender equality in the labor market, women from less-developed areas must be educated, a goal that could be achieved through campaigns. The appropriate way to increase women's participation in the labor force is to balance their parenting duties and work responsibilities. The Turkish government is coming up with measures that can be used to increase women's employment. In the last two decades, Turkey has taken important measures to promote gender equality, with the main goal being to bring its legislation closer to the EU Acquis. Constitutional amendments and the penal and civil codes have played a significant role in bringing about gender equality, although its implementation has become problematic due to the prevailing social norms and practices in the country. The country, therefore, needs a social transformation.

a. Gender Quotas in Turkey

Turkey is among the countries that have the lowest representation of women in the fields of politics and economics. Initially, the country had allowed women to participate in its development in an effort to make Turkey modern and secular. Women at that time were involved in economic and political developments (Marshall, 2010). For instance, in 1934 women were formally recognized as citizens in Turkey. Moreover, twelve women in the Republican Peoples Party (CHP) were elected to parliamentary seats in 1935.

The developments at that time were great steps that would ensure the empowerment of women in Turkey. Nevertheless, the number of women in the parliament remained very low, as quotas established at that time manifested a low representation of women. From 1935 to 1950, the unofficial quota of 4.5% was maintained. To enable the number of women necessary to reach the targeted quota of 4.5%, the parliament allowed seats to be reserved for women (Mencütek, 2013). In the years that followed, the number of women in the parliament remained very low since the quota that had been established before 1950 was not officially recognized and could not be implemented further. From 1951 to the 1990s, the representation of women in the parliament remained below 2% except in 1983, when the number of women in the parliament reached 3%. Women had been under-represented in politics despite the revolutions over the empowerment of women. For

instance, in 1999, out of 550 elected deputies, there were only 22 women (Sevinc, 2012). The table below shows how the number of deputy women has increased over the years.

Table 1: Women in Parliament from 2002 to 2015

Year of elections	AK Party	CHP	DTP/HDP	MHP	TOTAL
2002	3.6	6.2	0	0	4.4
2007	8.7	8.9	33.3	2.8	9.1
2011	13.7	14.8	37.9	5.6	14.3
2015 (June, 7)	15.5	15.9	40	5	17.6
2015 (November, 1)	11	15.5	38.9	7.5	14.7

Source: The Grand National Assembly of Turkey (2015).

The campaign for the promotion of gender quotas began in the 1990s. Pressure for the government and the political parties to establish quotas to promote the participation of women in politics increased, especially from civil societies and NGOs that supported women's welfare. Crucially, the Association for Education and Supporting Women Candidates (KADER) greatly lobbied for the political parties to establish gender quotas. The organizations have also prepared reports and presented in the parliament to establish the significance of the matter. Moreover, the NGOs have organized panels that questioned and pressured leaders to understand the significance of increasing the number of women in politics (Mencütek, 2013).

The elite in the political parties have also increased pressure for party members to increase the number of women in political parties. They have demanded an increase in the number of women in the political list as well as in top positions in the country and the political parties. Tremendous progress has been witnessed, and some of the parties have already adopted gender quotas. The United Socialists Party (BSP) was the first party to introduce gender quotas. The quota was established as a result of pressure from elites. The party agreed to establish a gender quota of 30% initially.

Once the BSO established a gender quota, other parties started considering the significance of introducing gender quotas. For instance, the CHP started addressing the under-representation of women in the party in 1993. At that time, there were only two female representatives in the General Executive Committee (GYK) that constituted forty-four members. The party adopted a gender quota of 25%, but not in all organs of the party, only those involved with decision-making. The party organs that the gender quota applied to included the assembly of the party and the sub-provincial

and provincial assemblies. The party refused to adopt the quota in the Central Executive Committee. The quota could also not be applied to the list of candidates. Party leaders had provided ambiguous arguments regarding the issue of women's representation in the party. They argued that they wanted women in the parties to exercise their power and their responsibility to demand the increase of female representatives in politics and the national assembly. Women in the CHP have continued to demand increased representation in the national assembly. In the year 2005, women in the CHP demanded an increase of the quota to 33% in the lists of party contestants in local and national elections. Nevertheless, the party rejected the proposal.

There are other parties in Turkey that have demonstrated the effective use of quotas. The pro-Kurdish parties had the ability to implement quotas in their parties successfully. The quotas in those parties have benefited women through their applications in different places in Turkey. One of the most significant parties that have implemented the 20% quotas is the People's Democracy Party (HADEP). The party introduced the quota during the 1999 elections. Women in the Kurdish parties began a revolution for the adoption of quotas in the 1990s. They wanted the empowerment of women and an increase in the number of female representatives in the party (Mencütek, 2013). The parties had faced difficulties in adopting the quotas. Ayse Gokkan, a woman in the HADEP, had noted that the men who were in the party had objected to an increase in the number of women in the party. They always objected when women were put in top positions in the party or the candidate's lists. In the elections of 1999, HADEP didn't secure any seats in the parliament. The men objected, and felt that the reason for this failure was the huge selection of women in the party. The party had only the capability to secure a huge number of votes from the Kurdish population. HADEP agreed on the adoption of the 25% quota in the annual convention during 2000, and the agreement was put in the statutes of the party. The quota was increased to 40% during the general elections of the year 2005 (Mencütek, 2013).

Crucially, there are other parties that have largely objected to the application of gender quotas in the parties and in Turkey. The AK party is a critical example that has been associated with objections against applications and the introduction of quotas. Women in interviews have been quoted as saying that the leader of the party views quotas as dangerous to party progress. The leaders of the party believed that the application of quotas would interfere with the merit of the individuals who had been selected as the candidates of the party. They objected to the selection of women without consideration of their abilities to lead. It was required that women be given

the opportunity to practice so that they could gain the vital knowledge required for leadership. It had been proven that women in the party who had served more than once performed better in the elections that followed. The huge hindrance of the quotas is the belief that females are largely dependent on their male counterparts in the party to be selected as leaders in both the parties and the national elections (Mencütek, 2013).

There have been several efforts to introduce quotas to the party. The major move was the proposal for the introduction of a quota through a constitutional amendment. The change of Article 10 has been debated. The CHP in 2004 requested a change in the Article and inserted a clause that stated that women and men are equal (Franceschet, Krook & Piscopo, 2012). Women and NGOs supported the move in the parliament and through addresses to the media. The members of the CHP party agreed to the change, but described the change in the constitution as insignificant. Nevertheless, the quota was partially voted in because another part of the motions related to the privileges of women was not voted for. Due to the failed support from CHP party members, the amendment to the constitution failed. A second effort to introduce the quota in Turkey was made in the year 2002. In the effort of writing the new constitution, Erbatır made a proposal to the parliament on the significance of introducing the quota. She proposed that the quota of 25% should be introduced partially. She considered that the effort to introduce the quota in earlier years had failed (Mencütek, 2013).

Table 2: Political Empowerment in Turkey

Gender Gap Sub indexes	Rank	Score	Sample Average	Famale	Male	Female to Male Ratio
Political Empowerment	103	87	211			
Women in Parliament	91	0,17	0,24	14	86	0,17
Women in Ministerial Positions	121	0,04	0,19	4	96	0,04
Years with Female Head of State	31	0,06	0,2	3	47	0,06

Source: Bekhouche and Zahidi, (2013)

The low representation of women in politics has been associated with a culture that is highly oriented towards the family. This orientation towards the family is believed to hinder the empowerment of women and the provisions of basic rights and freedoms provided by the constitution. Women have been required to adhere to the responsibilities and roles they have in the family before they can make the decision to join politics. Once

they are involved in politics, they might find very little time to stay with their families. This lessened time given to family matters would go against the significant cultural considerations she is required to observe. Family-based responsibilities have contributed significantly to the lack of women's participation in the labor market and politics (Marshall, 2010). The huge consideration of the empowerment of women is the recognition of equality before the law. Moreover, societies should allow women to participate in economic developments without being restricted in any manner. The major obstacles placed in society against women cannot give women the chance to develop in economics and politics.

The pressure for the empowerment of women has been increasing on a daily basis despite the huge challenges in Turkey (Marshall, 2010). Crucially, the current president of Turkey has been saying openly that it would be difficult to equate women and men. He believes that men and women are naturally different and any effort to promote their equality is doomed to failure. Nevertheless, huge progress has been made, and it is expected that efforts for the empowerment of women will soon be realized easily. In the current period, it is seen that women and civil societies have increased the pressure on the government to empower women into politics.

2. CURRENT QUOTAS IN TURKEY

In the current situation in the political world, gender quotas remain one of the most significant tools used to promote the presence of women in the political arena (Turkish Review, 2013). National governments, female activists, and international institutions have advocated for the development of gender quotas in the political systems of specific countries. In this case, many countries have adopted some form of gender quota in the selection of female candidates over the last few decades. As the Turkish Review notes, by the year 2013 Turkey had not fallen among the countries that have adopted such concepts. However, as time passed different reforms took place in the country's political system, and the incorporation of the gender quota became evident.

To begin, there are different quotas that political parties in Turkey adopt. One of these quotas is the statutory legislative quota that provides that women should constitute at least a minimum proportion of the legislature. Second, there is the reserved seat quota that requires the preservation of a specific number of seats for women. In this case, only selected women would fill the specific positions. The other quota relates to a voluntary party. In this quota, one or more political parties in Turkey voluntarily adopt the

gender quota. The political parties in Turkey can use the adopted gender quotas in different ways so long as they meet their political desires (Turkish Review, 2013).

3. CURRENT POLITICAL SYSTEM

In June 2015, there were general elections held in Turkey (Colakoglu, 2015). In the elections, the governing party, commonly referred to as AKP, lost the outright majority in parliamentary votes for the first time in around thirteen years. Over the past and present, the system of elections in Turkey has allocated 550 seats in the parliamentary elections. The country has been recognized as having the highest election threshold. All parties that do not register at least 10% of the popular vote are barred from the legislature (Colakoglu, 2015). The long-lived prosperity of AKP can be attributed to the election threshold adopted by the nation. Although there are numerous parties that vie for elections in Turkey, only a few can meet the 10% threshold. The threshold has therefore helped the ruling party to a great extent. The constitution provides that the threshold applies only to the parties and not to the independent candidates. The Kurdish candidates have for decades run independently, since the candidates who won the majority seats in their respective regions are automatically able to enter parliament. However, in 2015, the candidates of the Kurdish party and the People's Democratic Party were able to run together under Selahattin Demirtar's leadership. Despite the fact that the People's Democratic Party participated in the 2014 general elections in Turkey, the 2015 elections marked its first efforts to win parliamentary seats (Colakoglu, 2015). As the 2015 election approached, Demirtar organized a campaign that advocated for peace and minority rights set out by the People's Democratic Party. In that case, votes were secured not only for the Kurdish people, but for women in different regions.

Following the 2015 elections, there were four parties that found spots in the legislature (Colakoglu, 2015). The AKP was among these four parties. The other parties were: the CHP, which is the main opposition party in Turkey; the MHP, which is the nationalist party in Turkey (and which also found spots in the legislature); and the HDP, the People's Democratic Party, which gathered approximately 40%, 25%, 16%, and 13% of the votes in that order (Colakoglu, 2015). The party, therefore, passed the 10% threshold. In this regard, the AKP has 258 members of parliament, the CHP has 132 members, and both the MHP and HDP have 80 members. In the current political system in Turkey, the president plays both a symbolic and

political role. The president immediately takes office; he or she stops being affiliated with any specific political party. He or she is required by the law to be neutral. In that case, the role of the president is much more diplomatic and administrative as opposed to governmental and executive.

4. HOW HAVE GENDER QUOTAS CHANGED?

As Tajali (2015) provides, the 2015 parliamentary elections in Turkey changed the face of the nation's politics and its relationship to gender quotas. The elections marked a historical change, as they proclaimed an end to single-party rule, and the number of women elected to parliament significantly increased. Moreover, it was the first time that the People's Development Party entered the parliament with a total of 13% of the national votes. The parliamentary elections witnessed an entry of a notable number of women to the Turkish parliament. In this case, approximately ninety-six women were elected to the Turkish parliament, which contains five hundred and fifty seats. The number constituted 17.5% of the total parliamentary seats. It was a dramatic increase from the 14.4% that had been recorded in the previous parliament. Women from the People's Democratic Party currently make up approximately one-third of the total number of female members of parliament in 2015 (Tajali, 2015). According to Tajali (2015), this success was achieved partly due to the gender equality platform and parity measures adopted by the People's Democratic Party. The party's equality platform advocates for positive discrimination policies until the time that women and men are viewed as equal. In that case, the party advocates for policies of equal representation across the organizations of different parties. Tajali (2015) states that the notable number of women elected to the Turkish parliament in 2015 has signaled a turning point in the way political parties, which are the main obstacles to the participation of women in parliament, will define their gender ideologies. More so, the number will determine the way in which the political parties address the underrepresentation of women in political decision-making. The ideology of feminist gender adopted by the People's Democratic Party has set it apart from the other major political parties existing in Turkey (Tajali, 2015). Most of these parties fail to recognize the fact that women should be given the same political opportunities as men.

Despite the fact that the year 2015 saw an increase in the number of female parliamentary seats, the number is still below the global average of 22.5%. Therefore, women are still underrepresented in the current parliament in Turkey. There are various reasons why women are underrepresenten-

ted in Turkey's political arena. The main reason is that there is no support for women in the political system and that there are patriarchal structures adopted by the male representatives that tend to keep women in their place. In 2010, the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip, gave a statement that confirmed the underrepresentation of women in Turkey. He said, "I do not believe in equality of women and men" (Rasmussen, 2014). He further provided that the main role of women is to be mothers and to raise children. Such a statement confirmed the current level of gender discrimination in the political systems in Turkey.

As Rasmussen (2014) provides, patriarchy is one of the reasons behind the current underrepresentation of women in the Turkish parliament. Patriarchy refers to a system of social structures and strategies in which men tend to dominate, exploit, and oppress women. Patriarchy still exists in modern Turkey. The nation is patriarchal because it tends to favor men in all its political endeavors. The social structures exist at both the public and private levels. At the public level, the state is viewed as an oppressor of women. Women become the targets of the nation's patriarchal structures. The patriarchal society and the adopted structures have significantly affected the relation between men and women in the political arena as well as the nature of the discourse about women. Again, such structures affect how women think about themselves. In that case, having a society dominated by patriarchal structures significantly affects how women perceive their underrepresentation in politics and if men or women should represent them. Nevertheless, there has been a change in how women think about female representation in the political arena. Women believe that fellow women should represent them in politics. In fact, most women believe that there should be a 21-50% representation of women in parliament (Rasmussen, 2014). The current ruling party in Turkey, the AK Party, has called for the adoption of gender quotas so as to deal with the underrepresentation of women in politics. The party has promised the liberation of women in the nation. Over the years, there have been approximately 17 governing female ministers in Turkey. One of them, Sahin, has been a minister since the 2011 elections. She has been the Minister for Social and Family Practices. During the governing of the current party in control, the party has presented four female ministers. In 2009, twenty-seven women were elected mayors in Turkish municipalities. Such a number was still low considering the fact that the total number of posts was 2,948 (Rasmussen, 2014).

Many scholars have offered numerous explanations for the underrepresentation of women in Turkish politics. Apart from the patriarchs, currently women are being judged for not staying at home to care for their

children and parents and to perform other house chores. Such an idea resembles the statements made by the Turkish prime minister earlier. Tajali (2015) describes such an idea as a structural problem for women to join politics since they are regarded as the main caregivers. In this case, gender stereotypes still apply in Turkish politics today. Women who manage to join politics at any level tend to be given roles similar to those they play at home. Another reason for the underrepresentation of women in Turkish politics is that the government and other stakeholders in politics do not see the underrepresentation as a democratic problem. Therefore, it becomes difficult to increase representation (Scharfe, 2015). Moreover, when women are chosen to candidate lists, they are often selected in only one list in which they cannot be elected. Hence, only men are elected. Women, therefore, remain at the bottom of the election lists.

Turkey has never adopted gender quotas in its politics (Rasmussen, 2014). In fact, the current governing party has often denied that gender quotas could be implemented in the country. The denial comes from both the prime minister as well as the female ministers. Nevertheless, there are two political parties that have implemented gender quotas in two different ways. One of them is the CHP, which has a 33% gender quota for female candidates on the election lists. The other party is the BDP, which has a 40% quota for women. The gender quota, in this case, is valid for elections at both the national and local levels.

Currently, there are some associations in Turkey that have addressed the issue of the underrepresentation of women in politics (Rasmussen, 2014). One of these associations is KA-DER. It is the Association for the Support and Training of Women Candidates. The association's main objective is to educate and support women candidates for politics. The stakeholders in the association believe that women and men should be represented equally in the political decision-making models. In addition, the association believes that quotas are important in Turkey for increasing the political representation of women. All the regions in Turkey with an aim of reaching out to everyone and changing the nation have represented the organization. For instance, in Istanbul the association had a project called School of Politics for Women. In the project, all women citizens were welcome to learn about politics and being a political candidate. Another current project that has been in existence since 2003 is "From Today for Tomorrow" (Rasmussen, 2014). The project aims to empower women in local politics and enhance the contact between groups at the local levels so as to share relevant information.

5. THE FUTURE OF TURKISH POLITICS AND GENDER QUOTAS

The results of the 2015 general elections showed that there can be a bright future for women in terms of their representation in the political arena. Though the number is still low compared to the world average, there is hope that in the future the nation and the accompanying political parties will change positively and significantly. As said earlier, there are associations that have come up in support of women. Such associations educate and support women regarding the importance of their representation in the political field. In that case, it is evident that in the future there could be more associations in support of women, and gender quotas will increase. It was an encouraging thing to see women represented in such a great manner. In addition, since the increase can be attributed to the new political party in parliament, it can be anticipated that more political parties will come up in the future, and the number of women in the political arena will increase. Therefore, the future of Turkish politics and gender quotas is bright, and women will continue to increase their representation in the political arena. The empowerment of women and the enhancement of equality in Turkey would be realized in the future. Mainly, the establishment of gender quotas is because women have been largely underrepresented in politics. Therefore, the empowerment of women would start with the enhancement of equity. Majorly, the predictions of the future can be made easily through consideration of the current activities taking place in the country. The change of the Ministry of Women and Gender Affairs to the Ministry for Family and Social Policies gave the minister in charge the opportunity to deal with the major issues that affect the development, equality, and empowerment of women. Nevertheless, the decision to change the name of the ministry was a huge frustration for women's organizations that wanted the ministry to be majorly oriented towards women. They believed that the change of the name was an act directed towards the oppression of women. Majorly, women noted that the change in the name would take back the efforts necessary for the promotion of equity in Turkey (Krook & Norris, 2014). Nevertheless, it was evident that the pressure for promotion of the equality of women had already gained momentum. Women have the capability to see even the simple actions of government with skepticism. Therefore, it would be very difficult for the government to take actions that oppress women without being noticed.

Nevertheless, the efforts towards realizing the empowerment of women would be hindered by cultural beliefs and the oppression of women in Turkish society. It would be difficult to have a huge number of women in

politics and the economy without obtaining the means to solve the major troubles that are facing women. Moreover, the realization of the equality and empowerment of women with the beliefs that affect the welfare of women negatively would be difficult. Women must be given enough background to empower themselves. Women in Turkey faced threats of gender violence that hindered their ability to join the power spheres (Krook & Norris, 2014). Violence against women in Turkey has a huge impact on policies that are being put in place to encourage the empowerment of women. The slaying of women has been increasing in Turkey. In 2002, sixty-six slaying cases were reported, but that number had increased to 1,011 in 2007. It was ruled that Turkey had violated its role in the prevention of violence against women in 2009 by the European Court of Human Rights.

Nevertheless, women would still realize their empowerment in the future. Majorly, women have been able to unite and fight for their rights when their rights have been objected to, or policies had been turned against their rights. The pressure and the spirit that is currently among the people would bring about a positive future for women in Turkey. Women are defending their rights in unity whenever the rights of one of them have been violated. That represents new revolutions in which women have shown that they recognize their rights, and they demand respect. The current unity among women will require that leaders in power surrender to their demands.

A great example is how women joined hands to protest the murder of Ozgecan Aslan. She was a student of psychology who was killed by a driver who had carried her away in an attempted rape. The murderer had accepted that he was involved in the criminal action. The death of Aslan caused huge protests in Turkey (Ince Yenilmez, 2015). The leaders of the lawyers under the Mersin Bar Association announced that none of its members would help the murderer in this case. The group has more than 1,600 lawyers who have been licensed to work in the region. This time, women even went against Muslim cultural beliefs in Turkey. It is required that women at funerals stay at the back and give the men a chance to carry the coffin. Nevertheless, the thousands of women who attended the funeral refused to step back despite frequent warnings from the imams. They vowed that they would not let any other man come close to her. Instead of men carrying the coffin, women carried it. The pressure had increased, and this time women were ready to fight against the violence, inequality, and oppression that had been directed against them (Ince Yenilmez, 2015).

It is evident that women are ready to go a step further—to ensure that their rights have been protected and to promote equality in Turkey.

Women have been fighting for their rights in Turkey, but their cries have not been listened to for many years. It is evident that women are ready to take action against oppression. The fact that the lawyers supported them is crucial evidence that all the people in Turkey would hear their cries. Moreover, they are ready to go against the cultural ties that have prevented their empowerment for many years.

CONCLUSION

Women have been underrepresented in Turkey, but there is a bright future for them. Political parties play a significant role in the empowerment of women. They have an important responsibility to ensure that women have gained the ability to join higher positions in politics. This is evidenced by the 2015 parliamentary elections in Turkey that changed the face of the nation's politics and its relationship to gender quotas. The elections marked a historic change in the nation as it proclaimed an end to single-party rule in the countries, and the number of women elected to the parliament significantly increased. Approximately ninety-six women were elected to the Turkish parliament, which contains five hundred and fifty seats. The number constituted 17.5% of the total parliamentary seats, a dramatic increase from the 14.4% that had been recorded in the previous parliament. Despite the fact that the year 2015 saw an increase in the number of female parliamentary seats, the number is still below the global average of 22.5%. Therefore, women are still underrepresented in the current parliament in Turkey. The main reason is that there is no support for women in the political system and that there are patriarchal structures adopted by male representatives that tend to keep women in their place. As Rasmussen (2014) provides, patriarchy is one of the reasons behind the current underrepresentation of women in the Turkish parliament. Patriarchy refers to a system of social structures and strategies in which men tend to dominate, exploit, and oppress women. It would be difficult to have a significant number of women in politics and the economy without getting the means to solve the major troubles that face women. Majorly, women have been able to unite and fight for their rights when their rights have been objected to, or when policies have been turned against their rights. The current unity among women will demand that leaders in power surrender to their demands. A great example is how women joined hands to protest the murder of Ozgecan Aslan. She was a student of psychology who was killed by a driver who had carried her away in an attempted rape. The murderer had accepted that he was involved in the criminal action. The death of Aslan caused huge protests in Turkey

(Shafak, 2015). The government should enhance the empowerment of women since it has the responsibility to do that. When women are empowered, the country has an opportunity to focus on more pressing issues that the country must address. The country's economy would grow and at the same time attain a positive reputation at the international level.

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