Gender Equality in the Turkish Parliament

- Field study- based on NGOs and MPs personal Experiences

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Abstract

Gender equality is important for a country’s development. Turkey want to be a full member of the EU, gender equality is therefore an important factor to investigate. This research paper aims to address the reasons for women’s low representation in the decision-making positions, mainly in the Turkish Parliament. The purpose is to understand what casual mechanisms that impact the women representation at the national level in the Turkish Parliament. The research methods is carried out with in-depth interviews namely, semi-structured interviews in Turkey with four Members of Parliament, a gender-expert lawyer and three women’s organizations namely, Kadin Adaylari Destekleme Dernegi and Ucan Süpürge, while the interview with Türk Üniversiteli Kadinlar Dernegi consists of group interview. Furthermore relevant literature was used in order to complement the interviews. The overarching theoretical framework used in the thesis consists of gender theory and complementary different concept definitions, namely, Culture Matters, Low representation of Women, Modernization and Patriarchy. These concepts have been the foundation of the analysis and have added understanding of the reasons for women’s low representation in the Turkish Parliament. The common perception of the interviewees to solutions were quotas, increase the education, to start with democracy first in the family, make the society aware of the problem of gender inequality. The main conclusions drawn from this research were that the government and the NGOs are aware of the problems on gender equality; they are working together to combat the inequality between sexes. The government is also aware of that they have reached a certain level of gender equality in the Parliament compared to the last decades. The process of gender equality is slowly developing but there is a will to achieve gender equality in the Turkish Parliament.

Key Words: Women’s low representation, gender equality, education, hindrances
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Abbreviations

AKP Justice and Development Party
BDP Peace and Democracy Party
CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CHP Republican People’s Party
EU European Union
KA’DER The Association for the Support of Women Candidates
KEFEK The Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men
MHP Nationalist Movement Party
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
TÜKD Turkish University Women’s Organization
UN United Nations
Ucan Süpurge Flying Broom
1. Introduction

*If a test of civilization be sought, none can be so sure as the conditions of that half of society [women] over which the other half [men] has power*

- Harriet Martineau, “Women” (1837)

This introductory chapter provides the reader the thesis act. The focus of this research is discussed and justified and overall aim and the previous research are identified.

1.1 Examining Gender Inequality

The issue of gender inequality started to gain global attention in the end of the twentieth century. The addition of women and women’s rights as a theme within international development was triggered by the UN Decade for Women which began in 1976. During these years women’s organizations developed all around the world which greatly contributed to bringing issues concerning women to the forefront. The issue of women’s rights has slowly evolved into an issue of human rights and was officially proclaimed this at the Vienna World Conference in 1993. Moreover women’s empowerment and health were made the focus points of a number of sustainable development programs presented at the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development in 1994. Two years afterwards a platform was adopted in order to promote and protect the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women.¹

Since 1999 Turkey has been a candidate to join the European Union. The accession process has been difficult for Turkey but the country has made improvements in a number of different areas such as democratization. To complete the candidateship Turkey needs to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria which consist of stability of

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¹ Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, Rising Tide- Gender equality and cultural change around the world, (United Kingdom: Cambridge Press, 2003), 3.
Institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union. Turkey made significant progress but there are still areas in need of development for example in gender equality. The following statistic is very telling of the current state of gender equality in the country: there is 550 Members of Parliament in Turkey whereas only 79 are women. This project seeks to examine the state of gender inequality in Turkish politics, namely in the Turkish Parliament. The foundations of these shortcomings and the corrective measures that have been undertaken in Turkey in recent years to promote equal representation in the Turkish Parliament will also be examined.

This study was carried out during an eight-week field study in Turkey, between February and April 2012. The research relies exclusively on qualitative methods of data collection, namely in-depth interviews with three women’s organizations as well as with four members of Parliaments and one gender-expert lawyer. In addition to the interviews, I participated in one seminar and one conference. The seminar, called Violence Against Women at took place at Istanbul Kutur University and the conference, called International Convention on the role of national gender equality machinery for a more equal society for all, was held in Ankara. This thesis analyzes the interviews based on gender theory and concepts such as culture matters, patriarchy, women’s low representation, and modernization.

1.2 Outline of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis is as follows: the thesis beings with an outline of the aim of the study as well as, the formulation of the research topic and questions and an outline of previous research. The second chapter outlines theoretical framework of this research. Chapter three explains the qualitative methodology and the approaches

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used for this study. A historical background on how women’s political rights developed in Turkey and their evolving role in the Turkish Parliament is presented in the fourth chapter, which is followed by a presentation of KEFEK (The Committee on Opportunity for Equal representation for women and men), and women’s organizations that have been investigated in this research. Chapter five presents the empirical data: the results of the interviews and the literature that have been collected. Chapter six consists of the analysis of the empirical data. The discussions of the results are presented in chapter seven and finally the last chapter consists of concluding remarks.

1.3 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this project is to understand the reasons contributing to the under-representation of women in the Turkish Parliament. The key questions of this thesis concerns Turkish women’s low participation in politics, namely the possible reasons for this and what improvements have been made by the government and women’s organizations in order to improve this situation.

1.4 Problem Formulation and Delimitation

At the present time there has been a lot of discussion about gender inequality in the Turkish Parliament. I am aware that there are a number of different areas in which gender inequality exists within the Turkish society and therefore can be studied (e.g. education, labor market etc.). However, this thesis focuses on one particular area of gender inequality in Turkey, that been, the low level of women representatives in the Turkish Parliament. The interest to investigate this topic arises from the most recent elections in Turkey 2011 when a great deal of effort was put towards promoting women in the Parliament. The results showed a 5% increase of women representatives in Parliament compared to the previous elections in 2009. This is an impressive increase for any country, developed or developing. This research relies on qualitative interviews with women’s organizations, members of Parliament and a gender-expert lawyer in order to investigate the reasons contributing to women’s low representation in the Parliament.
1.5 Previous Research

There have been previous research in this field but there is a lack of investigations in the English language. The other existing studies which have looked at the problem of the lack of women in the Turkish Parliament have based their investigations on data gathered exclusively from insights from members of Parliament or insights from womenís organizations. No study to date has ever combined insights from both groups of informants into a single holistic study. This dual perspective is necessary for my perspective because I am also interesting in understanding how the Turkish Parliament has been collaborating with womenís organizations to address this issue.

In the last two decades major contributions have been made to the academic field of gender studies by notable scholars. Among others, Mona Lena Krook states that there are substantial cross-national variations in women´s representation globally. Rwanda and Sweden have more or less equal numbers of women and men in their national assemblies, while the Belize and Saudi Arabia have no females at all. The different explanations gathered from research shows that there are political, economic and cultural factors that affect the number of women representations in the parliament in different countries. Furthermore, socio-economical factors do matter, Krook argues that the more educated women are, the more involved they are in the labor force which in turn facilitates their move into higher social and economic roles. This increases women´s influence in politics.4

Previous research by Ayse Gunes Ayata and Fatma Tütüncü titled Party Politics of the AKP (2002-2007) and the Predicaments of Women at the Intersection of the Westernist, Islamist and Feminist Discourses in Turkey focus on women’s right in the AKP era. The authors discuss the factors contributing to the under-representation of women in Turkish politics. They highlight that Erdogan, the Turkish Prime Minister, argues that under-representation of women in politics is because of their low overall participation in political and social life. Furthermore Ayata and Tütüncü stress the need women representatives from each of Turkey’s 81 provinces as opposed to just

the cities as is currently the case. The paper discusses a couple of interviews made with the AKP. The respondent’s think that the problem of under-representation is because of women’s shyness, indifference, motherhood and their home-oriented perspectives. The article by Ayata and Tütüncü is limited only the AKP era and is therefore not representative for all parties in the Parliament.

Özgür Güldü and Müge Ersoy-Kart also discuss the exclusion of women in the politics. Güldü and Ersoy-Kart argue that there are four important factors that affects the interest in political participation; gender role socialization, socio-economic factors, human capital and political orientation. This article is generally discussing the obstacles for women to participate in politics but they have not discussed the issue of the improvements made by the government and the NGOs. In addition there is a lack of suggestions concerning ideas on how to increase women’s political representation.

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6 Ayata and Tütüncü, “Party Politics of the AKP (2002-2007) and the Predicaments of Women at the Intersection of the Westernist, Islamist and Feminist Discourses in Turkey”.

2. Theoretical Framework

There is a need to develop a theoretical framework that enables us to understand the logic of the hindrances for women that affect their slow development in gender equality. Gender theory and four complementary concepts have been selected as analytical tools for the investigation of women’s low representation in the Turkish Parliament. They are as follows: Culture Matters, Women’s Low Representation, Modernization and Patriarchy.

2.1 Gender Theory

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, identities and expectations assigned to men and women. Gender experts (Connell 2002, Butler 1990) do not stress that gender is something that “is” instead is gender something we “do”. This means that the gender process depends on one’s identity and at same time it permeates all levels of society, all institutions, structures and sites. This means that one needs to problematize the effects of gender roles on social relations and structures. Even if gender is a social construction, it is not merely an imposition by those in power in society. In order to ‘structure’ the society, there is some kind of need for a gender order. Gender roles give people an identity. According to Connell people enjoy their gender polarity, the social norms to be a ‘feminine female’ or to be ‘masculine’ is a part of ones identity. Furthermore, Connell states that everyone combines masculine and feminine characteristics to different extents. There are hierarchies not just between men and women, but also within each sex – hierarchies of power for example. Fascinatingly, because the ‘masculine’ is associated with power that base on the traditional notions of masculinity tends to be despised more so than deviations from the feminine notion.

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8 Mia Liinason “Vad är Genus?” Socialmedicinsk tidskrift Vol.85. No. 3 (2008), 264
9 Mia Liinason “Vad är Genus?” Socialmedicinsk tidskrift Vol.85. No. 3 (2008), 265
There is four main structures in the modern system of gender relations namely, *power relations, production relations, emotional relations* and *symbolic relations*.\textsuperscript{12}

*Power relations* are central to *patriarchy* where women take the second role in power relations. The institutionalization of power relations means that men or the state have direct control over women.\textsuperscript{13}

*Production relations* are about different work tasks that are made by men and women e.g. women are seen as housewives while men are breadwinners. This kind of division of labor is common throughout history and across cultures.\textsuperscript{14} *Emotional relations* are often interwoven with power and division of labor (e.g. figures of mother and father).\textsuperscript{15} (Sigmund Freud 1990) highlighted the patterns of relationships importance of the social institution. Thus, Freud paved the way of exploration of structures of emotional relationships, ties of commitment. This is an important dimension of gender which often is interrelated with power relations and division of labor.\textsuperscript{16}

*Symbolic relations* are about the central meanings of gender. People have expectations of the different genders e.g. when we are speaking of a woman or a man we have different understandings of the gender, which perhaps is accumulated through our cultural history.\textsuperscript{17}

The four structures of gender relations are further explained by the concepts below. The Power relations are explained by the concept of patriarchy, the Production relations are explained by the culture matters and women’s low representation, the Emotional relations of gender relations are also interwoven with women’s low representation where the emotional relations begins in childhood and continues to adulthood which can be interpreted as the cause of power and division of labor between genders. Lastly, both the concepts culture matters and the women’s low representation more precisely explain the Symbolic relations of gender relations within gender theory.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 81-92.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 81-83.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 84-86.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 86.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 89-91.
2.1 Culture Matters

The term ‘culture matters’ has been devised for this thesis as a means of conceptualizing and articulating that culture has a significant influence on matters in gender roles. According to Inglehart and Norris, two leading academics within the field of gender studies, discuss social construction of gender roles and the learned behavior of women and men that is associated with the biological characteristics of female and male.\textsuperscript{18} Inglehart and Norris point out that in some societies, the roles of men and women are given by the society regarding labor, either in work or at home. While in others there are fewer social expectations and the difference between the sexes are just seen as biological difference and the roles are more interchangeable.\textsuperscript{19}

Where a culture of gender equality predominates, it provides a climate where de jure legal rights are more likely to be translated into de facto rights in practice; where institutional reforms are implemented in the workplace and public sphere; where women embrace expanded opportunities to attain literacy, education and employment; and where the traditional roles of women and men are transformed within the household and family.\textsuperscript{20}

Furthermore Inglehart and Norris point out that cultural change is a necessary condition for gender equality. The authors assert that the first step of change needs to be from the women themselves before they can hope to change society. After this personal change takes place, the cultural change will lead to mass mobilization of women’s movements and support politics that speed the process of gender equality.\textsuperscript{21} Inglehart and Norris highlight that culture matters but it is unclear how much it matters. They claim that it matters compared to the level of social development and the legal-institutional structures in a country.\textsuperscript{22} The authors stress that in developing countries both women and men accept the traditional division of gender roles in the home, family and workplace. Both sexes accept that they have different roles as breadwinner or caregiver. Furthermore the two authors stress that the young educated generation is becoming dissatisfied with the traditional categorization, but they assert

\textsuperscript{18} Inglahart and Noris Rising Tide; Gender equality and cultural change around the world, 8.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid,9.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
that most women in this society would nonetheless willingly accept the traditional roles at home, leaving men to occupy in the public domain.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{2.2 Women´s Low Representation}

Janet Clark mentions a number of common theories on low representation within feminist theory. According to Clark is the moralistic state culture higher in women representation compared to the traditionalistic state culture, which have the lower number of women representation. Furthermore she states that a second set of theories points out the reason of women´s low representation in public office depends on the gender role socialization, where men and women expect to have different roles in life. Clark highlights these theories that women are home-oriented while men are independent, assertive and achievement oriented.\textsuperscript{24} Out of this, the politics and public life are the man´s world while the home is the woman´s sphere. According to Clark, gender socialization begins in childhood and continues to adulthood. Women´s male colleagues do not accept women who want to be in public office, women face obstacles such as psychological pain and they cannot classify themselves with non-political women.\textsuperscript{25} This limits women´s desire to enter to public office and it will only be a few women that have noticed “counter socialization” who will seek public office.

Another view on the problem of gender inequality is women´s family responsibilities hinder their political participation. Clark stresses that women are forced to take on responsibility for their family which requires them to give too much energy, which in turn hinders them from actively participating in politics. Women´s housework takes up the majority of their time and therefore they do not have time for public office. Clark mentions a belief that male conspiracy theory that is based on feminist ideology and it is about the men who discriminate against women, to explain women´s low representation. Furthermore she states that women are less likely than men to become incumbents and therefore less chance to get into office.\textsuperscript{26} Lastly, Clark stresses that

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 42.  
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid,75.
women have difficult to competing with men because of men’s power, prestige and desirability of political office has affected women’s low representation.\textsuperscript{27}

\subsection*{2.3 Modernization}

Modernization theory is a large theory encompassing many different disciplines as it seek to explain how society progresses, development of societies and pursues the process of social evaluation. Furthermore it assumes that “traditional” countries can be brought to development in the same manner more developed countries have. Modernization theorists Karl Marx, and Daniel Bell have argued that economic developments affect the cultural changes. Contrast to that, Max Weber and Samuel Huntington have claimed that cultural values continuing influence on society.\textsuperscript{28}

Modernization theory (Almond and Powell 1968; Levy, 1966, Rostow, 1991) has been used to explain how a country will achieve gender equality by socio-economic changes. The modernization approach highlights that all nations grow from traditional, underdeveloped societies to fully modern societies by following the similar way as the Western societies modernization process. The modernization process disrupts traditional cultures and social structures by its economic development, which affects changes in culture, social and political life.\textsuperscript{29} According to Inglehart and Baker with industrialization, societies raise their educational level and increasing income levels which brings unpredicted changes such as changes in gender roles, attitudes toward authority and sexual norms and broader political participation.\textsuperscript{30} Furthermore Inglehart and Baker addresses that elite controls of a state and military can in a long run resist this change.\textsuperscript{31} This was exactly the case in Turkey: from 1960-1989 the increase in the number of women in the Parliament stalled. This was a result of the elite controls of the state and later on military coup that decreased the number of women in the Parliament.\textsuperscript{32} This statistic shows us that

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{27}Ibid, 74-75.
\bibitem{28}Ronald Inglahart and Wayne E.Baker ”Modernization, Cultural Change and the Persistence of Traditional Values” American Sociological Review, Vol. 65 No. 1, Looking forward, Looking Back: Continuity and Change at the Turn of the Millennium (Feb.2000).
\bibitem{29}Ibid, 21.
\bibitem{30}Ibid.
\bibitem{31}Ibid.
\bibitem{32}Yaraman ”72 Yilin Ardindan Kadin Icermeyen Siyaset”, 19.
\end{thebibliography}
one of the reasons to Turkey’s slow development in gender equality is the state control of elites and military coup. The non-familiar social and economic shifts symbolize postindustrial societies. The changes has been in form of; a rise of highly educated people, skilled labor, rising living standards, the expansion and fragmentation of mass media channels, the growth of multilayered governance, with power shifting away from the nation-state toward global and local levels, the expansion of nonprofit social protection schemes; the destruction of the traditional family and growing equality of sex roles within the home, family and workforce. The socioeconomic changes have an impact on the modernization process on gender equality.\textsuperscript{33} The modernization thought tends to have a deterministic point of view. A belief that everything is moving towards democracy, equality and market economy, which always ends in the western democracies.

2.4 Patriarchy

Patriarchy is based on hierarchical power relations between men and women. Several feminist writers (Carole Pateman 1988, Sylvia Walby 1990) explain the ‘Patriarchy’ as a social system that is oppressive to women. According to Walby “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”.\textsuperscript{34} Pateman argues that ‘patriarchy’ refers to a political power but the political theorists have ignored that during the twentieth century. Since the seventeenth century several feminists have noted that political theorists have upheld the patriarchal right. A couple of organized feminist movements have brought back the ‘patriarchy’ into the academic currency in the late 1960s.\textsuperscript{35} Patriarchy describes a society characterized by current and historical unequal power relations between women and men. Women are subordinated to men and are under-representation in public office, in decision-making positions and in politics.\textsuperscript{36} Yesim Arat stresses that the explanation to the content of patriarchy limit’s women to come into the decision-making positions in public world. Furthermore she states, “Even when women exercise effective power within the private realm, the legitimacy of traditional male power in the public world

\textsuperscript{33} Inglehart and Norris, Rising Tide- Gender equality and cultural change around the world, 12-15.
\textsuperscript{35} Carole Pateman The sexual contract (California: Stanford University press, 1988), 19.
keeps women away from political/public life”.

Moreover Arat stresses that the explanation of power relations between men and women in society offers a macro-level analysis.

“It is within this structure of power relations that I trace female politicians’ perception of obstacles in political life and see the extent to which these obstacles can be understood in terms of the power dynamics between genders.”

2.5 Clarification of the Coherent Concepts

To clarify for the reader it should be mentioned that this research study is characterized by gender theory and concepts that are interrelated to gender theory and similar to each other but highlights different angles. The following explains the different reasons on women’s low representation in the Turkish Parliament.

The two different concepts that are most fitting for this investigation, Culture matters and Women’s Low Representation, are complimentary to one another in that they seek to explain different angles of the issue being investigated; women’s low representation in the Parliament. The concept Culture matters highlights the influence culture has on the level of equality between genders in a society. Similarly the concept Women’s Low Representation considers the family responsibilities bestowed on women and how they hinder her political participation due to a lack of time. Women’s role in the family is emphasized. Furthermore, Modernization and the concept Culture Matters focus on developments within a society and how such changes affect gender equality. The socio-economic development is raised by the Modernization concept. Societal development does not take place in isolation, thus development in one area of society often spurs further development in other areas. For instance, an increase of women in the workforce has an impact on a society’s culture as women’s household responsibilities are forced to adapt to the decrease in time women spend inside the home. The two concepts are interrelated in the sense that they spur development in each other’s focus area. Lastly, Patriarchy and Women’s Low Representation are derived from feminist theory and focus on unequal power

37 Ibid, 357.
38 Ibid.
relations between men and women from two different angles. In this investigation these two concepts are used to investigate reasons contributing to women’s low presence in a certain sphere of society – namely the Parliament. According to Patriarchy, women’s low presence is a result of men’s domination in society forcing women to take a secondary role. The concept Women’s Low Representation asserts that women’s role in the household, and their domestic responsibilities prevents larger numbers of women from leaving the home and entering the Parliament. This theoretical framework will be used as tools in chapter six in order to analyze the empirical data gathered from interviews and complementary literature to give an understanding to women’s low representation in the Turkish Parliament.
3. Methodology

This chapter discusses and justifies research strategy and data collection techniques (centered on semi-structured interviews). However, the research approach that has been used in order to achieve the results that are presented in this study. Furthermore the section describes the information gathering, a short presentation of the respondents, the trustworthiness and the problematic of interviews.

3.1 Nature of Investigation

The aim for the interviews conducted in this research is to analyze their specific experiences and their perception of obstacles for women to get into politics as well as what kind of improvements could be made in order to increase women’s political participation in the Turkish Parliament. In total eight interviews were made with relevant respondents working with the issue of gender inequality in the Turkish Parliament. The respondents can be categorized into three different groups– male and female members of Parliament in Turkey, women’s non-governmental organizations and a gender-expert lawyer.

All interviews were based on the same themes, namely, obstacles for women entering the Turkish Parliament, the actors’ role in increasing number of women in political representations and general questions about the parties and NGOs views on gender inequality. The interviews were conducted in the Turkish language which I transcribed into English. The reason for conducting the interviews in Turkish was because the respondents were Turkish, thus they were understandably most comfortable speaking in their mother tongue. Since I am fluent in Turkish it was not a problem for me to conduct the interviews with them in Turkish which enabled them to speak freely. The questions were open and the respondent had the chance to give own personal opinion within the asked question. The interviews lasted approximately
twenty minutes to one hour. A recorder was used during the most of the interviews for ease of transcriptions.\textsuperscript{39}

In addition to the interviews two important meetings, namely, one seminar and one conference, where different scholars and ministers participated and made different speeches on gender equality were also the source of data. The first seminar was at Istanbul Kultur University 5\textsuperscript{th} of March about \textit{Violence Against Women}. The second conference was 22\textsuperscript{nd} of March at the Hilton Hotel in Ankara about \textit{International Convention on the role of national gender equality machinery for a more equal society}. Different ministers participated on, such as Fatma Sahin, Minister of Family and Social Policies and Cemil Cicek the current speaker of the Parliament. The secondary data used was collected from different libraries in Istanbul and Ankara but mostly from \textit{Women’s library and information foundation} in Istanbul and consists of academic literature, electronic sources, and local official reports. The main book that has been used in this study has been \textit{Kadinin Karar Mekanizmalarinda Temsilinin ve Gücünün Artırılması Semineri} edited by Ambassador Murat Bilhan and Arzu Tek.\textsuperscript{40} This book has been conducted from a seminar on “To increase women’s representation on decision-making positions” at Istanbul Kultur University in December 2010. The book consists of transcriptions of different experts about the reasons of low participation of women in decision-making positions and Parliament.

\section*{3.2 Qualitative Methods}

Qualitative in-depth interviews are the most appropriate methods for the study because the focus is on attempting to understand a select group of women’s experience, the thoughts and which kind of work they are doing in order to achieve gender equality in Turkish Parliament.

The reason for qualitative research and interviews was obvious when I received scholarship from the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. The most suitable interview techniques for this research are semi-structured and group interviews. The


\textsuperscript{40} Murat Bilhan et. al., Kadinin Karar Mekanizmalarinda Temsilinin Gücünün Arttırılması Semineri (Istanbul: Golden Medya Matbaacilik ve Tic. A.S,2011).
difference between structured and unstructured interviews are that, in structured interviews specific questions are asked decided upon beforehand while in unstructured interviews the interviewer and the interviewee carry out a more informal conversation without a formal research agenda and structured questions. The strengths of interviews are to have the ability to discuss the latest issues by engaging with respondents. A quantitative approach was not appropriate since numbers and statistics were not used.

In addition, an extensive literature review was conducted, focusing on the existing studies that have been conducted on gender inequality in the Turkish Parliament in Turkish. The data presented in this literature is used in parallel to the interviews in order to check the data for validity and/or new findings.

3.2.1 Before the Interviews

The first step was to gather background information on the different women’s organizations then the questions were prepared in the Turkish language. The questions was posed broadly to increase the likelihood of gaining new information and to not affect the answers of the respondents. In order to structure the sample of interviewees I selected group of individuals specifically because of who they are, namely the most relevant women’s organizations where checked and contacted via e-mail in order to book interviews. The contact with Members of Parliament was made through a friend who is working as advisor at the Development and Justice Party (AKP). She was as a gatekeeper between the members of Parliament and myself and she helped me to get in touch with the MPs. I went to Ankara the week after the women’s day and conducted the interviews in 10 days. During my visit in the Parliament, I also came across with an unexpected interview with a lawyer that is familiar with the issue of gender equality in the Parliament that I had a chance to make an interview with her.

42 Bimber, "Bimber’s Informal Guide to Elite Interviewing for Honors Undergraduates", (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2004), 1-5.
3.2.2 Presentation of the Interviewees

The interviewees will be codified because some of the respondents wanted to be unidentified. The codification will be by sexes and parties- women organization’s names and the only woman lawyer will be presented by her name. The Members of Parliament that have been interviewed has been one woman MP from Justice and Development Party (AKP), one woman from Republican People’s Party (CHP), one man from AKP who is member of The Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men (AKP)\(^43\) and one man from Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). I had some strategic considerations on specific MPs that I wanted to interview but all of them were not able to have an interview with and I wanted to have representational view of both men and women on the issue of gender equality in the Parliament. Only one party Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) fall out from this research and the reason was that they were too busy to make an interview with. It is important to have a representative view and the choice of these parties was obvious though all these parties are in the Parliament. It is necessary to highlight both the women and men perspectives on this issue and get their feelings about gender inequality and how they are collaborating with one another to address the issue. All MP’s that have been interviewed except the male respondent from BDP are members of The Committee on Gender Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men.

3.2.3 Respondent Selection

The interview respondents selected for this investigation are considered relevant and important influences the question of women’s political participation. MPs are chosen since it is their perception to affect the question of gender equality. The gender-expert lawyer is familiar with the problem and the women’s organizations are seen as representative for their organization and as gender equality experts. It is important to get the respondents experiences, since the aim with this research is to understand what obstacles that hinder women to reach the level of decision-making positions and the

\(^{43}\) The Committee on Gender Equality of Opportunity for women and men is a committee that includes 26 members whereas only 5 are men.
improvements by the actors in order to increase the level of female representations in Turkish Parliament.

3.3 Methodological Challenges

I prepared around seven questions to the MPs and I knew that I should take out the most important questions to ask otherwise the time should not be enough. I expected to meet at least one MP from each party but a pitfall in this study exist though a MP from the MHP could not be interviewed because lack of time. I got the chance to record all interviews except one, which I was not given permission to record. I was therefore forced to take notes during the interview, which I found to be difficult to do while carrying on my interview conversation.44 For this reason it was important to go through the interview afterward and identify the unclear parts to try and fill in any missing context where possible from my memory. To have interviews without a tape recorder can have a negative impact as it affects the researcher’s flexibility on the ability to pose follow-up questions. Making interviews with elites is difficult though there is lack of time for the interviews and one get stressed about to prove unsuccessful.

Another problem that I came across with was when I went to the TÜKD I expected that I would have interview with one person in order to have semi-structured interview. There was a meeting for the members of the NGO the particular day I went there and a number of women attended the meeting. I decided therefore to make a group interview instead of my original plan in order to get the experience from the different participants of the NGO. The head of the NGO started to explain the goals of the NGO, how they are working and how they are supporting the girls in universities, while the others participated occasionally.

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3.4 My Personal Experience of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

During my period in Ankara, I spent around 10 days in the Parliament. To come in touch with the MPs I used a gatekeeper who is an advisor to a Member of Parliament in order to book meetings with other MPs. Without her, it would not be possible for me to get in touch with the MP’s. It is very difficult to book a meeting beforehand since the MPs program can change over a day. There is a place called “kulis” which is a backstage where the MPs one can meet. It is kind of a meeting hall with sofas and the group rooms for each party are around that hall. Tuesdays is the day when the different parties in the Parliament have their group meetings which are shown on TV. Most of my interviews with the MPs were conducted in this “backstage space”. The hierarchy in the Parliament could easily be felt. The relationship to the elites and people in higher-positions is very special in Turkey that occurs from the culture. It is not the same as in some European countries that you call the people that have higher position than you, as “you” in singular, instead you need to call them “You” in plural in order to show your respect.

Something that I never imagined before I went to the Parliament, was that the citizens that have voted for different MPs had the chance to come to the Parliament in order to tell the MPs their problem so they could find a solution to that. The citizens needed to book a meeting with the MPs by calling the MPs advisors in order to get the chance to come into the Parliament to tell about their problems and expected the problems to be solved.

3.5 Validity, Reliability and Bias

According to John Biggam a valid is research that is acceptable to the research community.\(^{45}\) Biggam argues that one’s research is valid once when the empirical work is implementing. First from the selection of research strategy, next the collection and analysis of the data, in a suitable way that fits your research approach.\(^{46}\) This

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\(^{46}\) Ibid, 99.
research aimed to investigate the elites thoughts about improvements and reasons for low representation of women in the Parliament and decision making-positions. It aimed to be done with semi-structured interviews. Different interview questions were prepared, one for the women MPs in order to get their view of what they are feeling of being a woman representative in the Parliament, one for the men MPs in order to get to know how they are supporting the women in the Parliament and decision-making positions and one common for women’s organizations, to see how they are working to affect the improvements of gender equality in the Parliament and the decision-making positions. The aim of this research was foremost the views of the elites in the Parliament, namely, the MPs from each party that are representative for the Parliament, and the women’s organizations on gender equality. However, it cannot be interpret as 100% valid though there is one pitfall to be fully representative and that is the view of an MP from the MHP. Three of four parties in the Parliament have been conducted. The most important of women’s organization was to interview KA’DER because it is the only NGO in Turkey, working for gender equality in the Turkish politics. The validity of this research is strong.

On the other hand according to Biggam reliability is a concept of trust.\(^{47}\) He considers that one must demonstrate whom you researched, where you made the data collection, how the research has been conducted (e.g. interview questions) and what have been found (e.g. transcripts of interviews).\(^{48}\) This research is reliable, as mentioned above, all interviews have been conducted in Istanbul and Ankara and they have been conducted in the Turkish language. Most of the interviews except one have been tape-recorded and are available in audio file. However, all interviews have been transcribed, even that one that has been conducted by notes. The most important parts, used in this research have been translated into English, rest of the interview transcriptions are available in the Turkish language.

According to Biggam bias can arise when there are prejudice or affect your research. The bias did not affect the reliability of this research. I did not know the respondents beforehand and it was a specific group of MPs in the Parliament who were interviewed but the sampling of the different MPs was not known before. Even the

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\(^{47}\) Ibid, 100.

\(^{48}\) Ibid.
NGOs that I interviewed were not known before. I am aware of that there are many different women’s organizations working for women’s issues and gender equality in different areas but KA’DER is the only one working on the specific issue of gender equality in Turkish politics which can be interpret as representative.

4. Background of the Case

This chapter will present background information concerning Turkish women since 1934. In particular this section looks at how Turkish women have gained their right to vote and to run for Parliament, as well as further developments beyond these major developments. Moreover, KEFEK and the women’s organizations KA’DER, TÜKD and Ucan Süpürge that have been investigated in this study will be presented in this section.

4.1 Women’s Right to be Elected in the Turkish Parliament

The Turkish republic was built in 1923. In that year, there was a huge reform in Turkey, which was positive for the women. In 1923 Atatürk created “Kadinlar Halk Firkası” which was a party for women’s rights in social, economic and political life. Later on, in 1924 there was an association for women called “Türk Kadinlar Birliği” to secure women’s social and political rights. It was first, in 1935 that women had the right to be elected into the Parliament. The same year people in the Parliament discussed for the first time to change the law regarding the Turkish women’s political rights. The law stressed that for every 20,000 “men inhabitant” there will be one MP elected. The discussions were about if women should be included in this or not.49 Women did not have any political rights in the constitution in 1924 it was only men who were 18 years old that could participate in voting for the parliamentary candidates. Men needed to be over 30 years old to be elected as a Member of Parliament.50 The new law that was implemented in 1924 promoted equal rights for both sexes. The Turkish civil law came into force in 1926 and prohibited polygamy

50 Ibid, 167.
marriages which gave women new civilized rights. The oppression over women partly disappeared within the creation of the Turkish republic’s secular state.\textsuperscript{51} Women acquired the right to participate in local elections. In 1933 there were changes in the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 25\textsuperscript{th} paragraph of the village law in order to allow for women’s participation and election to the demarche. There was a demonstration made by women in 1934 in order to promote women’s rights. Women walked to the Parliament and demonstrated that they wanted their political rights. During the women’s demonstration, when Atatürk was working in his office he stated: “The women have the right to have their position in the Parliament”.\textsuperscript{52} The government made changes the 5\textsuperscript{th} of December 1934 in the 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} paragraphs in the law that was implemented in 1924. The changes that have been made were regarding the women and men who are 30 years have the right to be elected and every Turk who was 22 years old had the right to vote.\textsuperscript{53} İsmet İnönü who was the advisor to Atatürk stated 5\textsuperscript{th} December 1934 during the negotiations about the new constitution that the women can be elected as ministers, furthermore he stressed that Atatürk did not gave the right to women to be generous, the women fight for their rights during the liberation war and they showed that they deserved the right. Atatürk argued, “I believe that the political and social rights used by women are essential for human happiness and prestige”.\textsuperscript{54} There were 18 women in the Parliament in 1935. The 1950’s elections exposed women to political competition. The power was in the hands of an anti-democratic movement in the 1950’s and this was the reason for women’s low representation in the Parliament that decreased to 8 MPs in 1957.\textsuperscript{55} Furthermore in the 1960’s Parliamentary life was interrupted. The “democracy” indicator was not included in the discourse of the state right after the elections in 1961 when the new constitution was established. As a result of the struggle of social and political opposition the women MPs remained at 3.\textsuperscript{56} On the 12\textsuperscript{th} of September 1980 there was a military coup in Turkey which prohibited social and political organizations. The first opposition which made its voice heard was the women’s opposition in 1982.\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 168.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Aysegul Yaraman “72 Yılin Ardından Kadın İçermeyen Siyaset” (Kadin Hareketi Tarihi Marmara University, Public Administration (2006), 18.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. 19.
\end{flushleft}
4.1.1 Statistics on Women’s Representation in the Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Number of MPs in the Parliament</th>
<th>Number of Women MPs</th>
<th>Total number of women in the Parliament (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics from KA’DER\(^{58}\)

One interesting point should be addressed that there is lack of literature on women’s representation in the Turkish Parliament since 1935.\(^{59}\) The table above shows the statistics of the elections since 1935-2011. As you can see, improvements begin at end of the twentieth century. The increase of women’s NGOs can be interpreted as a result of the efforts to increase of women’s representation in the Turkish Parliament. Some of the women’s NGOs that are actively working with gender equality have been investigated in this study. These women’s organizations were chosen because of their different ideologies: for instance the NGO KA’DER is promoting women candidates in politics, TÜKD is promoting girls in universities and the Ucan Süpürge is a women bulletin that are publishing news regarding women issues.

\(^{58}\) The Association for the Support of Women Candidates

\(^{59}\) To be noted; there was a problem of finding literature on women’s representation in the Parliament after the year 1934. The information on the developments since 1934 in this study was gathered from the women’s library and information center foundation in Istanbul.
4.2 The Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men (KEFEK)

The Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men (KEFEK) was established 24th of March 2009. “The aim of this Committee is to regulate the establishment, functions, competence, working procedures and the guiding principles of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men (Committee) of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to be established with a view to monitor the developments in Turkey and in the international arena concerning women and men, informing the Grand Assembly of Turkey about these developments, debating issues referred to the Committee and if asked, for submitting their opinion to the main committee on the bills.”. 60 The Committee has 26 members and 5 of them are men.

4.3 The Association for the Support and Training of Women Candidates (KA´DER)

KA´DER is the Association for the Support and Training of Women Candidates. It works for the equal representation of women and men in all fields of life. The equal representation in all elected and appointed decision-making positions is important for KA´DER’s image. The association was found in 1997 and aims to increase the number of women in politics and decision-making positions in order to achieve equal representation of men and women in all fields. 61 It is the only NGO in Turkey that is working with issues concerning gender equality in Turkish politics, more precisely in the Turkish Parliament.

4.4 The Association of University Women (TÜKD)

TÜKD is an Association of University Women founded in 1949 by the first women graduates of Turkish Republic. TÜKD aims to cooperate with university managements and with the relevant national and international corporate organizations

to increase the number of women university graduates. It makes projects in order to increase the number of young women in school. In particular they organize different scholarship-programs, as well as different training programs to raise attention about women’s empowerment in politics and decision-making in different areas for student girls and to create and develop intellectual and modern graduate women students. TÜKD also promote to implement the International Conventions in order to achieve gender equality in Turkey.62

4.5 Flying Broom (Ucan Süpürge)

Flying Broom was founded and began its activities in 1996. The aim of Flying Broom was to establish a network between women’s NGOs and to function as an information and documentation center. Over the years, the organization has raised many funds from both national and international sources towards the implementation of projects under the scope of improving women’s status and capacity. A large number of volunteers from women’s NGOs, the media, universities, and individual activist are supporting the Flying Broom. By promoting women's empowerment, the organization also aims to contribute to the process of democratization and the development of a civil society in Turkey, in accordance with the international gender equality norms and principles formulated at Beijing (1995) and other international conferences and summits.63

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5. Empirical Research Findings

This chapter will present the empirical research findings of the interviews and the seminar/conference. The supplementary literature will be compared and contrasted with the research findings. This chapter is organized according to re-occurring themes that are raised by a number of my interview respondents. The themes are presented according to how they were discussed in the interviews.

5.1 Overview of Factors to Women’s Low Representation

As mentioned in the background information Turkish women’s representation have decreased through the years in the history. The reasons among others have been the military coup in 1980s. Other influential factors have been the women’s movement late increase that has affected women’s representation in the Parliament. There are many reasons to women’s low representation in the Parliament that have been gathered by the interviews and literature.

Aydeniz Alisbah Tuksan stressed that different reasons such as pregnancy, high birth rates and a lack childcare have decreased the number of women working outside their home. While Tuksan highlights that the Prime Minister openly encourages families to have only 3 children in order to decrease the inhabitants in Turkey. Even with this population initiative, there needs to be support from the government in the form of child care in order to facilitate women working outside their home. According to Tuksan, there is very limited support to child-care today in Turkey. Instead women have the responsibility of taking care of their children, and the household, which suggests they have a lack of time and opportunity to enter politics, issues which men

\[64\] Yaraman “72 Yılın Ardından Kadın Içermeyen Siyaset”:19.  
\[65\] Bilhan et, al., Kadının Karar Mekanizmalarında Temsilinin Gücünün Arttırılması Semineri, 40.
do not face. The housewives are dependent of their husbands because they do not have any social security of their own.\textsuperscript{66}

Furthermore Tuksan points out that even if there have been changes in the civil code in Turkey regarding whom the “head of family” is, there are still problems. Women are working illegally and there are women working for free in the household. Women’s place is seen as in the household and this is stopping women from working outside their home. About 85% of women are working for free and women that are in a decision-making position are only around 7%.\textsuperscript{67}

According to Nevin Gaye Erbatur, to strengthen the status of women one needs to see women as individuals. To make the role as mother and housewife easier, one need to make sure to strengthen the men’s role in helping the women with for example the kids. Furthermore Erbatur states that the women would be seen as an individual to continue its life by acting as an individual and not collectively, she means that the woman working in the house should not be responsible of all work in the household.\textsuperscript{68}

The work in the household should be shared between the men and the women in the home.\textsuperscript{69}

\textbf{5.2 Democracy Starts in the Family}

It should be noted that my respondents interpret gender equality as directly correlated to democracy. This thesis does not contest the notion that gender equality is certainly \textit{related} to democracy, but they are not necessarily contingent on one another. Gender inequality in a society does not necessarily mean that it is undemocratic. Gender inequality exists in all societies in the world, even functioning democracies. Thus to pair the two conditions together is problematic. 

Erbatur is stating that democracy is starting in the family, and once you have implemented democracy in the family, it will be easier to have democracy in the country. If you raise your children with equal treatment and rights no matter the

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid,40.  
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid,56.  
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
gender they will develop another perspective on the issue of gender equality in the social world, economy, politics and in life in general than what exists in Turkish society today. Erbatur asserts that democracy will start in the family if parents are to raise their children equally so that the understanding of equality in the society will change. 70

One of my interviewees Kadriye Kayaturk who is a lawyer argues that the problem is that there is a lack of nurseries in Turkey. Children are raised by uneducated grandparents with traditional thoughts and therefore the society does not develop. 71 Furthermore as Erbatur stated, the lawyer also thinks also that democracy should start in the home before it can be implemented and accepted in the society. 72

Cemil Cicek who is speaker of the Parliament stresses at the conference of International Convention on the Role of National Gender Equality Machinery for a more equal society for all:

“The essence of this meeting is to create awareness. It is clear that there are differences between men and women in many areas.” 73

Furthermore Cicek thinks that there are many problems such as inequality which need to be made aware of in society. He points out that they need to change the mentality of the society in order to improve gender equality in Turkey. 74

“To be honest, if you are not aware of something, you cannot take the measures according to that”. 75

Cicek says that people need to be aware of the problems so there can be politics that develops according to that, things that you need to work on to improve. 76

70 Ibid, 57.
71 Interview with lawyer Kadriye Kayaturk, 16th of March 2012, Ankara.
72 Bilhan et.al., Kadının Karar Mekanizmalarında Temsilinin Gücünün Artırılması Semineri, 57.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
At the seminar about violence against women at Kultur University in Istanbul, Aysel Celikel who is a lawyer was one of the panelists. She pointed out that:

“The family’s view on gender equality needs to be changed before gender equality can be achieved in society”. 77

On the same seminar the director of the Istanbul Kultur University Dursun Kocer held a speech where he stressed:

“It is the men who needs to be responsible for this issue” 78

Kocer asserts that men are responsible for gender inequality in Turkey and it is not only the women who need to be educated, but also men. Furthermore he asserts that women are aware of the inequality and want to achieve equality but it is men that are not aware of the problem. 79

An article by Nilufer Negiz discusses the differences between men and women who are participating in politics. She points out that women make their political choices based on their “religion” or “family”. According to Negiz the research conducted on this shows that in Turkey poorly educated woman vote according to the family’s elder man (which can be their father or their husband). Negiz calls this a “stimulated vote”. 80

5.3 Education

Education is one of the common issues raised by the interviewees. Most of them expressed the notion that we need to change the mentality of the Turkish people and educate them in order to achieve democracy and gender equality in Turkey both generally and in the Turkish Parliament.

77 Aysel Celikel Istanbul Kultur University Bende Siddete Hayır Diyorum, Seminar, 5 March, Istanbul.
78 Dursun Kocer Istanbul Kultur University Bende Siddete Hayır Diyorum, Seminar, 5 March, Istanbul.
79 Ibid.
KA’DER work centers on education Turkish women, largely through their educational programs and campaigns. In addition they lobby both the government and the public to increase awareness of the issue of inequality. More specifically KA’DER has a program called “politics education” and the participants can be from politics, society, or women who want to learn about politics in Turkey.

“We are opening up for such educations regularly and we are going almost everywhere in Turkey to teach people about what needs to be done in politics for gender equality. In addition, the importance of women’s political participation will also be discussed. These training courses are about 5 days.”

One of the projects that the Association of Turkish University Women Organization (TÜKD) has is working as a bridge between girls who have been accepted to the universities with high degrees especially to the coveted programs such as medicine, law or science. People who donate a scholarship meet the female student who is the scholarship receiver which builds a contact, so the girls who receive this money come primarily from the eastern part of Turkey, so are unfamiliar how Istanbul works. The students build a relationship with the donor and together, they two participate in social activities to get to know each other and the city Istanbul. This NGO is trying to foster a strong and educated female generation that will build up Turkey in the future so they can defend women’s rights. According to the head of the NGO, they support around 700 girls. They have other projects beside this one of them tries to educate women and girls about violence against women.

“We have reached around 10,000 children and women, we have made programs in schools, we have been in contact with families so we have tried to make consciousness on both the parents and children that women are not helpless, that they can contact certain help organizations”.

TÜKD continues to state that they are trying to help build a stronger country by empowering women the society for a further. This indirectly affects the number of women in the Parliament.

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81 Interview with KA’DER, 22nd of February, Istanbul.
82 Interview with TÜKD, 5th of March 2012, Istanbul.
Fatma Sahin who is the Minister of Family and Social Policies stressed that the government cares about education and that the government have successfully achieved equality between boys and girls in the first level of education. The Turkish government has created a fund designed to address the issue of poor people’s access to education. To and this budget is around 2.6 million Turkish lira, which has supported 990,000 mothers and girls education. Sahin argues that, in the first level education the ministry has reached a rate of 98% of female students a trend they want to continue in the middle level education and in universities. By supporting mothers and girls education, the government has used positive discrimination to help increase the number of educated females in Turkish society. Sahin argues furthermore that they continued with transported education\(^\text{83}\), which is important, primarily in the Southeast region because of the lack of schools in the villages.\(^\text{84}\) She continues by discussing that the ministry is supporting the transported education by reserving funding from ministerial headquarters.

“If we look at the rate of graduated girls we see that 75% of them will get employed”\(^\text{85}\)

Furthermore she is discussing the importance of strengthening the support for education. By strengthening the mechanisms for education, and by offering support, Sahin argues that they will see how the numbers of graduated students will increase. According to Sahin, in a small numbers of years Turkey’s graduated girls have increased from 14% to 29% and she hopes that they will catch 50%\(^\text{86}\).

Kadriye Kayaturk the lawyer I interviewed has been active in women NGOs. Education is the most important thing for her and she stresses that everyone should support education.

\(^{83}\)Transported education that is translated from Turkish Tasimali egitim, which means that some villages does not have any schools and the children are therefore served shuttles that take them to other school close to their neighborhood. Sahin means that the government makes facilities so the children can get their education without hindrance.

\(^{84}\)Fatma Sahin “International Convention on the Role of National Gender Equality Machinery for a more equal Society for all” 22 March 2012 Hilton Ankara.

\(^{85}\)Ibid.

\(^{86}\)Ibid.
“If a woman reaches a special level of an education, if they participate in work, one can overcome all discrimination with their own contributions. If we need to go back even further, we as women should grow our children with this awareness, the society shapes in our hands, we need to start with our children. We need to use our motherhood position and shape the society, afterwards is the first thing our children, especially the female children’s education”.

5.3.1 Campaigns to Promote Education

Kadriye Kayaturk makes references to the developments which have been made during the AKP’s time in power. The AKP organized campaigns to promote women and girls in education, such as “Mother and the girl are in school”. Kayaturk highlights that this was really important to increase the numbers of educated women. The lawyer points out that there were mothers and their daughters who participated together in school, and there were even illiterate mothers who succeeded in finishing school by studying from a distance. There was also another campaign called “Dad send me to school”. Furthermore Kayaturk points out that there are campaigns that the President of Turkey’s wife, Hayrünnisa supports raising awareness of it in the media. Keciören municipality where Kadriye Kayaturk works even ha campaigns. Keciören municipality established education centers that support education. These education centers help people to finish their school from a distance. She describes that the participants of these programmer are mostly mothers and their daughters.

“There are even people who are in mother position that have children and have not any educational background, they are coming and participating in these educations and finish their first school, middle school, high school and there are even sometimes people who go to university. In this way when the municipals and government support such things, other NGOs, special provincial administrators, the local governments are following them and supporting the education.”

Kayaturk highlights that a society with educated people; especially educated women will pave the way for women.

87 Interview with the Lawyer Kadriye Kayaturk, 16th of March 2012, Ankara.
88 Interview with the Lawyer Kadriye Kayaturk, 16th of March 2012, Ankara.
89 Ibid.
5.3.2 Media as a Part of Education

Like many of the other interviewees Cicek is also highlighting the importance of education. He argues that it is important with laws, but if there is not any educated society, it will be difficult for them to interpret the laws.

“Education, less developed culture, insufficient education, traditional prejudices, pressures, these are problems we are facing with based on civilization”\textsuperscript{90}.

Cicek stresses that the above-mentioned factors are characteristic of a society that does not understand gender equality. It is necessary to educate the society and try to change the traditional mentality of the people, so there will be a better understanding of gender equality. Media is another issue Cicek discusses. He argues that there should be television programs that are instructive and that educate the society in order to change the mentality of the people.\textsuperscript{91} Cicek does not think that only education in universities will be enough to change the traditional mind, there is other factors. The TV and media that are continuous influences in people´s daily life so can affect the mentality.\textsuperscript{92}

5.4 Obstacles for Women

Many of my respondents discussed the obstacles surrounding women leaving home to work. During the interview the question of motherhood’s importance was raised. It should be noted that the way in which one of the respondent’s discussed the concept of positive discrimination could be considered problematic in its accuracy of the term. This respondent uses it in her discussion of parental leave, to suggest that women should be permitted to be away longer as an act of positive discrimination. While this is not the conventional use of the term, her point speaks to the need for gender sensitive policies that address the needs of women and mothers.

\textsuperscript{90} Cemil Cicek “International Convention on the Role of National Gender Equality Machinery for a more equal Society for all” 22 March 2012 Hilton Ankara.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
5.4.1 Parental Leave and Nurseries

The respondents discussed the different obstacles that women face in order to participate in politics or labor force. Most of them highlighted that the paid parental leave is too short and there is a severe lack of nurseries. The interviewees want to have stronger social security so that they do not feel like they have to choose between having children or being employed. Kayaturk states:

“I want it to be positive discrimination right at this point. As I know, in Europe it is like that. For instance in Germany, I know from my friends that there have 3 years paid parental leave. In Turkey we have 8 weeks before the birth and 8 weeks after the birth that is paid and this is too few days. As you mentioned there are just a few nurseries. According to the psychologists, children need their mother most between 0-3 years old, however if mothers leave their jobs, for this long, it will be very difficult for them to return. It should be positive discrimination for women at this point, the government should support this, they should support that woman can be at home with their children on paid parental leave, or work with minimum payment but the connection should be active between the mother and their work. To choose between motherhood or work should not be the case, one should not put people to the point where they need to choose to have children or career”.

Furthermore Kayaturk explains that the parental leave is newly implemented in Turkey. It has been little more than one year that mothers can be at home from work for 8 weeks. She highlights that there have been milk leave which means that a mother can breastfeed its child 3 hours each day, furthermore Kayaturk argues that there is a positive discrimination for women and this has been established in the constitution before the elections, afterwards parallel to that they are doing changes in the law in order to support positive discriminations for women Kayaturk continues, but there is also economic factors affecting progress on parental leave in Turkey.

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93 Interview with the Lawyer Kadriye Kayaturk, 16th of March 2012, Ankara.
“Women start the competition 5-0 behind the men, they need to do much things so they can come to a certain point so they can have a competition with men, so I support positive discrimination so women can start from 0-0.”

KA’DER stated that they want nurseries but that the government did not support it. She continued by stating that they have huge support from different countries such as Sweden on what they can do in order to increase the numbers of nurseries.

“When we are working with MPs, we are giving them some information by telling them look; Sweden is doing like this and this has led to increasing women’s participation in labor market. You can defend it by this because it has made improvements in those areas, we are preparing a folder for the MPs and before that we need to get the information by ourselves. We already have the information but the government does not have the lotion to do anything. The government sees itself as conservative democrat, they are describing themselves like that and in the frame of those conservative democrats is a woman seen as Mother.”

KA’DER highlights that the government does not see any need to increase the numbers of nurseries. There is not even a budget for this. She continues that people from the party’s demarche do not see any problem with few nurseries and if there is no political will to change the situation then it will not change.

5.4.2 Positive Discrimination for Women

Fatma Sahin highlights the need to strengthen women economically. She asserts that if a woman is to be independent in society, they need to be economically strong and thus be involved with work life. “We have made a strong positive discrimination related to employment at this point in the Parliament 2008, sometimes we are saying that laws are unimportant but this law is very important. Sometimes it is very important to the starts of things”. Sahin asserts that if you are employing a woman, you can abolish the upper retirement age limit and ask the state to pay for the

94 Ibid.
95 Interview with KA’DER, 22nd of February 2012, Istanbul.
96 Ibid.
employers share. The state contributes the costs of employing women for five years by this positive/affirmative action.\(^98\) As a result of this positive discrimination for the last two years, women’s participation in the work force has increased by 4%. Furthermore Sahin asserts that the ministry has implemented the Lisbon strategy which is a EU policy (“The Lisbon policy aims specifically for economic as well as social and environmental renewal. The Strategy seeks to increase European competitiveness, not on the basis of social dumping but investing in a knowledge-based and highly productive society”).\(^99\) Sahin argues that, if the Turkish government continues with this positive discrimination in five years, they will achieve around 30% increase of women employees.\(^100\)

Sahin addresses that they need to succeed to have family life and work life together. There are roles that are expected of woman it is difficult for woman to do many things at once therefore we should support women so they can work.

“In last two months we have signed two important protocols. One of them is about science and industry, women who are working in organized industry, they are working loaded for a minimum wage”.\(^101\)

Sahin continues by discussing about the other protocol that is about to compulsory create nurseries.

“Yesterday the undersecretary to our minister called, we identified the areas and the undersecretary said in one month we will make the sub-structure and in three months we will make the nurseries functional so it can open up for work”.\(^102\)

\(^98\) Ibid.
\(^99\) The European Union’s Lisbon Strategy <http://www.etuc.org/a/652> (20 may 2012)
\(^100\) Fatma Sahin “International Convention on the Role of National Gender Equality Machinery for a more equal Society for all” 22 March 2012 Hilton Ankara.
\(^101\) Ibid.
\(^102\) Ibid.
5.5 The Cooperation Between the MPs and NGOs in Order to Strengthen Women´s Role

The NGOs are working together with the MPs. When KA´DER was interviewed a question on how they are working together with the MPs was asked.

KA´DER lobbied hard to build “The Committee on Equality of Opportunity for women and men”, according to KA´DER; they have been a reason to the birth of the Committee. The committee established 2009 and some of the MPs that were not MPs at that time participated on KA´DER´s “politics school”. Because they were working together, they already knew what they expected from such committee on equality.

“We wanted to call the community only The Committee on Equality for women and men but they added an Opportunity which we did not like. It happens that want something and they agree but in the last minute they add something that benefits them”.103

KA´DER dislikes the MPs last minute changes which benefit the government. Furthermore she advocated that KA´DER come with suggestions on things that they want to change in the law regarding women, the suggestions for change is then discussed in different commissions in the Parliament and then women MP´s discuss and put it as a question on the table at the Parliament. The Parliament must answer the question one MP has asked. With such collaboration the NGO’s have the chance to come with their suggestions and make changes to the law.104 She points out that their own questions or the media´s questions are left without any answer, to get an answer in Turkey, KA´DER points out that the MPs must put it on the table as a motion of question.105 A question can come from a woman in the society that want KA´DER to investigate, KA´DER then the question goes to the MPs who are debating the issue in the Parliament.106 The most important change in the law regarding women was on the civil code where all the NGO´s working on women´s issues worked together to make suggestions. They wanted a change on 26 paragraphs in the civil code and change was made on 24 paragraphs.

103 Interview with KA´DER, 22nd of February 2012, Istanbul.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
KA`DER acknowledges that there is an increase in women in decision-making positions.

“There is an increase, since KA`DER has been established, it is possible to say that there is a slowly but stable move. In Parliament, in municipalities there is an increase but it is quite slowly and this disturbs us but yes we can say that there is increase”. 107

KA`DER stressed that it is difficult for women to show up when the conservative ideology is spreading. Furthermore she stated that the political climate prevents women. 108

“The prime minister have different discourses such as: Women must give birth do 3 children, the women who is at home is palatable and there are also different journalists who states that it is not right that women are looking for job when the unemployment is so huge, they are stating need to be at home and wash the socks while men should look for jobs. It is difficult for women to show up themselves in a conservative environment. Even in general it is difficult but to show up themselves you need to be strong and need to go for it, while it is conservative it is difficult and therefore it is developing slowly”. 109

5.6 Quotas to Increase Numbers of Women

5.6.1 In Favor of Quotas

There are different quota methods for ensuring that women are represented in the Parliament. The importance/unimportance of quotas is a reoccurring topic among the respondents. Some of the respondents think women who would achieve positions in the Parliament do not need quota as their education and qualifications are sufficient. Others think that quotas are a good system in order to help promote women in a male dominated sector.

KA`DER was very positive to quotas:

107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
“Since KA’DER has established we have supported quotas. Before we had a policy that it should be 33%, 1 of 3. We made campaigns on 33% women in Parliament; we went to the Parliament to make information. Today KADER is 15 years old and since 15 years we are dealing with this, I cannot remember exactly the year but I think it was 2008 when the European Commission’s decision on 40% quotas was made and we agreed upon that and started to make 33% to 40% instead. But when we have not even reached 33% how should we manage to reach 40% of quotas. It was a new constitution that came up. We came together with the other women’s group and started to discuss what it should be included in this law. What do we want to see regarding the women in the new constitution? When we discussed this among the women, even if we have spent many years on working for quotas, I recognized that most of the women do not accept quotas. To ask for quotas to the men, when there are many women who do not accept quotas, felt wrong. It is men who make the law because the Parliament is full of men. There were women who surprised us by telling us that it is degrading to ask for quotas to men, we need to come there by working.”

Isilay Saygin addresses that there needs to be quotas so women can achieve a place in the Parliament. She points out that “We as women, when we see women in the list we must take care of them. By doing so, we will move women to better places. When we have achieved this goal, there is nothing that we can fail with”.

The female MP from CHP highlighted that quotas are one of the mechanisms in order to increase women’s decision-making in the labor market. She stated that their party lastly put 33% quotas and that the men are supporting quotas in their party.

“Lastly we putted %33 quotas, in every stage in the party and I have been active on that point I think. I am council member of both the party and the Parliamentary council, I have defended them on the meetings with in group legislature I have worked with my male friends and finally this has been real, the aim is to reach 50% of quotas.”

Furthermore she is stating that the men in CHP are supporting women because the majority who voted for quotas in their party were men.

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110 Ibid.
111 Bilhan et,al., Kadının Karar Mekanizmalarında Temsilinin Gücünün Arttırılması Semineri, 37.
112 Interview with Female MP of CHP, 15th of March 2012, Ankara.
113 Ibid.
5.6.2 Quotas As A Good Start

Ucan Supurge thinks that quotas are a necessity because she believes that women need temporary solution. Furthermore she stress that women do not begin life in equal conditions with men and this gap gets larger over time, so to try to close the gap, women need positive discrimination but the government does not like quotas in Turkey. According to Ucan Supurge this is a problem for women´s NGOs because she thinks that quotas have resulted in good things in the world. She is discussing that there is a critical limit on 33% of rate in order to call a country equal represented but Ucan Supurge thinks that Turkey did not reach the critical rate in the Parliament and in the decision-making positions nor in the public institutions. She states that it is a necessity to have equality between genders and it is written in the Turkish constitution that the government needs to ensure equality between women and men. Thus to live up to the constitution, a quota a system should be used. Ucan Supurge highlights that the politicians in the government who think with a man´s mentality that quotas is something that underestimate women, Ucan Supurge continues, “you do not need to be that polite, quotas is nothing that underestimate us, on the contrary it is a mechanism that strengthen us and that we need to use”.114 Deeply discussing this issue, Ucan Supurge points out that the men are putting forward that women do not want to participate in politics, that they cannot find any candidates, why do they need quotas? In response to that Ucan Supurge says that politics works just by men, if women are not working voluntarily in the politics, then there will be a problem. Furthermore she is stating that men are making politics into a men´s club. The women are trying to complete their roles in the home and in the society. All while trying to get into the Parliament. Ucan Supurge states that it is very difficult, the women are somehow retired to make this happen and quota system is a must that Ucan Supurge supports.115

According to Kayaturk are quotas something that less developed countries use. The ideal, she thinks is that there should not be any quotas in any area, neither on young politicians nor women politicians. Kayaturk argues that quotas is something that

114 Interview with Ucan Supurge, 13th of March 2012, Ankara.
115 Ibid.
shows the gap between men and women, she defend women who are qualified that can take the place in the Parliament and not only for their sex as female.

“Are there any quotas for men? Those who trust themselves, trust their background and CV, participates in politics and after a certain carrier they are becoming politicians”.116

Furthermore she states that the quota will not be necessary, she argues, when women and men have reached an equal position, it will be a natural timeline and no need for any quotas after both sexes have reached equal position.117

5.6.3 Against Quotas

The female MP of the AKP does not think that quotas are right. She is stating that the quota system is something that forces gender inequality, but does not naturally achieve it through society’s development. She thinks that positive discrimination initiatives offend women when women are selected primarily because of their gender. Furthermore the AKP’s MP is highlighting that you can reach the place with your own will instead of quotas.

“Like our prime minister did in the last election, in every election our woman participants increases with 50%, to do this with one’s own will, woman who have proven themselves in the woman NGO’s who are moving towards politics and that they really want by their own will, is the way I am supporting”.118

The female MP of the AKP underlines that she is against quotas and one who does not deserve the place, should not be there because that will make the approach that people want to take place in the Parliament because of the quotas and not their background.119

The man MP of BDP does not know if they have any quota system in their party. He says

116 Interview with the Lawyer Kadriye Kayaturk, 16th of March 2012, Ankara.
117 Ibid.
118 Interview with Female MP of AKP, 15th of March 2012, Ankara.
119 Ibid.
“…but I am telling you from my heart that we do not need any quotas, we have already women representation and the number of women are increasing”.

Furthermore he points out that he does not like quotas, he is stating that people in other parties fill out the place with a woman, it is not working like that. People who are working, who deserve, and have an interest for politics should be there. The MP is against quotas and do not agree that you can put people to fill out the places with force, however, he continues by arguing that it does not matter what sex who represents people without any background and knowledge.

5.7 Discussions with the MPs

5.7.1 The Role of Decision-Making Position of Women in the Parliament

The role of decision-making positions of women in the Parliament was raised in the interview questions. The interviewees had different views on this issue.

Female MP from AKP

“Women’s decision-making in the Parliament is of course the same as a men’s decision-making, especially in the AKP. In no other party is there the same level of freedom within the congress, within the organizational structure and within the women’s branches of the party. In every branch in the Parliament woman have equal decision-making power as men and sometimes women’s voice are even stronger than men’s.”

Male MP of the BDP;

“It is unfortunately low, in total there are 550 people in the Parliament and if I am not wrong, only 13,5% of them are women representation in the Parliament, there are huge imbalance in organization and Parliamentary representation in the other political parties. The women friends are looking at this one-sided but this issue has historical roots and the women do not have the interest in politics much as men, I do not want to go into philosophical discussions.

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120 Interview with Male MP of BDP, 14th of March 2012, Ankara.
121 Ibid.
122 Interview with Female MP of AKP, 15th of March 2012, Ankara.
but if you compare with England, France, Spain, there are more men who are dealing with politics. I do not think that you should force women into politics, I am against force, but as a man, and as a human, I am pro to; if there are any obstacles for women in participating in politics then take away the obstacles for them, this could be societal, traditional, law you will say what about the law? It is forbidden for women in Saudi Arabia to drive car. In short, one would take away all obstacles that prevent woman to participating in politics, after removing all obstacles, if there are women who want to participate they will if not they do not, it is up to them. In general, my view all over the world is that the women’s will to participate in politics much lower than men’s, it is like that all over the world.”

Male MP of the AKP

According to the male MP of the AKP who is one of the members of The Committee on Equality of Opportunity for women and men states that with the establishment of the committee in 2009 there has been positive discrimination for women and an increase of the numbers of women in politics during the AKPs development.

“In East the men has the priority, there are 550 MP’s I wish that half of them were females. Of all this, it is only around 10% who is women, there need to be increase by women’s will to participate in politics. There is a low will by women to participate in politics and we are supporting them to increase the numbers of women. I wish that it could be 50% men and 50% women in the Parliament”.  

Furthermore the male MP of the AKP argues that there are only five men in the Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men. When the question of why he thinks that it is only five men in the committee he responds:

“It is the women who want it to be as such, and the men do not participate at the same time, we are there to support the women.”

Female MP of CHP

“Quotas are one of them, but we are supporting that women’s strengthen in the labor market. It is very low numbers of women who are participating in the labor market right now. It is a general issue for Turkey that women should be 20% of the labor market but it is more

123 Interview with Male MP of BDP, 14th of March 2012, Ankara.
124 Interview with Male MP of AKP, 12th of March 2012, Ankara.
125 Ibid.
important to strengthen women’s economic independency, the nurseries importance, violence against women and to create law’s for supporting these. It is also very important to point that the women NGO’s worked for a change of the civil code and penalty law. In sum, it is very important to work on supporting women to get in high positions, have women in high positions but to do this, you need to have the power, they are talking about these things now but it is very difficult with the opposition party”.126

In order to achieve gender equality, the CHP have recently implemented quotas in their party. The female MP of CHP elaborates:

Female MP of CHP

“Lastly we putted 33% quotas, in every stage in the party and I have been active on that point I think. I am council member of both the party and the Parliamentary council, I have defended them on the meetings with in group legislature I have worked with my male friends and finally this has been real, the aim is to reach 50% of quotas”.127

There were different reasons for female MPs participation in politics, one wanted to be a part of the party CHP’s change while the other had a political interest that was deeply rooted in her family.

The female MP of CHP

“I am first of all supporting women’s participation in politics. I believe that it is important to have a representative number of women in the Parliament. The second reason is that in CHP, there is an ongoing change and I want to be a part of that change. The third is that I am unsatisfied with current power and only within politics is it possible that I raise these concerns and have them be heard.”128

While the female MP from AKP;

“I am a pharmacists and I was self-employed. There are problems in the society, I started with NGO’s and later on I thought that the politics would be the solution and I participated in politics. The interest comes from my roots though my family has a political background. I started with the establishment of the AKP and I have always been part of AKP with its establishment and I knew the party’s view to the woman I trusted them and thought that I

126 Interview with Female MP of CHP, 15th of March 2012, Ankara.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
could be part of the politics and the politics become with AKP. If AKP would not exist then maybe the politics would not be exist”.  

5.8 Changing the Law is Not the Only Solution

There have been plenty of discussions to the solution of the problem to gender equality. One suggestion has been changing the law but Cemil Cicek who is speaker of the Parliament does not think that changing the law is the only solution. He addresses at the seminar on *International Convention the role of national gender equality machinery for a more equal society* that;

“The essence of this meeting is to create awareness. It is clear that there are differences between men and women in many areas. To be honest, if you are not aware of something, you cannot take the measures according to that”.  

Cicek believes that people need to be aware of the problems so there can be politics that develop, according to that, things that you need to work on to improve. Even if Turkey has come a long way on this issue, Cicek agrees that it has been late to take measurements. As many other interviewees has discussed, Cicek points out also that Turkey has been one of the first countries that gave the political rights to women in 1934. “That was 1934 now we are in 2012 and doing this meeting, even if there has been a lot of time since then, we have succeed with some improvements but two days of this meetings shows that we have many problems”.  

Cicek says that it is not enough only with laws in a country. One would change the mentality of people so things can improve.

“People often say if it was up to me, I would make a law to improve things. But this is not enough it is just shortcut, if it should be solved only by laws, there would not be any problem in the world. To make laws are of course important, it is a way to put finger on problems, and it is also important to find solution on things”.

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129 Interview with Female MP of AKP, 15th of March 2012, Ankara.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
Cicek also discusses the importance of the women NGOs that are working to find a solution to women´s issues. He suggests that one needs to find the root of the problem in order to find a solution and to deal with it. NGOs do this which is why it is important to support the NGOs and cooperate with them. Furthermore he stresses that Turkey has made improvements legally by signing the international treaties. The country has made changes in their constitution in 2001, 2004 and 2010. They are now working in the Parliament with shaping the new constitution and Cicek points that they are open for all suggestions that they need to change and he is aware of that this kind of meetings is good to have in order to come up with suggestions.133

Regarding the law and the importance of the cooperation with the NGOs that Cicek noted above, KA´DER one of the NGOs that has been interviewed is discussing how they worked for changing the civil code.

“I can tell you the best co-operation has been done together with all women NGO´s in Turkey. There was a platform which KA´DER and almost every women NGO who participated to change the civil code, we worked hard to change it and we wanted to change 26 paragraphs on the civil code but the changes only become in 24 paragraphs. But we have not been satisfied with the 2 paragraphs which they did not change, and we continue to working on to change these.”134

In the above paragraphs the interviewee was discussing cost sharing and the law of marriage. She continued that they also wanted to change Turkish Penal Code (TCK) and they succeeded with the most of the changes they wanted to change. Furthermore KA´DER addressed that there is only a few laws that have not been changed yet but they are following up those and work on it.

Regarding the issue of changing the law in order to expand the social security -namely in the area of increasing the number of nurseries and establish homecare services - the ministry is finalizing the protocols which have been signed that promote the social security. Sahin hopes that they will follow up the protocols that have been

133 Ibid.
134 Interview with KA´DER, 22nd of February 2012, Istanbul.
signed. She supports the flexible working model that offers alternatives in the social security system. Furthermore she thinks that beside economic, cultural and social security it is also important to support women who have elder people to care for. Sahin says that there should be mechanisms that support the women in order to take care of their elder people. Furthermore the minister is supporting the mechanisms necessary to create the institutional infrastructure in order to help to raise children. The government is collaborating with the World Bank and the United Nations on how these things works in the world, they have established different models and they are now working on the models that will fit Turkey best. Sahin concludes by stressing “I am trying to say that, I am not saying that we do not have any problems, we are aware of the point that we have reached until now and we are even aware of what we need to work on”.

6. Analysis

The empirical data has highlighted different issues relating to the problems of gender inequality and the lack of women in the Parliament. The analysis below will discuss the major factors (namely hindrances) which have been gathered from the empirical data that are important for understanding women’s low representation in the Parliament. Furthermore this section will discuss the different suggestions that were raised in the interviews concerning possible ways for improvements.

6.1 Hindrances for Women’s Participation

Gender theory is visible in Turkish culture. Though gender is something we “do” Turkish culture considers men and women to have different roles in society. In general, Turkish society considers women as housewives and has the responsibility of the housework while men are seen to be the breadwinners and to carry the family. As Connell describes social norms play a role in creating one’s identity and to be feminine and/or masculine is part of one’s identity.136 To be more specific in the case of Turkish culture different concepts that are interrelated with gender theory will further explain the specifics cases of Turkish culture.

There are different reasons which hinder women in Turkey to participate in politics and take place in the Turkish Parliament. When discussing the different reasons for women’s low representation in the Parliament and which kind of measurements that are taken in order to improve the gender equality, most of the respondents suggested that democracy starts in the family, one would raise their children in equal terms in order to change the society’s view on gender equality. According to Inglehart and Norris, the roles of men and women in work or at home are determined by the society. Inglehart and Norris mean that Culture Matters in order to change the society, the traditional roles of women and men are transformed within the household. Furthermore one needs to educate the children in the family, the respondents point out that children are left at home with uneducated grandparents which raise the children

with traditional thoughts. According to the *Women’s low representation*, the gender socialization explains that women and men are expected to have different roles in life. Women are more home-oriented. Furthermore Clark stresses that the gender socialization starts in childhood and continues to adulthood which in the long run affects women. They face obstacles to enter a public office and suffer psychological pain of being excluded by their men colleagues in politics. Aydeniz Alisbah Tuksan stress that women are seen as mothers and housewives, though they do not work, they are dependent of their husbands and consequently does not have any social security by their own. According to the *Patriarchy* theory, the women are subordinated to men and therefore have obstacles in order to be independent. The respondents highlight this issue by stressing that women have given roles, they need to be at home with the children and the elder while men are the breadwinners.

### 6.1.1 Lack of Education as a Barrier for Political Participation

Other hindrances have been education. The number of educated women is lower than the number of educated men. According to the lawyer Kadriye Kayaturk society needs to be educated in order to interpret the laws and one needs to educate the society in order to achieve gender equality. Cicek argues that insufficient education, less developed culture and traditional prejudices are all issues which plague the Turkish society. *Culture Matters* describes that a cultural change is necessary condition for gender equality. Inglehart and Norris highlight that *Culture Matters* when looking at the level of social development and the legal-institutional structures in a country. The authors suggest that a *cultural change* will lead to a mass mobilization of women’s movements that supports politics; which will speed the process of gender equality. Furthermore Inglehart and Norris stresses that, the traditional categorizations will change by the young educated generations. As Kayaturk acknowledged the government and NGOs are trying to increase the number of educated women and girls by supporting different campaigns, however, Inglehart and Norris state even if the change of traditional categorizations will come by the young educated generations, they believe that there still will exist women that will

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137 Clark “Getting There: Women in Political Office”: 71.
139 Arat “Obstacles to Political Careers: Perceptions of Turkish Women”:356-357.
prefer the traditional roles at home in the family and leave the public sphere as the men’s domain. According to the Modernization, changes in economic and social lives are symbolizing the postindustrial societies. One example is the expansion and fragmentation of the mass media channels that today have a huge impact on people’s daily life.\textsuperscript{140} Cemil Cicek discussed the importance of the laws. He pointed upon that complaining about the laws not being enough for gender equality. Cicek means that the society needs to be educated in order to interpret the laws so they can follow them. He argues that the mentality of the society needs to be changed and this would not be possible only with the education of universities. Furthermore he suggests that the media does matter and suggests that mass media channels should put more programs that educate the society.

6.1.2 Men have the Priority

All of the MPs are supporting women into decision-making positions. The MPs want an equal representation in the Parliament but both of the male MPs that I interviewed agreed that women do not have any political will to participate in politics. The Male MP of AKP, member of KEFEK discussed that the men have the priority in the East regions. The Patriarchy theory describes the historical explanations to the traditional power relations between men and women. According to Arat, the content of Patriarchy limits women to take position in high status jobs.\textsuperscript{141} Furthermore, the respondents are pointing on that the Patriarchy is more visible in eastern parts of Turkey. The traditional thinking is slowly growing in the eastern region and people are tied to their traditional culture. For instance, when interviewing the Female MP of AKP, she was explaining that she was the first woman elected as MP from her city (a city in eastern Turkey). She told the difficulties to be accepted as woman MP, the people were used to men MP however, it took time to gain the people’s trust for her. It is not only matters of the Patriarchy, but also that Culture Matters, Inglahart and Norris argues; both women and men accept the traditional values in developing countries. The society is used to the traditional roles and, thus, leaves the public sphere to the men.\textsuperscript{142}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{140} Inglehart and Norris, Rising Tide- Gender equality and cultural change around the world, 12-15.
\textsuperscript{141} Arat “Obstacles to Political Careers: Perceptions of Turkish Women”: 356.
\textsuperscript{142} Inglahart and Noris Rising Tide; Gender equality and cultural change around the world, 42.
\end{footnotes}
According to the *Patriarchy* theory men dominate in the power relation between men and women. Obviously, in the men dominant areas, their voice is heard more clearly.\textsuperscript{143} Dursun Kocer, the director of the *Istanbul Kultur University* stressed that the men need to take responsibility in order to catch gender equality in a country:

“It is the men who need to be responsible for this issue”\textsuperscript{144}.

Kocer means that men should take the responsibility of gender inequality and be aware of the problem in order to improve the gender equality. Furthermore, Kocer stressed that one should educate not only the women but also the men in order to achieve gender equality in Turkey. Inglehart and Norris advocate in the *Modernization* that socioeconomic changes have impacted on the modernization process of gender equality.\textsuperscript{145} If men obtain higher education, they will have more knowledge about gender socialization, which will in turn help women on their quest for gender equality.\textsuperscript{146}

### 6.2 Quotas

Most of the respondents agreed that Turkey needs quotas in order to achieve gender equality. They stressed that one would implement quotas to begin with, until the number of women and men have leveled. Ucan Supurge, for instance, thinks that in order to close the gap between men and women, one should start with quotas to reach the same level. She thinks that quotas are a temporary solution. According to Clark’s definition *Women’s low representation* does women have difficult to compete with men because men have more power and desirability of political office that affect women to came into politics. Other respondents thought that quotas are not a good solution. Women should earn their position on their own will and competence and not because of their gender. Furthermore concerning the concept *Women’s low representation* does women have difficult to compete with men because men have more power and desirability of political office that affect women to came into politics.

\textsuperscript{143} Arat “Obstacles to Political Careers: Perceptions of Turkish Women”:357.

\textsuperscript{144} Dursun Kocer, *Istanbul Kultur University* Bende Siddete Hayır Dıyorum Seminar, 5 March 2012.

\textsuperscript{145} Inglehart and Norris, *Rising Tide- Gender equality and cultural change around the world*,12-15.

\textsuperscript{146} Inglehart and Norris, *Rising Tide- Gender equality and cultural change around the world*,12-15.
representation, Clark describe another view on the role of conflicts; women’s responsibilities of their family and household work that take too much energy and time which hinder the women to be active in politics. However, the NGOs do matter in order to promote women for political participation. Most of the women respondents that have been interviewed in this study have been active in different NGOs before becoming an MP. According to KA´DER it is a problem that some women do not support quotas. KA´DER means, if woman who are the ones that need quotas to achieve the same level of representation as men do not support quotas then how would it be possible to change the men’s stance on quotas. Culture Matters asserts that a cultural change is necessary condition for gender equality, the first step Inglehart and Norris means is that the women need to change their own stance before expecting the society to change. The empirical data shows that CHP recently has put quotas to improve the gender equality, while the AKP does not want any quotas. Likewise BDP argues that they have enough women in their party and there is no need for quotas.

6.3 The Government and NGOs Working Together

The Committee of Opportunity on Equality for Women and Men was established in 2009. According to Modernization postindustrial societies expand their multilayered governance by shifting away from the nation-state toward global and local levels and that the nonprofit social security schemes expand. The NGOs’ increasing capacity for public visibility, enhanced position in bargaining with governmental bodies are notable achievements in fundraising supported by international organizations like UN, the World Bank and the European Union. As KA´DER explained they had to work very hard to establish KEFEK. There where women who were active in KA´DER before the Committee was established, they worked together in order to create KEFEK, some of the participants even became MP’s after having participated in KA´DER’s politics schools, they already knew what was expected from KEFEK. Both of the female MPs and one of the male MP respondents are members of that Committee. All of them discussed that the government is aware of the importance of

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147 Ibid.
the issue on gender equality and they are working hard to increase the equality between the genders.

6.4 Nurseries

One of the most discussed problems of the respondents has been to create nurseries for children so women can be free from obstacles that hinder them from participating in politics. Another issue has been to increase the parental leave in order to have economic support by raising one´s children. The interviewees discussed that the choice between work and home is giving women trouble. For instance the lawyer Kardiy Kayaturk wanted a long parental leave and she referred to the western societies. This can be interpreted by the Modernization economically independence results in changes to gender roles. Moreover, most of the respondents were aware that the prime minister wanted at least 3 children from each family but the government did not want to expand the nurseries, and the respondents thought that it would not be possible to have many children if there is not any support from the government. At the conference on International Convention on the Role of National Gender Equality Machinery for a more equal society for all, Sahin argued that they recently, just one day before the conference, have signed protocols in order to increase the nurseries in Turkey.

6.5 Supporting Gender Equality

According to the empirical data, the most important fact in every area of gender equality is firstly to increase the number of educated inhabitants in Turkey. All of the respondents think that the society needs to be educated and there are investments made especially on women’s and girls’ education. There are different educations that NGOs, municipalities, and government supports. KA´DER for instance opens up for regular education in Turkey where they teach women for example how to participate in politics, and the importance of gender equality. Furthermore TÜKD is also supporting education by giving excelling female students from the eastern region opportunities in form of scholarships, in order to support their studies both economically and socially. The aim is to create a country that can defend women´s rights and for women to be equally represented in the Parliament in forthcoming
years. The government also supports education via different campaigns outlined above. This shows that there have been an increase in the number of educated women and girls in Turkey. According to Fatma Sahin, the government have supported 990,000 mothers and girls education, furthermore she addressed that educated girls have increased from 14%-29% only in a couple years. The government believes that they will reach equality in the number of educated in both sexes in a short time. However, according to the modernization theorists, education is important as, higher level of education increase income levels that in turn bring positive changes in gender roles. The Turkish government makes facilities for children living in the rural areas by giving them transported education\textsuperscript{148} where the children can take a shuttle to other schools close by their neighborhood. According to the Modernization, when traditional society grows to more modern society, they follow the patterns of Western societies. Sahin and KA’DER discussed different models that they will take as examples in order to develop Turkey. KA’DER for instance discussed that they are preparing folders for the MPs to show them how Western countries has succeed in different areas of gender equality in order to implement similar initiatives in Turkey. While Sahin stressed that they are working on different models in order to investigate which model that will fit into Turkey.

\textsuperscript{148} Transported education that is translated from Turkish Tasimali egitim, which means that some villages does not have any schools and the children are therefore served shuttles that take them to other school close to their area. Sahin means that the government gives makes any facilities so the children can get their education without hindrance.
7. Discussions of Results

This section is organized according to themes that have been derived from the results discussed above.

7.1 Collaboration to Promote Women

The importance of the collaboration between the MPs and NGOs (namely KA’DER) is made clear by their joint development of KEFEK – an achievement that required work from both actors. The speaker of the Parliament Cemil Cicek also stressed the value of having the Turkish Parliament work closely together with women’s organizations in order to benefit from their extensive knowledge of women’s issues in Turkey such as gender inequality. He spoke about that the collaboration effort that is going into the making of Turkey’s new constitution. KA’DER has already successfully improved the civil code by revising paragraphs 24 of 26.

7.2 The Influence of the Society

Changing the laws is important in order to achieve gender equality in Turkey. But as Cemil Cicek discussed at the conference International Convention on the Role of National Gender Equality Machinery for a more equal society for all part of the Turkish society is not aware of that gender equality is a problem. Inequality for some is not seen as a problem because they are used to that living standard which is based on traditional societies. For them: the traditional ideology is taken for granted and they are therefore not aware of the problem, while other people’s ideology is modern and striving for gender equality.

There are strong ties in the Turkish family which are collectively bound to each other. In an article by Nilgun Negiz it shows that women make their political decisions based on their family or religion, by voting to same party as one in the family does.\textsuperscript{149} This can depend on a weak political interest or lack of knowledge. As many of the respondents discussed, democracy has to start in the family, if one would start to

\textsuperscript{149} Negiz "Siyasette Kadin Olmak":34.
shape their family with democracy then it will be possible to shape the society with help of expanding institutions (e.g. nurseries, youth clubs). The laws in Turkey are not the best but there are huge change and a will to make it better. Most of the respondents addressed that they have huge expectations from the coming constitution. Also as Cicek discussed, people need to interpret the law so one can make it in practice. Theoretically there are laws, but there is no practice because less educated people cannot interpret the laws and therefore, are not aware of their rights. According to the Modernization, higher economic levels result in higher education levels. According to Women’s low representation, women’s low representation depends on the gender socialization, where men and women have different roles in life. The director of Istanbul Kultur University stressed that men must take responsibility in order to decrease inequality between sexes. Because of the different expectations in life of women and men, there are re-occurring inequalities. Some are used to the life expectations and continue to live up to it, while others want them abolished. If everything is about to change the society, then once again, who are making the rules in the society and how would it be possible to change them? According to the Modernization, countries that are on their way to modernization, goes from western countries patterns, and this is clearly discussed by the interviewees in this study. They are working on different models that have succeeded in gender equality in order to implement the right model into Turkey.
8. Concluding Remarks

This section will revisit the research objectives above, summarize the findings of this research work and offer conclusions based on the findings.

The aim of this study has been to investigate the reasons for women’s low representation in the Turkish Parliament as well as which impacts there have been from different women NGOs and what kind of improvements there have been in order to increase gender equality in Turkish politics. This study was based on in depth interviews with the Members of Parliament, women’s organizations, and a lawyer. Further data was gathered from one seminar and one conference. This study concerns large and important social issues about how a change in a country can be effected by pressures from outsiders (the EU), or if the change must grow within the Turkish society.

Reasons:

While it is not possible to say with exact certainty the reasons for women’s low representation in the Turkish Parliament, it is possible and to assume potential reasons based on the insights gained from interviews. The respondents questioned for this investigation cited a number of factors hindering women from participating equally to men in the Parliament – women’s lack of education, lack of parental leave, too few children’s nurseries and women’s household duties to name but a few. These factors are valid and certainly contribute to women’s low representation, however they should be viewed as symptoms of a deeper underlying problem as opposed to the problems themselves. It is this problem which this thesis aimed to address.

The division of gender roles in Turkish society determine to a large extent women’s and men’s professional opportunities. As the respondents highlighted these gender roles are first introduced and are strongly reinforced within the family, but as the findings show, have a broader, societal-wide effects. Women are seen to be keepers of the home and family, thus their sphere of existence centers on the household. As previously stated in the section above, women are not expected to work outside the home to nearly the same extent as men, who are framed as the primary income
earners for the family. The necessity for parental leave and nurseries runs counter to this outlook as it is based on the notion of women working outside of the home, thus it has not been made a priority within the government. The lack of interest among women to enter politics (a common response cited by the respondents) is also an effect of gender socialization. According to *Women’s low representation* women are raised to be concerned with domestic and home affairs.¹⁵⁰

**Improvements:**

The respondents listed these various points as actions for improvements for gender equality in general: Campaigns to promote education, positive discrimination for women in labor force and signed protocols in order to increase nurseries. However I see the subject of improvement as being a matter of education first and foremost. Education is a means of empowering women, and the campaigns which have been carried out by women’s NGOs and the government has significantly increased the number of educated women in Turkish society.¹⁵¹

The empirical results shows that the change of law is necessity but also to change the mentality of the people in order to interpret the laws. As *KA’DER* mentioned there have been changes in 24 of 26<sup>th</sup> paragraphs in *KA’DER’s* favor. The problem is that the non-Turkish speaking women and the illiterate may remain ignorant about the changes in the law that promotes women. The link between the women illiterate or non-Turkish speaking and the world goes via their men. As the *Gender theory* and *Patriarchy* described that women are subordinated to men, I believe that men are not interested in to tell about the new laws that gain women, to their wives. There are attitude that are difficult to change. It will take long before the new laws will be accepted in parts of Turkey. Despite all problems on gender equality in Turkey, the changes in the law shows a progress for women that have strive in decades to strengthen the women’s role in the Turkish society. The pressures of EU can also be interpreted as a result of changes, but it is only a marginal for Turkey’s potential to the enlargement of the EU, however this is a progress which shows Turkish governments will to change the Turkish society.

¹⁵⁰ Clark ”Getting There: Women in Political Office”: 71.
Another point for improvement is helping the women’s organizations gain for attention within Turkish society. At the present time the population of Turkey does not know about these organizations in general nor their aim. During my time in Turkey I noticed that some people, both educated and non-educated were not aware of the women’s organizations and their function. In order to reach the public sphere the women’s organization should get more media attention. This would not only increase their popularity but their scope of influence and thus power within Turkish society as an actor of positive change for women.

8.1 Improvements made and Prospects for the Future

Even if there are hindrances that affect women’s low representation in the Parliament and the decision-making positions there are improvements since the last elections in Turkey. Most important is to speed up this development because the country does care about this problem and has even established KEFEK in Grand National Assembly of Turkey that are working towards gender equality. As the lawyer Kayaturk assumes: even if EU does not want Turkey as a member, it is good goal to have the Copenhagen criteria in order to develop the country itself. There are long-term investments such as educate more women and girls, expand the nurseries, taking help of other countries that have succeeded in gender equality. The awareness of problems is there and the Turkish politicians know that they need to work on.

This research project is really just an introductory investigation into a complicated issue that warrants further research. For one this research can be conducted on the wider scale, in cooperating more members of Parliament and more women’s organization to gain deeper insight. This research project can also be used as a sort of model investigation for useful for other countries suffering from visible from gender inequality and looking for possible expiations and solutions. Lastly this project could be used for awareness purposes to bring further attention to the situation in Turkey.
Bibliography


The European Union’s Lisbon Strategy "<http://www.etuc.org/a/652>" (20 May 2012)


**Conference**


**Seminar**


Kocer, Dursun “Bende Siddete Hayır Diyorum” *İstanbul Kultur University* 5 March, Istanbul.
Interviews

Interview with Female MP of AKP, 15th of March 2012, Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ankara.

Interview with Female MP of CHP, 15th of March 2012, Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ankara.

Interview with Male MP of AKP, 12th of March 2012, Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ankara.

Interview with Male MP of BDP, 14th of March 2012, Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ankara.

Interview with KA’DER, 22nd of February 2012, KA’DERs Office, Istanbul.

Interview with the Lawyer Kadriye Kayaturk, 16th of March 2012, Keciören Municipality, Ankara.

Interview with Ucan Süpürge, 13th of March 2012, Ucan Süpürge’s Office Ankara.

Interview with TÜKD, 5th of March 2012, TÜK’s Office, Istanbul.
Appendix A: Interview Guides

Interview Questions to KA´DER

1. How do you support gender equality as an NGO?

2. Do you collaborate with the Member of Parliaments in order to strengthen women’s role in the society?

3. Do you work for improving women’s socio-economic independence?

4. Your campaigns addressing women in the Parliament were featured in the media right before the last elections. What did you find to be the results of this campaign?

5. The social security system needs to be strong in order to provide women with the family-friendly facilities they need. Have you done any work to increase the number of nurseries for example?

6. How do men support your NGO?

7. What do you think about the quota system?

8. Can you share your experiences of the conference you were attending in Sweden September 2011?

9. Do you think that there is a model on gender equality that can be used in Turkey in order to achieve gender equality in the Parliament?

10. As I know, the Swedish government, namely SIDA has supported a lot of your projects. What has been done in order to increase gender equality with Sweden´s support?

11. Do you want to add anything else?
Interview Questions TÜKD and Ucan Süpürge

1. How do you support gender equality?

2. Do you cooperate with the MPs in order to increase the number of women in the Turkish Parliament?
   - Has any changes resulted from your work in terms of the decision-making mechanisms for women?

3. Do you do any work concerning improving women’s socio-economic independence?

4. The social security system needs to be strong in order to provide women with the family-friendly facilities they need. Have you done any work to increase the number of nurseries for example?

5. How do men support your NGO?

6. What do you think about putting a quota system into the Parliament?

7. Do you want to add anything else?
Interview Questions for Women MPs

1. What are your reasons for participating in politics?

2. What kinds of efforts/initiatives are being made in order to increase gender equality in the Turkish Parliament?

3. Do you have any difficulties as a woman MP?

4. What are the impacts on decision-making for woman MPs?

5. What do you think about implementing the quota system into the Parliament?

6. How do the men MPs support women in the Parliament?

7. Lastly, do you want to add something?
Interview Questions for Men MPs

1. What are your reasons for participating in politics?

2. What kinds of efforts/initiatives are being made in order to increase gender equality in the Turkish Parliament?

3. What are the impacts on decision-making for women MPs?

4. What do you think about implementing the quota system into the Parliament?

5. How do you support women to participate in politics?

6. Lastly, do you want to add something?
Interview Questions for the Lawyer

1. How do you support gender equality?

2. What do you think about socio-economic difficulties for women?

3. The social security system needs to be strong in order to provide women with the family-friendly facilities they need. Have you done any work to increase the number of nurseries for example?

4. Do you think the men are supporting the gender equality in the Turkish Parliament?

5. What are you thinking about implementing the quota system into the Parliament?

6. Do you want to add anything else?