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*Erasmus*

**Femicide in Turkey: Exploring the Nexus of Migration and Patriarchal Governance**

A Research Paper by:

Frida Martine Elverum Brekk

MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major: GMD

Supervisor: Shyamika Jayasundara-Smits

Second Reader: Bilge Şahin

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***Inquiries:***

International Institute of Social Studies

P.O. Box 29776

2502 LT The Hague

The Netherlands

t: +31 70 426 0460

e: [info@iss.nl](mailto:info@iss.nl)

w: [www.iss.nl](http://www.iss.nl)

fb: <http://www.facebook.com/iss.nl>

x: [@issnl](#)

***Location:***

Kortenaerkade 12

2518 AX The Hague

The Netherlands

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## **Abstract**

The idea that femicide is a social problem is deeply linked to political, cultural and legal frameworks. Patriarchal attitudes, migration patterns and the inadequacies of legal frameworks have all had an impact on femicide rates in Turkey. Emphasizing on femicide in the context of rural to urban migration this study investigates the connections within legal institutions, societal views and gender based violence. This research explores how Turkey's legal frameworks confront and sometimes support patriarchal institutions that sustain violence against women. This research is based on document analysis and qualitative interviews with academics, human rights activists and platforms, and legal professionals. It concludes that although laws are placed to protect women, they are often ineffectively applied and with defenses like "unjust provocation" and emotional distress reducing the responsibility of those who violate them. The study emphasizes how internal mobility affects femicide rates, arguing that migrant women in cities are more vulnerable due to the lack of proper legal protections and support networks. This study contributes on how national governance and cultural norms have established legal and policy frameworks that fail to sufficiently address femicide in Turkey. It promotes a more comprehensive, human rights based strategy for femicide prevention and gender justice by sharing insights into the wider repercussions of migration, gender inequality and the part played by legal institutions in sustaining violence against women.

## Connection to Development Studies

Migration is a core concern in development studies and it is often linked to urbanization and socio economic impacts. This study contributes to the discourse by examining the gendered dimensions of migration – specifically how it impacts women's vulnerabilities to violence. Researching the intersection of migration, patriarchal governance and socio economic shifts underscores their role in perpetuating femicide and gender based violence. This research fills a critical gap in the literature and aims to inform evidence based policy recommendations to combat femicide and support women's rights in Turkey, and beyond.

## Keywords

*Femicide, gender based violence, human rights, patriarchy, migration, Turkey, governance*

## List of Acronyms

KADAV — Kadın Dayanisma Vakfi

IKDD — Izmir Kadın Dayanisma Derneđi

AKP — Justice and Development Party

GBV — Gender based violence

KCDP — Kadın Cinayet Durduracagiz Platformu

IOM — International Organization Migration

OHCHR — Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

## Chapter 1 | Introduction

### 1.1 Nature of the problem

Femicide, defined as the intentional killing of women by male partners (Edelstein, 2024) represents the systemic and intentional violence targeting women solely based on their gender. Annually, 66 000 women around the world are victims of murder and 17% of these homicides are gender related, according to the Small Arms Survey report from 2013. This form of violence remains one of the most critical and persistent human rights issues globally.

Femicide is a global concern, this research focuses specifically on Turkey, where the alarming rates of violence against women are among the highest in the world. Femicide in Turkey has more than doubled in the last five years, with reports indicating that every day, at least one woman is murdered. Between 2013 and 2021, 3035 women were killed, recorded by We Will Stop Femicide Platform (2022), highlight the gravity of the issue and the urgent need for targeted interventions.

The most common cases of femicide arise when a woman seeks to make choices regarding her life or decides to pursue a separation or divorce. In others, the motivation of the murders remain either absent or unclear, pointing to a deeper systemic societal issue (Anavatan, 2023). The prevalence of femicide is linked to the dominant patriarchal social structures in Turkey and the weakened state of gender equality, fostering an environment that perpetuates high prevalence of violence against women.

There is limited research explicitly exploring the nexus between femicides, internal migration trends and patriarchal governance in Turkey. Migration, particularly rural to urban migration is a critical factor that influences social dynamics and increases vulnerabilities for women. This research aims to investigate how urbanization - rural to urban migration affects femicide rates. Addressing these gaps will support deeper insight in the role of governmental and legal structures that perpetuate violence against women.

Turkey experiences significant internal migration, driven by economic opportunities and growing regional disparities. (IOM, 2021) This migration exacerbates risks like displacement, lack of legal protection and socio economic hardships. (OHCHR, 2022) Migration often disrupts established gender roles and traditional dynamics which introduces new stressors provoking violent reactions from men who feel their traditional authority is being undermined. (Çetin, 2015) These are amplified by Turkey's legal and cultural landscape, where the male dominant governance and lenient legal frameworks often fail women.

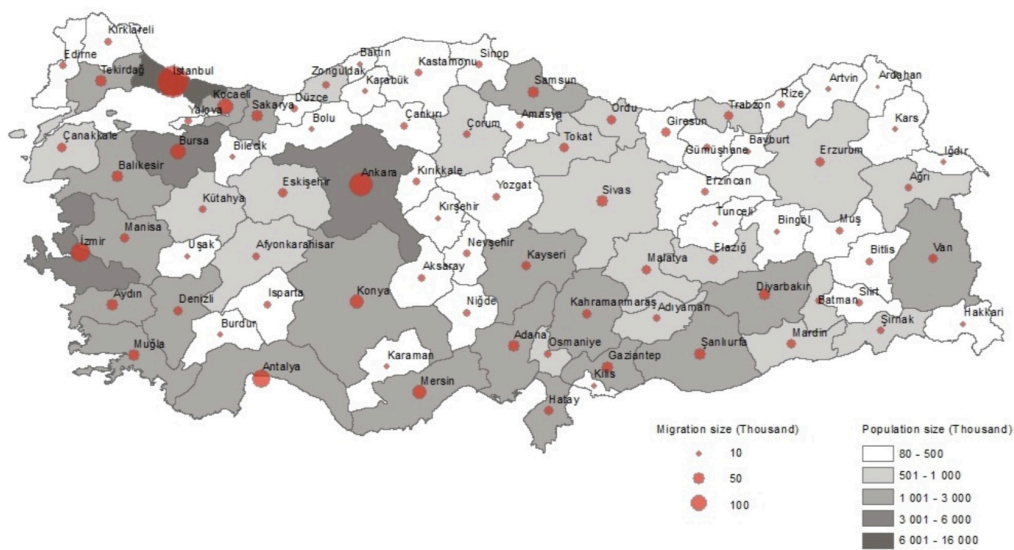
Geographically, Turkey's regional disparities compound these challenges. Turkey's Western region is urbanized and experiences more economic advancement, while the East and Southeastern provinces remain less developed. (Karakoç, 2020) Seeking to understand the regional variations in migration patterns and how they affect the transition of traditional gender dynamics, Turkey serves as a cultural fusion where its unique landscape stems from political conservatism with policies reinforcing patriarchal values. Exposure to more progressive gender norms like those of urban cities, may provoke

tension which may result in violence and femicide. Therefore, this research will further inform how migration and development gaps based on regions intersect and impact the rates of violence. Women entering the work force in their new urban environments, is an aspect brought upon by migration that can provoke backlash from men who feel their traditional authority is threatened as women and households transition from collectivistic to individualistic values (Velichkovsky et al., 2019), as urban environments often increases autonomy. Additionally, Turkey's legal ambiguities including leniency of laws and denunciation of the Istanbul Convention further undermines the protection.

Migration plays a defining role in this dynamic, as women abandon familiar support networks in rural regions to assimilate into urban regions with different social expectations. This transition creates disruptions in traditional structures, placing women at heightened risk of violence. Women's evolving status, shaped by their migration journeys clashing with men's traditional roles is key to researching Turkey's rising femicide rates. Altinoz's (2018) study highlights migration as a risk factor for femicide perpetrators, emphasizing that femicide as a 'society related phenomenon' rather than an 'individual act'. Further studies have presented an apparent link to violence in families who migrate, perpetrators citing reasons such as "committing femicide to protect honor and exert dominance over their spouse," or expressing a crisis in male identity and their "inability to control women" (Jewkes, 2002), underscoring how migration and patriarchal governance intersect in violence.

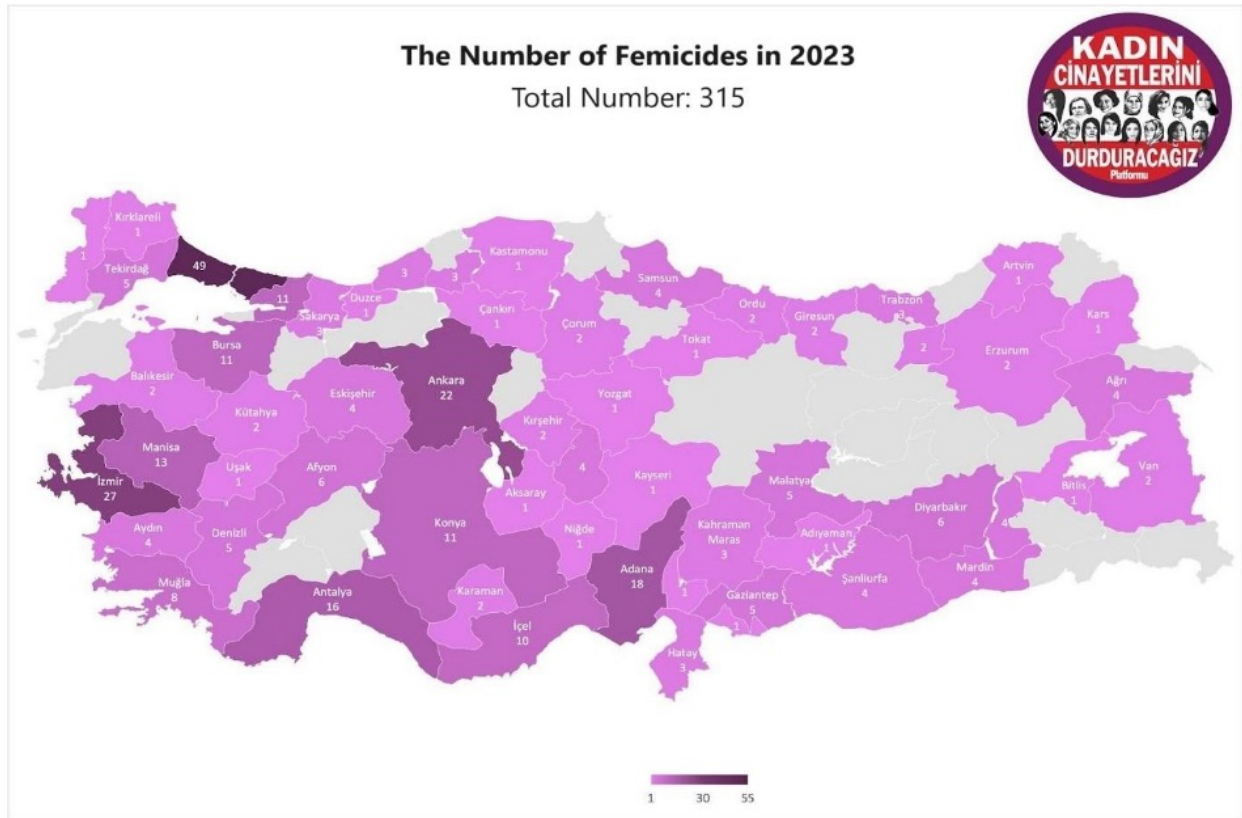
Regional disparities in economic development further exacerbate vulnerabilities for migrant women. Kavakli's (2023) research found that "the deadly effects of divorce rate and educational equality are mitigated in more developed provinces" suggesting that areas with lower development may lack sufficient support systems, legal frameworks and financial opportunities. Rising divorce rates and increased gender equality in the educational sector additionally correlate with occurrences. (Kavakli,

### Size of provincial in-migration, 2023



2023) This research will build and explore whether the gaps in urban areas with the highest femicide rates, brought upon by regional development gaps and migration, contribute to these statistics.

All of these factors point to the ruling AKP party's conservative stance, since coming into power in 2002, has prioritized family values over individual women's rights, further entrenching barriers towards equality and contributing to the alarming rates of femicide in Turkey.



Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara and Antalya, the most developed, urbanized and economically prosperous cities in Turkey, experience the highest rates of femicide (Kadin Cinayet Durduracagiz, 2023) Notably, these cities also show the highest levels of in migration, as illustrated in the charts above from TUIK (2023).

## 1.2 Justification and relevance of this research

In 2021, the Turkish government withdrew from the Istanbul Convention. This decision was widely criticized and opposed by 52.3% of the Turkish population, according to a MetroPOLL. This significant divide between the government in power and the voice of the people raises concerns regarding the authority of Turkey's presidential system and its impact on navigating legal frameworks in a politically manipulated environment.

Turkey's legal frameworks, such as Article 29 and 82 in the penal code enable leniency in femicide cases as they exploit claims of provocations and emotional distress to justify the violence and reduce sentences. Similarly, Law 6284 on the Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women has implemented measures towards the protection of women but remains inconsistent in practice. Structural changes, like the rebranding of the Ministry of Women's Affairs into the Ministry

of Family and Social Policies demonstrates an agenda that sidelines women's rights and reinforces traditional gender roles. President Erdoğan's rhetoric emphasizing family unity, motherhood and denying equality between men and women further perpetuates patriarchal norms that shape policies and societal attitudes.

The intersection of migration, cultural and traditional expectations and governance compound these systemic issues. Rural to urban migration often disrupts household dynamics and challenges the deeply rooted traditional gender expectations which increases vulnerability to violence for women. Although studies explore rural-urban migration and the role of women in Turkey, the explicit link between these factors and femicide stays unexplored.

### **1.3 Research Objectives and question**

This research examines the impact of patriarchal government policies on femicide rates in urban Turkey, focusing on internal migration patterns. It analyzes how these policies reinforce cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequalities, and how trends in migration and patriarchal structures contribute to the occurrence of femicide. Key issues include femicide trends, internal migration, and the intersection of patriarchal governance with gender. This study explores how cultural practices, economic disparities and societal norms further influence gender based violence. The accessibility of legal frameworks, support services and protections will be further examined to advocate for legislative changes that improve these provisions. Through qualitative data analysis it aims to uncover the foundational causes of rising femicide rates in Turkey.

#### Objectives

- **Role of Patriarchal Governance in the Increase of Femicide Rates:** Investigate how change in governance since 2002 have impacted femicide rates. Explore the influence of policy and legal shifts on femicide cases.
- **Impact of Migration Dynamics on Femicide Rates:** Analyze how rural to urban migration trends have contributed to the rise of femicide and examine how internal migration affects vulnerability to femicide and effects ability to reach support services.
- **Effectiveness of legal framework:** Evaluate the effectiveness of legal and government frameworks in addressing femicide by focusing on the responses and effectiveness in practice.

Why have femicide cases increased in Turkey since 2002, particularly among women migrating from rural to urban regions?

Will be supported by the following subquestions:

- How has governance in Turkey since 2002 reinforced patriarchal norms, and how has this contributed to the rise in femicide cases?
- Why does rural to urban migration increase vulnerability of Turkish women to femicide?
- How effective are Turkey's legal responses in preventing femicide and protecting women?

- How do traditional gender roles and cultural norms in Turkey hinder femicide prevention and support?
- How do Turkey's legal frameworks addressing femicide compare to international standard?

This research draws on debates and studies on patriarchal governance, migration and gender based violence (GBV) to analyze how traditional structures and internal migration influence femicide in Turkey. Power dynamics serve as a key analytical lens. The methodology outlines data collection, limitations and positionality. Empirical findings are divided into two chapters - chapter 4 examines the legal aspects of femicide, including patriarchal governance, policy effectiveness and comparisons with international standards. Chapter 5 explores the interplay of migration, cultural norms and support systems by focusing on rural to urban migration, cultural norms, and gender roles to uncover how their collective impact on femicide in Turkey.

#### 1.4 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the complex interplay of urban to rural migration and patriarchal governance in relation to femicide in Turkey to gain insights from individuals and experts. This research is exploratory and descriptive to support a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact and influence one another.

##### Data Collection

This study uses primary and secondary data sources to ensure a holistic approach.

##### Primary data:

- Conducted through 13 semi structured interviews with open-ended questions that encouraged personal account in reflections and responses.
- Follow up questions were based on received contributions to support a deeper exploration of the themes.
- Questions focused on migration, patriarchal governance and femicide explores topics like:
- Interviews were recorded using an app from iPhone and the interviews were translated by myself and transcribed with the support of Turboscribe.

##### Secondary data:

- Sources included policy and government reports on domestic violence, published academic literature on femicide, migration and governance in Turkey, media reports, public records and online archives.
- A narrative analysis further developed the collective stories on femicide, capturing diverse experiences and opinions to contribute to a comprehensive understanding its influencing factors.

Interview questions were tailored to each participant to explore how traditional gender roles in Turkey contribute to gender inequalities and femicide. They investigate the of policy frameworks in reinforcing patriarchal norms focusing on rural to urban migration and how government structures and sociocultural practices perpetuate femicide. The structure of the interview aimed to uncover the wider dynamics of migration, patriarchal governance and femicide, while also evaluating whether current prevention and intervention strategies are effective and what additional measures could be implemented, identifying gaps for potential reforms.

### Data Analysis

The study employs a thematic analysis as the primary method to examine the qualitative data and uncover reoccurring patterns. Transcribing was used to capture details of the recorded insights and to convert audio recordings into written text while ensuring that the context and nuances are preserved. Thematic analysis will serve as a primary method to interpret the transcribed qualitative data and systematically explore any recurring patterns and relationships. For the qualitative data, I conducted interviews through calls, in person, and via email, depending on convenience. Open coding was employed to break down the field data into smaller sections, assigning labels to identify uncovered ideas. Axial coding was then applied to group these concepts into categories to identify patterns. Key themes were initially manually identified and categorized, Delve platform later refined this process. Through selective coding, the main theme of femicide established a cohesive connection to patriarchal governance and internal migration. This approach combined deductive coding with a hybrid coding structure.

This research revealed 5 main themes detailed below with correlating codes:

- Patriarchy and Gender Norms
  - Patriarchal attitudes, traditional gender roles, justification of violence, control over women's bodies, crisis of masculinity
  - Participants often mentioned patriarchal structures and gender expectations in reinforcing control over women and their autonomy which has legitimized gender based violence. In the eyes of the law, perceived threaded to masculinity and control positions men as authoritative figures with justified actions.
- Governance and Legal Framework
  - Government inaction on femicide, weak legal protection and lack of accountability, judicial biases, inconsistent law enforcement, Istanbul Convention.
  - A strong consensus among participants was evident regarding Turkey's inadequate legal responses to femicide. Systemic failures in addressing violence against women was repeated often, contributing inconsistency and judicial bias to a culture of impunity.

- Femicide and Violence
  - Triggers to GBV, patterns of abuse, victim blaming narratives, cultural normalization, economic dependency, escalation of violence.
    - Economic dependency and cultural expectations enable the cycle of abuse, ‘triggers’ (codes) were mentioned by participants as a culprit to the escalation of abusive patterns that are left unchallenged.
- Internal (Rural to Urban) Migration
  - Isolation and marginalization, lack of social support, vulnerability from migration, cultural displacement.
    - Migration increases violence and femicide. Participants often mentioned foreign migrants and refugees noting that the rural to urban migration journey similarly experiences social isolation and displacement thereby reducing support networks and accessibility.
- Access to Justice and Support Services
  - Barriers to legal assistance, limited access to shelter, rural versus urban displacement, systemic delays, funding shortages.
    - Participants all mentioned practical obstacles for women when seeking support and justice. Limited shelter availability, poor conditions and resource disparities between rural and urban regions impose additional barriers for those escaping abusive circumstances, confirming systemic weaknesses.

These categories and codes were assigned to decipher the collected data in a systematic and manageable manner by labeling key findings and words into broader themes. From this, a code book was created based on the collected qualitative interview data, supporting a structured analysis of the data findings. After establishing the themes, they were analyzed in relation to the main research objectives. This facilitated a deeper exploration revealing connections in the findings, including contrasts, relationships and underlying patterns. Excel spreadsheet further aided in unraveling and interpreting further connections.

#### Limitations

Main concern was accessing reliable data on femicide as report methods vary and are inconsistent across Turkey. Participant cooperation is another challenge due to the sensitivity of the topic. Connecting with institutions was successful, I expect difficulties in obtaining contributions from government institutions which are less transparent than regional platforms.

My methodology will be transparent, using a reflexive journal to write in before, during and after interviews to ensure my own biases are evaded to my best ability. Interviews will be a collaborative effort with open ended questions to avoid suggestive answers encouraging free dialogues based on the personal experiences, without the influence of my initial preconceived notions or hypothesis - adopting

a non directive approach. Findings will be cross verified through methods of triangulation by offering participants the opportunity to validate the discussion to ensure alignment with the experiences shared in order to validate their contribution but also confirm that my findings accurately reflects their shared perspectives. Efforts will be made to maintain transparency and minimize bias in the qualitative interviews.

### Positionality

My background in human rights advocacy has driven this interest in femicide and gender issues alongside my formative years in Turkey, furthering this personal interest into socio-economic inequalities and gendered cultural practices. These experiences provided me with a unique perspective on the intersection of cultural norms, women's rights, and governance - motivating the research of these issues. Recognizing that these experiences may introduce biases, I am aware of how these may affect my research choices, such as framing questions and my interpretation of the collected data. My expectations about the research outcomes could influence how I collect and analyze data due to preconceived notions I have regarding gender-based violence and the causes in the context of Turkey.

To mitigate these biases effectively, I will ensure my data collection involves perspectives from different regions and backgrounds, include a variety of sources and regularly reflect to ensure that my analysis stays reflective and objective. I will be transparent regarding my limitations and the process to ensure the research remains impartial. To mitigate the influence of my positionality, I will engage in ongoing critical self-awareness to avoid that they shape my approach to the study and conclusions drawn. I will also address practical limitations, such as my proficiency in the Turkish language, although my language proficiency may facilitate conversation, I may still unintentionally interpret interviews based on my own background and preconceived knowledge. I will maintain transparency about this proficiency, and its potential impacts will be addressed to enhance the credibility of findings. Regarding my emotional involvement and attachment to this topic—I aim to maintain professional objectivity and regularly reflect to consciously separate the emotional attachment to the overall academic analysis. And finally, network bias will be consciously addressed to ensure findings are comprehensive.

### Sampling

Participants were selected for their specialization in femicide, women's rights, migration and governance. I engaged with 11 women and 1 man. Participants were inclusive but not limited to stakeholders such as academics, lawyers, economic and political specialists, human rights advocates and feminist platforms. Reaching these participants involved purposive sampling which ensured incorporation from those experienced in the field. In addition to snowball sampling which allowed for the research road to progress and expand organically.

Izmir, Ankara and Istanbul are the 3 urban cities hosting the leading advocacy organizations, academic institutes and policy making hubs, they were selected not only due to feasibility in regards to

logistics and resources, allowing effective interviews capturing diverse perspectives, but also because these cities are at the forefront of social and political change. I was able to access the core of Turkey's leading advocacy organizations, and policy platforms which supported the research's understanding. I contacted established organizations and experts which guided the research towards the snowball approach which allowed for an expansion of the participation pool to allow for multifaceted insights into the intersection of femicide, migration and urbanization. Interviews were conducted in person, and through Zoom due to constraining factors such as timing and travel. Those conducted online allowed for an opportunity to further follow up regarding any additional information that may have been overlooked.

#### Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitivity of the topic, this will be essential. Informed verbal consent will be obtained from all participants, after explaining the purpose of the study. How the data will be used, that their privacy and confidentiality will be anonymized as well as their rights to withdraw at any time without penalization will be thoroughly explained. Consideration to sensitivity will ensure that participants do not feel exploited or uncomfortable during the research process, and any potential conflicts of interest will be disclosed and managed appropriately to maintain transparency. Their right to withdraw at any point during the interview process will be verbally reiterated to ensure a fair exchange of discussion. Sensitivity to trauma will be addressed by ensuring a supportive environment that allowed participants to skip any questions evoking discomfort. Neutral and non leading language will be adhered. Respect for autonomy will also be upheld by encouraging participants to control and choose which aspect of their experiences to share. The research adheres to ISS guidelines and received ethical clearance to ensure the integrity of the overall research.

## **Chapter 2 | Theoretical Considerations & Conceptual Framework**

This chapter outlines the theories and concepts guiding the research on femicide in Turkey, focusing on how internal migration and patriarchal governance intersects with gender based violence. This research is informed by two primary concepts: Gendered Migration Theory and Systemic Violence Framework. These frameworks support a nuanced understanding of how migration, governance and structural factors intersect to shape femicide in Turkey.

Patriarchal governance will be employed to understand how traditionally and culturally male dominated structures contribute to femicide by analyzing societal norms and legal systems in place that reinforce violence and gender inequality. Gender and migration is explored intersectionally through the lens of gendered migration theory to support the exploration of rural to urban migration and how migration is a factor in how patriarchal societies exploit the vulnerabilities of Turkish migrant woman. The systemic violence framework introduces an exploration of femicide, supporting further examination of institutional and structural factors that continue to perpetuate this violence and shape the lived experiences. It will assess laws and policy responses related to femicide in the Turkish system

and the effectiveness in their impact allowing for nuanced and comprehensive theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding how migration, governance and systemic factors intersect to influence femicide rates in Turkey.

In addition to 2021 unconstitutional denunciation from the Convention, exploitation of legal frameworks such as Articles 29 and 82 of the Turkish penal codes contributes to reduced sentences and justification of the violence. As highlighted in a pamphlet by Mor Cati's Women's Shelter "these measures are to be taken to protect women, children, family members and stalking victims subjected to or at the risk of violence, and to prevent any violence from being directed against them."

## **2.1 Gendered Migration Theory**

Understanding migration from an intersectional lens with gender is imperative to understanding how the migration process is influenced by gender norms and inequalities. Migration patterns have historically been male centric, as have most traditional migration theories, such as neoclassical economic models driven by labor migration. This is deeply rooted in patriarchal norms as economic roles have been prioritized over the women's experiences and contribution in the migration process. (Boyd, 2003)

According to Altinoz et. al, (2018) the intersection of patriarchal governance and cultural practices with socio-economic disparities creates an interplay that perpetuates femicide, necessitating a deeper understanding of its multi-layered complexities and implications. It has been established that migration leads to shifts in household roles which "weakens men's sovereignty and demolishes the patriarchal system in the house, incidences of domestic violence then often increases" (Min, 2001), implying that individuals who migrate from rural to urban areas may experience shifts in cultural expectations and norms that could in return challenge the traditional gender dynamics.

"In the 1960s and early 1970s the phrase 'migrants and their families' was a code for 'male migrants and their wives and children.'" (Boyd, 2003) In Turkey's patriarchal society this remains true regarding rural to urban migration. Feminist theory views gender as a 'social construct' raising the question of how patriarchy is altered after migration. (Boyd, 2003)

Research has often marginalized women's role focusing by primarily on the domestic sphere and treating gender as a mere variable in the migration journey but their experiences are much more complex. Gendered Migration Theory requires examining several factors, including economic participation and contributions, domestic responsibilities, policy gaps, integration and challenges in adaptation. It also requires a nuanced understanding of how vulnerabilities exacerbate the risk of femicide and gender based violence. Addressing these barriers through an intersectional lens of Gender and Migration, albeit research on this has been slow and uneven, could provide a nuanced comprehension to the risks faced by vulnerable women focusing on their unique roles and the interplay with their urban to rural migration journey.

While literature on female migration focuses on the increase in "social mobility, economic independence, and relative autonomy" it also examines the changes in status through migration. In

other words, “moving from one system of patriarchy to another” may reveal a shift in gender roles but in the context of Turkey this autonomy might not translate into improved gender equality. Instead, this shift in dynamics could lead to a backlash from men who perceive a loss of control, reinforcing existing patriarchal norms and increasing women’s vulnerability.

Rural to urban migration is a significant trend in Turkey - inflation, currency fluctuations, external debt, uncertainty over interest rates, and geopolitical tensions are driving factors behind Turkey’s patterns of internal migration. Based on the 2000 census 65% of the Turkish population lives in urban centers, and this movement has only continued to gain momentum since. A rapidly converging trend observed in gender ratios of migrants to major metropolitan regions (Istanbul, Kocaeli, İzmir and Ankara) driven by improvement of women’s health conditions in urban regions. (Hemmasi, 2002) “Although moving to the city ... may add to women’s well being, it does not make them immune from other societal discriminatory forces” (Frantz, 2000) suggests that it does not eliminate the challenges.

Although urbanization can offer independence and opportunities for women, they often experience high risks of violence and limitations due to persistent gender inequalities. (Tacoli, 2013) Shift in power relations, economic hardships, fractured social networks and inadequate protective policies and support systems are further factors exacerbated by migration.

Despite gaining access to better health and educational opportunities in urban regions, rural migrant women continue to face systemic gender inequality. Lack of support integrating in their new urban societies perpetuates their marginalization and this inequality could manifest in subtler forms of control which increases risk. Although secular reforms have supported women in urban regions, this has not seen a similar development with women of rural origin, regardless of their migration. (Tabak, 1997)

Erman’s (1998a) study focused on the diversity of rural to urban migrant women, found that most gained autonomy within the family. While this independence may help combat systemic issues that contribute to femicide, it can intensify resistance from entrenched patriarchal structures. The complexities of urban social dynamics can result in a backlash that manifests in reassertion of control in order to maintain traditional power imbalances, often rooted rural customs. Policies and strengthening public awareness and engagement to support women migrants who have recently migrated from rural regions could support reduction of their vulnerability in urban settings.

Ozkanli’s (2001) research findings demonstrated that women’s move from rural regions to urban cities resulted in informal and low paying opportunities, sharing that “some of the immigrant women became housewives, others work within the informal sector, in marginal jobs without social security” due to absence of legal protection in the informal labor market, fostering their economic dependence. As studies have proven economic hardship can escalate to femicide, making economic strain a known risk factor. Although migration to urban cities has often been portrayed as opportunities to achieve economic stability, for women it frequently confines them to household duties and informal, precarious work, exacerbating their vulnerabilities. These cases contribute to environments where abuse is more

likely as evidenced by the Kadın Cinayet Durduracagiz Platform findings that “65% of women killed in 2023 were killed in their homes.” Additionally, the “flexible working model” promoted by the Minister of Family and Social Services traps women in these unsafe environments.

**Göç etme nedenine göre illerin verdiği göç, 2018-2023**  
Provincial out-migration by reason for migration, 2018-2023

| Yıl<br>Year | İl<br>Province | Toplam<br>Total | Göç etme nedeni-Reason for migration                       |   |                     |  |   |  |   |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------|--|---|---------------------|--|---|--|---|
|             |                |                 | Tayin / iş<br>değişikliği<br>Assignment /<br>change of job | İşe<br>başlamak /<br>iş bulmak<br>Starting /<br>finding a job | Eğitim<br>Education | Medeni durum<br>değişikliği / ailevi<br>nedenler<br>Change of marital<br>status / family-<br>related reasons | Daha iyi konut<br>ve yaşam<br>koşulları<br>Better housing<br>and living<br>conditions | Hane / aile<br>fertlerinden<br>birine bağımlı göç<br>Migration related to<br>any member of the<br>household / family | Aile yanına /<br>memleketeye<br>geri dönme<br>Returning to<br>family home /<br>hometown |
| 2023        | Toplam-Total   | 3 450 953       | 320 142  | 285 825   | 512 011             | 152 046  | 518 016   | 601 481  | 99 975  |

This chart, published by TUIK, demonstrates ‘migration related to any member of the household/ family’ is the most common reason behind migration, a trend that has remained stable over the years and highlights womens dependency on family and reinforces the idea that women may migrate primarily due to family obligations rather than individual, economic or personal reasons. (2023)

## 2.2 Systemic Violence Framework

Systemic violence in Turkey's legal system is both a product and mechanism for sustaining structural violence rooted in patriarchal and cultural norms. These structures are embedded with discriminatory practices in institutions as they perpetuate gender inequality and normalize the marginalization of women through laws and policies. Structural violence shapes these societal norms and due to their interconnectedness, structural will be considered in how they enable systemic violence within institutions.

Galtung's concept of structural violence will be employed as a theoretical framework to examine the systemic factors underlying femicide in Turkey. His observation informed that “when one husband beats his wife, there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance, there is structural violence.” (1969) Implying that systemic violence is understood as the mechanisms that reinforce patriarchal dominance leading to gender equality and the violence against women. It should be noted that Galtung's concept of structural violence has been critiqued by feminists for emphasizing a macro level analysis with overgeneralization and a neglect of individual agency. There are concerns regarding the insufficient consideration to cultural context, which can significantly influence the understanding of violence. The framework carries concerns about the downplay of individual roles as it suggests they are “merely passive victims” instead of active agents who are capable of choosing their circumstances. (Sinha, 2017)

Late sociologist Vincenzo Ruggiero (2019) articulated on the matter in that “systemic violence refers to the harm people suffer from the social structure and the institutions sustaining and

reproducing it.” Utilizing Ruggerio’s perspective to contextualize femicide sustained by the broader way in which institutes work. Through his lens, femicide is not about the isolated and individual murders but a broader phenomenon that benefits from systemic social structures.

The concept of patriarchal governance by Kocabicak (2023) introduces mode of analysis allowing for exploration of how state policies and practices perpetuate gender roles. She introduces two forms of patriarchal state character: the ‘domestic patriarchal state’ confining women to household work which limits their rights and contribution in public life, and ‘public patriarchal state’ where state shapes gender relations which perpetuate inequalities through ensuring roles are segregated and women are subordinated in public spheres. Applying these concepts to examine political and legal shifts, like the denunciation of the Istanbul Convention and their impact on femicide will support a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

The interplay between populist governance and systemic violence under AKP’s increasingly authoritarian Islamist governance, which has resulted in a decline in secularism and prioritization of the nuclear family. AKP’s instrumental use of populism is fosters a national identity grounded in Sunni Islamic values, reinforcing religion and sidelining secularism. Following the 2017 referendum, Erdoğan further consolidated control as he gained authority to systematically influence and reshape state institutions and focusing on religious influence into the government, intentionally straying even further away from Turkey’s secular principals - what was once the foundation of its republic. This aligns with Karataş’ (2019) argument of prioritizing family unity diminishes woman’s autonomy, an evident pattern in Turkey’s institutional responses to femicide.

As Müftüler succinctly describes, “consequently, law becomes complicit in femicide through provocation, and provocation could be seen as the legal system’s concession to patriarchy.” (et al. 2020) Norms framing certain actions by women as justification of violence validates the male entitlement and control over women’s behavior. Courts demonstrate empathy towards male perpetrators as they perceive their violent actions as justifiable responses instead of criminal acts, evading accountability. These biases reinforce the culture that perpetuates these systemic inequalities. Justice is not delivered, and this reinforces a culture of inequality that prevents it from being delivered. The theoretical utility of provocation defenses is reflective of the systemic biases.

Provocation has been used in numerous femicide cases where the perpetrator claims that their actions were a trigger from the behavior of the victim, this often reduces their sentences significantly, if not completely. A femicide case notable according to Atilgan, (2024) a husband accused his wife of being ‘flirty’ when asking for the time. He initially received life imprisonment which was reduced a decade based on provocation (Hurriyet, 2007), highlighting how provocation is weaponized to perpetuate gender biases within the legal system.

### **2.3 Integrative Analysis: Combining the Frameworks**

By analyzing the intersection of systemic violence patriarchy and migration, it is evident that these factors collectively exacerbate the occurrence of femicide in Turkey. The interplay of patriarchal governance and systemic violence, reinforced by migration creates a complex web of vulnerabilities for women. Rural to urban migration adds another layer of challenges for migrant women who face compounded challenges of traditional gender expectations with assimilation to their new urban environments increasing their vulnerability to femicide, and violence.

The Systemic Violence Framework combined with Gender Migration Theory presents how structural inequalities in migration patterns and patriarchal governance establishes a landscape where femicide increases. Migration exposes women to new forms of abuse in unfamiliar urban regions as household dynamics shift. Manipulation of provocation defense reinforces violence by normalizing femicide in Turkish society.

The governmental stance on family unity and traditional gender roles, policies introduced by the ruling AKP government, contribute to a broader societal acceptance of male dominance over women. Combined with structural violence this creates an environment where femicide is not only tolerated, but often excused. Migrant women are caught in the intersection of patriarchal norms, socio economic challenges of migration and a legal system that evidently fails to protect them.

Incorporating both frameworks demonstrates that femicide cannot be fully understood without considering the interplay of patriarchal governance migration and systemic violence, and supports a comprehensive understanding of these barriers for internal migrants underscoring the need for more effective policy responses that address the interplay of these factors. Addressing the collective impact can support legal reforms and challenge patriarchal structures that perpetuate femicide and GBV.

## **Chapter 3 | Understanding Femicide in Turkey**

This chapter delves into the multifaceted phenomenon of femicide in Turkey analyzing its political, economic, cultural and migratory dimensions. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks previously introduced it examines how the intersecting factors further contribute to the prevalence of femicide. It will focus on influence of legal frameworks and conservative policies, discuss cultural and traditional influences, investigate the disparities that exacerbate the vulnerabilities, analyze the dynamics and how a shift in traditional gender roles and limited support and resources impacts the overall experience of women. Together, these sections support an understanding of the interplay they have in shaping femicide trends in Turkey.

### **3.1 Political Context and its Impact on Femicide**

Theoretical frameworks will be utilized to address the multifaceted issues of femicide in Turkey throughout this chapter. Political context will be analyzed through the lens of patriarchal governance and systemic violence with focus on how conservative shifts and policies shape legal and societal

responses on gender-based violence. Internal migration dynamics will be assessed focusing on the impact of rural to urban transitions to the experience of Turkish migrant women. These aim to explore a nuanced insight to how political, economic, cultural and migration intersect and affect femicide rates in Turkey.

With the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002 came a shift towards more patriarchal and conservative policies. This Islamist-leaning party has reshaped the legal and social landscape of Turkey. Gulalp (2001) argues that in Turkey there is a relationship between the rise of political Islam and globalization, contrasting with the modernization theory that predicts a decline in religion as a result of economic development. This foundation paved way for the AKP's governance which leads with increasing religiosity and conservatism.

İhsan Yılmaz (2021) observes that “the AKP has blended its autocracy with Islamist and pro-Turk nationalism, which is carried out through penal populism .. an image of ‘being tough on crime’ by criminalizing the expanding category of ‘others’”. He further elaborates that this ‘New Turkey’ is anchored in “nepotism, clientelism, authoritarianism, conspiracy theories, populism and an Islamist closely mirroring the Milli Görüş ideology.” These elements have collectively shaped a state that is no longer secular or democratic but instead favoring a government that consolidates power and reinforces conservative Islamic values, with profound implications for gender equality and governance.

In 2016, AKP introduced the “flexible working model” which disproportionately affects women, particularly migrant women by confining them to precarious and informal labour markets. Intended to provide support and flexibility, this model has been critiqued as a scheme for the exclusion of women and has received backlash from labor unions who claim “employers will be under unfair conditions” (Yener, 2016) rendering women more invisible and unprotected. Koten's research finds that “the fact that the legal regulations made for women under the name ‘flexibilization of work’ are presented to the society as if they were ‘favours done for women’ appears to be the sort of effort aiming at veiling the negativities to be created by the new implementations for women” (2015) further masking the structural inequalities in patriarchal politics that introduce detrimental effects to migrant women, who often lack the support networks familiar to urban women. Unstable work environments that offer few alternatives renders them dependent and economically insecure, with no opportunity for upward mobility.

President Erdoğan's speech at the Women and Democracy Association in 2016 encapsulated AKP's gender ideology enforcing a restrictive perspective regarding the woman's role within Turkish society — “No matter how successful a woman is, a woman who denies her motherhood, who gives up on looking after the home is incomplete, is only half, and risks losing her uniqueness.” (Tüysüz, 2016) This ideology reinforces a restrictive view that affects the role of women in public and private spheres, directly impacting societal and political landscape regarding gender equality.

In 2019, Instagram account ‘Gender Equality’ (Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği) went viral for collecting and exposing horrific statements from political leaders, revealing the disturbing disregard for gender equality in Turkey:

These are translated:

“I don't believe in gender equality anyway. Violence against women is being exaggerated.” - President Erdoğan

“Unemployment is high because women are seeking jobs.” – Mehmet Şimşek, Minister of Finance and Economic Deputy Prime Minister

“Aren't the household chores enough for women?” - Veysel Eroğlu, Minister of Forests and Water Affairs

“If a mother is raped, what's the child's fault? Let the mother die.” - Melih Gökçek, Former Mayor of Ankara

“Rape is more innocent than a woman who has an abortion.” - Ayhan Sefer Üstün, AKP Member of Parliament

“The victim of rape is right; if necessary, the state will take care of it.” - Recep Akdağ, Minister of Health

“Mothers should not prioritize any career other than motherhood.” - Mehmet Müezzinoğlu, former Minister of Health

“When girls go to school, boys can't find brides.” - Erhan Ekmekçi, AKP Provincial General Assembly Member

“A woman should be modest and not laugh out loud in public.” - Bülent Arınç, former Deputy Prime Minister

Erdogan's political rhetoric framing gender equality contrary to ‘fitrat’ (innate nature), suggests that gender roles are inherent, perpetuating a hierarchy that reinforces traditional roles, limiting opportunities for change and hindering progress towards a more equitable society by manipulating religious authority to justify and maintain existing power structures that benefit the government. He has said: “Our religion defines a special role for women: motherhood.” Supporting that “men and women cannot be treated equally due to their differing 'characters, habits, and physiques” (The Guardian, 2014), reaffirming that he believes in “equity, not equality.” Such rhetoric aligns with broader patterns minimizing gender equality and violence against women, restricting women's roles, opposing education and autonomy for women and making sensitive and outrageous comments about violence and rape, as demonstrated above. This rhetoric influences patriarchal policies approach and frames it as a protective measure (Human Rights Watch 2011) implicitly giving rise to deficient legal protections costing the lives of many Turkish women (Karataş, 2019) These attitudes contribute to Turkey's rank of 130 out of 153 countries on the Gender Gap Index. (The World Economic Forum 2021) The increasingly authoritarian Islamist governance has resulted in a decline in secularism, and concerning institutional

changes, so much that in 2009 “the European Court of Human Rights acknowledged that there is a climate conducive to domestic violence in Turkey (Opuz v. Turkey)” (Gulel, 2021).

Rebranding the ministry responsible for women’s rights mirrors this rhetoric and aligns with Erdoğan’s broader agenda by sidelining women’s rights issues (Isik, 2022) and hindering efforts addressing structural factors that contribute to this marginalization.



### 3.2 Patriarchal Governance and Legal Mechanisms: The Role of Article 29 and Gender Inequality

Patriarchal governance in Turkey is reinforced through legal defenses such as article 29 of the Turkish Penal Code, which allows for legal defenses that undermine femicide. In Article 29, “unjust provocation defense” has often been used in attempts to receive a reduction for those convicted of femicide. These attempts in reduced sentencing are normally attempted when claims of infidelity or insults to a man’s honor is involved, arguing that the murder was an act of extreme and uncontrollable anger, justifying the criminal act. (Pinar, 2022) “Laws, their application and the political background make up an environment in which women are not-so-subtly told that if they don’t behave in line with the patriarchal codes they and their rights won’t be protected by the state, neither while still living nor after death”, quoted in the Mediterranean Network for Feminist Information highlights the systemic issue and societal failures undermining the gravity of femicide. Patriarchal defenses like Article 29 reinforces that deviation from traditional gender norms results in a lack of legal and institutional support, compounding the vulnerability of migrant women who are already in precarious situations navigating unfamiliar environments. This article reinforces that their pursuit of autonomy will not be protected by the state, and can even be used against them in cases of spousal violence.

The reinforcement of genders role in family law is also a contributing factor to gender inequality. Traditional expectations are perpetuated and biases undermine autonomy in legal as well as social spheres. The new Turkish Civil Code went into effect in 2001 and refocused amendments on gender equality within family law. Relevant provisions included the joint management of marriage which promotes equal partnership. Implementation of equal custody rights of children out of wedlock, in which addressed issues of control. The adoption of “participation in acquired property” recognized marital property regime ensuring equality in assets in hopes of reducing economic dependency. Right to alimony claims, increased age of legal marriage and consent, equal contribution to household expenses, and restrictions on dispositions of family residence, which required mutual consent, (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Services, General Directorate on the Status of Women, 2021)

Albeit on paper, these changes were seen as highly progressive efforts that reflect progressive shifts towards equitable rights, the implementation and societal alignment still face significant challenges. As traditional gender roles continue to dominate the legal and social spheres, sidelining gender equality. For migrant women, navigating their new urban environments are often unfamiliar regarding their rights which imposes institutional barriers that prevent them from equal access in order to benefit from these reforms.

Government response to violence against women has been particularly limited in rural areas where shelters and hotlines are sparse and difficult to reach. While law 6284, which was enacted in 2012, aims to protect women from violence the enforcement is weak and therefore significantly undermines the impact. Similarly, Turkey’s ratification of the Istanbul Convention marked a progressive step but the denunciation that came in 2021 signaled a troubling regression that left migrant women especially vulnerable as they already face heightened risks of violence during their migration, these systemic barriers and lack of protection further exacerbates precarious circumstances.

### **3.2 Internal Migration: Rural to Urban Dynamics and Femicide**

Rural to urban migration further intensifies the risk of femicide, evidenced by a study on women who migrate from Central and Eastern Anatolia to Ankara. The study revealed that “for women who have immigrated to the city, to work means having an income outside the house. Yet, as this is considered as ‘inappropriate’ by their husbands or families, most of these women are compelled to withdraw from the labor market.” (Altinoz et al. 2018) This dynamic reflects the tension between women’s pursuit of economic independence and its resistance from traditional patriarchal structures.

Since gender roles remain more static in non migration contexts, researching femicide through migration allows for existing vulnerabilities to become clear as well as allows us to pinpoint new stressors specific to the migration experience due to rapid shifts in household dynamics, social expectations and economic roles. These shifts can “provoke violence reaction from men who feel their traditional authority is being undermined” (Çetin, 2015), further increasing the vulnerability of women,

and in severe cases, leading to femicide as a tragic assertion of control. Migration is essential to understanding femicide as journeys often disrupt established gender roles and power dynamics, provoking the male partner to respond violently to perceived threats to their authority, intensifying to extremely violent cases.

However, women face systemic barriers in urban environments. The mayor of Bağlar Municipality in Diyarbakır, who is setting up a women's shelter, shared: "For Kurdish women, the police is not seen as a secure place.... The political problems reflect on social problems" (HRW Report, 2011). Underscoring the dual challenges compounded by internal migration and patriarchal governance structures.

TKDF's president highlighted the challenges women face as they navigate these tensions: "Not only in rural areas, but the patriarchal system also continues to have an effect and the support of the government in every field. The Istanbul Convention was a very good convention made to protect women and girls without any discrimination. It suggested that gender equality be included in the curriculum of our education system. This model would be an inclusive and sustainable study. However, the government did not accept it and withdrew from the convention. We are now trying to implement the ILO's C190 Convention. Convention No. 190 includes the prevention of violence and harassment in work life. Therefore, we are carrying out an action that will create a domino effect by ensuring that women in employment work. With unions and the private sector. In this way, we are trying to teach the social living conditions through the male mentality that came with migration and started working in the factory. This information has a multiplier effect."

She emphasizes that even within urban settings systemic barriers that are rooted in patriarchal governance and societal norms continue to shape women's experiences. She further underscored the progress in addressing violence through collaborative efforts: "However, our institution has been working in cooperation with municipalities and the private sector for the last 5 years. As the Federation of Women's Associations of Turkey, we operate a 24/7 domestic violence emergency helpline. We provide social, psychological and legal support for women who apply here. The line is financed by the private sector. Municipalities distribute brochures with the phone numbers of the line on billboards and to homes to inform citizens. In addition, we contribute to the empowerment of women who are victims of violence by employing the private sector. It is a good example. In addition, the education scholarships of abused children are covered by the private sector. We are making good progress. Nowadays, fathers or brothers from some provinces or abroad call the hotline and declare that their daughters or siblings have been subjected to violence and ask for support. In the past, this segment, which we saw as bound by tradition, would not ask for help. A significant step for us."

Intersectional factors are crucial in addressing the increasing rates behind this phenomenon. Over 70% of the Turkish population has migrated to urban regions (Çetin, 2015) coupled with Turkey's soaring inflation rate reaching an all time high of 71.6% (Trading Economics, 2023) families experience immense financial pressure and economic strains. Secondary incomes are now mandatory

for families to secure basic needs, forcing young children and women to enter the workforce. As women gain access to employment, studies support that their autonomy increases, however, this rural to urban migration journey also triggers shifts that significantly impact households.

“This shift can also provoke violent reactions from men who feel their traditional authority is being undermined” further shares Cetin. He adds, “It seems beyond coincidence, then, that the increased rate of femicide in Turkey in recent years arises from the conflict between women’s new status and men’s traditional status, the latter of which defines women by traditional codes and thus seeks to keep women subjugated”, illustrating how these changes can be a provocation to those resistant to a change in traditional dynamics. Although it is important to acknowledge that violence against women did not derive from migration but added an additional complex layer to the phenomenon. Migration adds a complex layer introducing specific stressors which increase and intensify vulnerabilities.

Women’s evolving status, shaped by their respective migration journey and clash with men’s traditional roles is key to understanding Turkey’s rising femicide rates, especially when considering the socio-cultural dynamics involved. When a social environment shifts, gender roles also evolve “contributing to tensions or conflicts that may increase violence” per Altinoz. Her study in 2018 is the first to examine migration as a risk factor for femicide perpetrators, underscoring femicide as a ‘society related phenomenon’ rather than an ‘individual act’.

Further studies have presented a link of violence with families who migrate, perpetrators citing reasons such as “committing femicide to protect honor and exert dominance over their spouse,” or expressing a crisis in male identity and their “inability to control women.” (Jewkes, 2002) These dynamics suggest that migrating families may face intensified pressures that exacerbate traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms. Men attempt to reassert control in unfamiliar and challenging socio-economic environments, demonstrating how migration and perception of gender roles are defining factors separating men who are violence versus those who are not. (Altnöz et al., 2018)

Regional disparities in economic development within Turkey exacerbates vulnerabilities for migrant women. Kavakli’s (2023) research focusing between 2010 to 2017 found that “the deadly effects of divorce rate and educational equality are mitigated in more developed provinces”, areas with lower development indicators may lack sufficient support systems, legal frameworks and financial opportunities increasing risk of femicide. Kavakli’s study emphasizes that achieving equal economic independence and access must be a key societal goal in Turkey. His findings suggest that rising divorce rates and increased gender equality in the educational sector correlate with higher femicide occurrences, as women challenge patriarchal norms. (Kavakli, 2023)

To support the trends in migration this research used data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) which produces statistics authorized in accordance with Turkish Statistics Law No 5429. Given the political influence on government agencies, transparency is a concern. To uphold this research the

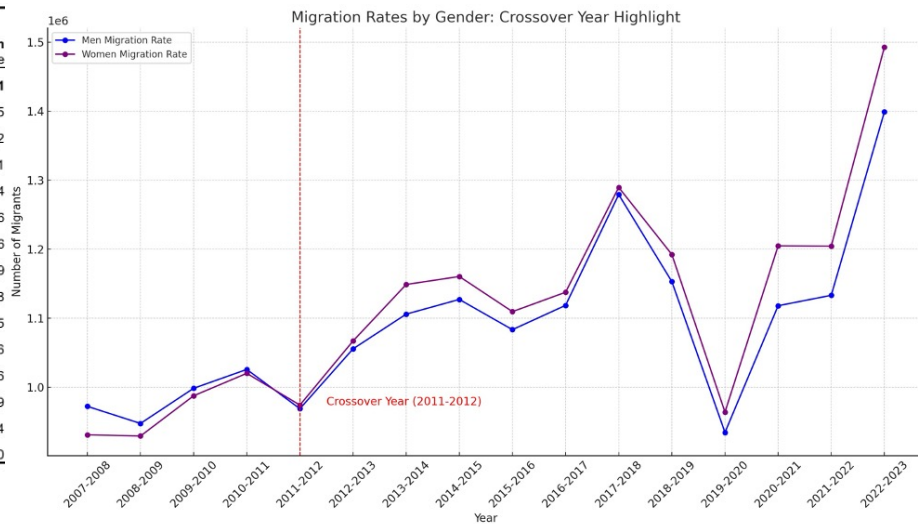
statistics were cross edified with independent data from IOM, HRW, Amnesty International, Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies and KCDP.

TUIK’s migration data accessible between 2007-2011 categorized by gender indicated that men migrated more frequently. However, from 2011 the trend shifted and women led these numbers, a trend that continues today. The commencement of this shift coincided with Turkey’s adoption of the Istanbul Convention, which was seen as a significant step towards gender equality and promotion of women’s rights. This was followed by expectations within legal and social reforms, improved economic opportunity for women and safer living conditions that would promise protection against gender based violence (GBV) and femicide.

**Yaş grubu ve cinsiyete göre iller arası göç eden nüfus, 2023**  
Population migrated across provinces by age group and sex, 2023

| Yaş grubu<br>Age group | Toplam<br>Total  | Erkek<br>Male    | Kadın<br>Female  |
|------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Toplam-Total</b>    | <b>3 450 953</b> | <b>1 653 782</b> | <b>1 797 171</b> |
| 0-4                    | 170 089          | 87 224           | 82 865           |
| 5-9                    | 195 819          | 100 137          | 95 682           |
| 10-14                  | 159 338          | 82 317           | 77 021           |
| 15-19                  | 413 341          | 181 087          | 232 254          |
| 20-24                  | 647 191          | 280 605          | 366 586          |
| 25-29                  | 489 210          | 227 284          | 261 926          |
| 30-34                  | 325 393          | 166 044          | 159 349          |
| 35-39                  | 199 053          | 102 325          | 96 728           |
| 40-44                  | 168 756          | 85 321           | 83 435           |
| 45-49                  | 145 285          | 75 329           | 69 956           |
| 50-54                  | 132 472          | 68 106           | 64 366           |
| 55-59                  | 116 767          | 58 598           | 58 169           |
| 60-64                  | 101 381          | 50 797           | 50 584           |
| 65+                    | 186 858          | 88 608           | 98 250           |

TÜİK, İç Göç İstatistikleri, 2023  
TurkStat, Internal Migration Statistics, 2023



TUIK statistics demonstrates the difference between male-female migration accounts for approximately 4.15% of the total population, indicating that a slightly higher proportion of women are migrating comparatively. (2023)

The 2011 economic growth further influenced rural to urban migration, with women’s labor market participation seeing an increase. TUIK’s data indicates that internal migration has been on the rise, increasing from 3.18% in 2007 to 4.04% in 2023, with women dominating at 52.1% indicating women’s growing autonomy through migration. 61.6% for education, 25.1% for better employment opportunities and 13.3% for better living conditions. (2023)

#### Chapter 4 | Legal and Governance Dimensions of Femicide in Turkey: Analysis and Impact

This chapter examines the institutional landscape of femicide in Turkey, examining how evolving social structures influence and shape legal frameworks, policies and societal relationships. These dynamics are critical to understand femicide in Turkey as it directly effects how gender based violence is addressed within its governance and legal structures. Drawing on fieldwork insights, the chapter inquires into the

institutional dimensions of femicide and how Turkey's specific legal structures and policies affect the rise of femicide since 2002, and evaluates the states response to this phenomenon. It will address how shifts in governance since 2002, and what impact this has had on the rise of femicides.

Insight into legal frameworks that are implemented to protect the safety of women will be analysed in assessing their adequacy and overall impact to compare with international standards to identify areas in need of reform. Turkey's participation in international agreements such as The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its denunciation from the Istanbul Convention provide critical context to understanding the gaps in addressing femicide.

Turkey became a party to the CEDAW in 1985, which established obligations in "eliminating discrimination, including by private actors, and authoritative interpretations of this treaty define violence against women as a form of discrimination", (HRW, 2011) intended to establish a foundation mandating Turkey to take action towards eliminating all forms of violence against women, including femicide. CEDAW underscores Turkey's responsibilities and obligations under the Istanbul Convention, where Turkey was the first country to sign, to uphold its commitment to combat violence against women, protect its victims and appropriately persecute its perpetrators. However, the 2021 denunciation marked a significant shift.

#### **4.1 Evolution of Patriarchy and its Implications for Femicide**

Patriarchy is deeply rooted in Turkish society, shaping governance institutions and structures that reinforce social expectations and marginalize women. Through the qualitative field research, it became evident that patriarchy is a foundational cause of femicide. Key main themes that emerged in the preliminary findings were gender norms, coded as patriarchal attitudes, traditional gender roles and control over women's bodies. A representative from Mor Cati explained during an interview that *"any violence against women is rooted in gender inequality, which in turn is caused by patriarchy."* Highlighting the systemic influence of patriarchy on governance structures, where gender inequalities create a fertile ground for femicide.

Professor İhsan Çetin noted how Diyanet, Turkey's official religious institution emphasizes family unit over individual safety: *"Diyanet always emphasizes family values because they see the risks of family breakdown. But at the same time, it can put women at a big disadvantage"*, revealing a dangerous interplay that prioritizing family cohesion over women's autonomy and safety.

Historical and socio economic factors reinforce patriarchal norms. Gokhan's study (2024) on the impact of social values and culture on discrimination against women observed that when societies shifted to settled agricultural communities, the emergency of private property and urbanization contributed globally attributed to the dominance of patriarchal cultures, establishing cultural values normalizing marginalization of women. These cultural values then shaped the perceptions of women's roles, facilitating "the acceptance of the lower status given to women in society and made many evil or

improper behaviors against women normalized for centuries.” (Gökhan, 2024) This normalization laid the foundation for ideologies that perversely intertwine female virtue with family honor, further contributing to strict behavioral expectations and gender division which has resulted in the modern day systemic subordination of women. (Ökten, 2017) The founder of Kadın Cinayet Durduracagiz noted the ongoing impact of this:

“The patriarchal capitalist government naturally has a negative impact on women’s rights. However, there is still a strong women’s and feminist movement in Turkey. We are highly organized, and we are changing society.” She mentioned that feminist activism influenced Turkey’s initial adoption of the Istanbul Convention in 2011, a year that saw significant decrease in femicides, she continues “of course, the European Court of Human Rights’ Nahide Oğuz decision had a major impact, as did Turkey’s women’s movement.”

Regional disparities in socio economic conditions further exacerbate this issue. Ayşe Gündüz Hoşgör and Jeroen Smits (2006) examined the role and status of rural women in Turkey and analyzed the regional disparities. Their main focus on comparison of rural and urban women with consideration to their autonomy and socio economic status through education, labor market, and family outlook. Regional disparities are evident, findings proving that Western region of Turkey is considerably more urbanized and advanced, leaving the Eastern and Southeastern provinces less developed in comparison. This was clearly correlated with the impact of government policies, mainly those effecting migration patterns, education and technology. Additionally, traditional norms and expectations revealed to have a significant impact on both urban and rural populations, including their labor market participation. Although Hoşgor relays the women’s complex experience shaped by cultural, regional and economic factors, there is a lack of how these experiences may influence femicide rates specifically, and how these factors intersect with migration and patriarchal governance.

Turkish society has been historically constructed holding patriarchal values at its core, predetermining the marginalized position of women which has further influenced current expectations surrounding their traditional gender roles. Kocabicak’s concept of the “role of men regime” provides insight into the power dynamics in the patriarchal state. She explains, “a particular group of elite men.. provides significant support to the men’s rights based mobilizations”, referring to how power is leveraged to sustain traditional patriarchal structures (2023) highlighting the intersection of domestic and public patriarchal systems with these ‘elite men’ holding influential power in shaping policies that perpetuate the gender inequalities that influences the risk of femicide. This patriarchal governance further influences the risk of femicide as socio economic changes and internal migration challenge established gender norms. Patriarchy, and patriarchal governance represent systemic dominance, as defined by Lerner (1989) “the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women

and children.” This dynamic is crucial to understanding how established structures fail to protect women in Turkish society.

Another significant aspect of institutionalized dominance is the cultural normalization of violence which create an environment which condone and trivialize femicide, instead often prioritizing family unity and privacy. Professor Ihsan Çetin from Tekirdağ University elaborated on this perspective, explaining that *‘keeping the family intact’* is often used as a justification for conservative mindsets and ideologies. *“The Turkish religious institution, Diyanet, always emphasizes family values because they see the risks of family breakdown. It’s understandable to want to make divorce harder and keep families together. But at the same time, it can put women at a big disadvantage”* he shares, revealing the dangerous interplay of religion with patriarchal norms, as the autonomy and safety of a woman falls secondary to the idea of family stability and cohesion.

Systemic change is essential towards successfully combatting femicide, it requires dismantling traditional gender roles and deconstructing cultural narratives that hinder the autonomy of women in Turkey.

#### **4.2 Effectiveness of Turkey’s Legal Measures in Combating Femicide**

Turkey has introduced laws like Law No. 6248 to protect women and *“these measures were developed collaboratively with feminist groups and women’s organizations, underscoring the significance of civil society in shaping policy”* shares the founder of Kadın Cinayet Durduracagiz (KCDP). However, enforcement and effectiveness remains questionable due to its inefficiency and inconsistency in practice. KCDP founder explained, *“the failure to implement this internationally recognized law violates womens rights to life, access to justice and human rights.”* Law No. 6284 has evidently not translated into tangible protections for many women. Further demonstrating the systemic violence within legal frameworks. Of those women who had heard of the law, *“only 7.5 percent knew someone who had actually benefited from it”* (Altınay, 2009) Barriers in the bureaucratic system and reluctance from prosecutors often results in a delay of these orders.

Inadequate units and lack of specialized staffing and training further contributes to *“the inconsistent laws and sentencing”* in Turkey. Discrepancies in how cases are prosecuted and sentenced further exemplifies the broader systemic issue that perpetuates femicide rates in Turkey. Investment in addressing these shortcomings is underprioritized and therefore overlooked due to entrenched gender biases. Resources are not allocated effectively as institutions and systems are hesitant in addressing gender based issues which would require Turkey to challenge and dismantle the deeply rooted patriarchal norms that perpetuate femicide. The President of the Federation of Women Associations in Turkey illustrated the systemic failures in institutional responses. Despite the laws in place to safeguard women, these biases create a significant gap between legislation and practice:

“The governments in power implement the mechanisms to prevent violence against women. If

the government does not see women as equal individuals, the institutions working under its administration cannot create differences in their perspectives. For example, when a woman who has been subjected to violence goes to the police, instead of implementing the procedures that should be applied to the perpetrator, the police may say, ‘Nothing will happen, it happened by mistake, he loves you.’ Or, if you complain, the police may say, ‘You will be worse if you give up’”

Human Rights Watch Report (2011) noted that “judges often have a tendency to view domestic violence as a private matter, leading to leniency in sentencing”, reinforcing the perception that femicide is a personal issue as opposed to a crime that demands strict judicial accountability. Emphasis on maintaining family unity emphasized in Human Rights Watch 2011 report is further made evident by Osman Baydemir, mayor of the Diyarbakır Greater Municipality, who shared with Human Rights Watch that *“only 10 percent of women go to the police at all, and 90 percent of women who do go to the police are further violated in some way ... there are so many women who went to the police and didn’t get protection”*

Human Rights Watch Report (2011) also found that law enforcement officers prioritize “preserving family unity, and push battered women to reconcile with abusers rather than pursuing criminal investigations or assisting women in getting protection orders”, reflecting the states emphasis on family integrity over safety, leaving many women vulnerable and unprotected.

These shortcomings have been documented extensively by KCDP, the leading source on femicide data in Turkey for the past 14 years. The platform has uncovered disturbing trends particularly the rise of *“suspicious deaths”* which have made headlines in society, as the statistics of murders manipulated to appear as accidents and suicides have surged from 2018, coinciding with Turkey’s transition to a centralized presidential system following a questionable referendum. This shift ultimately lead to a decline in transparency, enabling femicide and gender related cases to be downplayed and even concealed. (Sessiz Kalma, 2023) The founder of KCDP explained, *“There is no official and systematic reporting of femicides in Turkey. The only official data was from the Ministry of Justice in 2009, which reported a 1,400% increase in femicides over the previous seven years.”* Due to this lack of official transparent data, KCDP compiles and publishes its own statistics, relying on public records and victim contacts. The founder elaborated:

“In recent years, with the rise in suspicious deaths of women, we have also started to report these cases separately. We are referring to murders disguised as suicides, accidents, or natural deaths. Perpetrators have learned how to cover up evidence, and with the perception of impunity, hiding these crimes has become easier. By closely following each case and advancing our policies, we have been able to uncover the truth behind suspicious female deaths. Esin Işık and Şule Çet are just a few examples.”

KCDP's data revealed an alarming increase in unidentified deaths illustrated in the graphs below. The left chart shows the data from 2015 in numbers, and 2018 shows them in percentage format. For clarity, I have converted the percentages into numbers to support a clear and direct comparison. The number of unidentified deaths (tespit edilmeyen) in 2015 were 65, and there was no category yet for suspicious deaths (şüpheli olum). In stark contrast, 2018 experienced 132 unidentified deaths. What is particularly alarming is the addition of the new category; combined with the unidentified deaths leads statistics to a staggering total of 264 cases, according to KCDP's annual reports. This stark increase in unidentified and suspicious deaths corroborates the systemic failures in addressing femicide effectively. KCDP's platform vigilance brings to light a critical gap, particularly in urban regions.



She continues:

“It is also true that in underdeveloped cities, violence and femicides are more easily covered up. To overcome these barriers, we work closely with local media, and thanks to our widespread policy and workforce, anyone who has a direct suspicion now reaches out to us.”

However, the organization has faced significant push back. In 2021, KCDP faced a lawsuit filed on the grounds that it “*undermines family values and supporting terrorism.*” It sought the dissolution of the platform on charges of “engaging in activities contrary to the law and morality.” (BBC, 2023) General Secretary of the platform, Fidan Ataselim, viewed this case as a “warning” from authorities, in efforts to silence their advocacy efforts. Although the lawsuit was rejected by the courts in September of 2023, it highlights the pattern of government actions limiting the efforts of those working to address gender inequality and undermines advocate efforts in providing effective essential information and support. This is particularly concerning considering the platforms active role in shaping Law 6284 which, in theory, “*regulates the measures to be taken to protect women, children, family members and stalking victims subjected to or at the risk of violence*” elaborated in a brochure by another prominent femicide platform, Mor Catı.

Since the government hides accurate statistics and fails to provide adequate support, these human rights advocacy groups and platforms are a corner stone in addressing femicide effectively.

This government resistance is part of a larger pattern demonstrated as AKP started to take different paths from its initial politics, she explained:

“Currently, they are signaling their intent to re-examine our civil rights, disregarding the rulings of the Constitutional Court. They have withdrawn from the Istanbul Convention and are developing policies to weaken the effective implementation of Law No. 6284. They are forming alliances with those who call for the abolition of Law No. 6284 and advocate for women to be “sheltered.” They have also allied with HÜDA PAR, a party that promotes the idea that women should be subordinated to men. Most recently, through family-focused policies, they are leaving women voiceless, without rights, and unprotected within the family, encouraging families where men are positioned as the head. We observe that these family-oriented policies have a significant impact on increasing femicides. We are raising the alarm. For this reason, while women are killed every day, we have launched the “We wrote it, we will enforce it” campaign to ensure the effective implementation of Law No. 6284.”

Systemic shortcomings further erodes the trust in the justice system, as inaction emboldens the abusers leaving the victim feeling powerless. The lack of accountability further demonstrates how inadequate legal protection and societal pressures discourage women from seeking justice. This simultaneously perpetuates the cycle of violence which leaves them in dangerous dynamics, as they find themselves trapped by both societal and systemic barriers.

During my fieldwork, I encountered a woman staying at an Airbnb with her father, mother and daughter. There was a violent incident which lead us to the police station. Her leg had needed 7 stitches, because her father had shattered a glass on her during an altercation. The police informed us that there had been multiple filed reports against the father, including by his daughter, in the past. However, when asked if she wanted to file another report, she denied and repeated that “*nothing changes, and he is my father.*” Despite repeated reports of violence, it became evident that there is a failure in imposing consequences or protective measures reflecting a clear issue of institutional neglect and leniency for male perpetrators. She left with her young daughter shortly thereafter, having chosen to withhold any comments, underlining the societal pressures in preserving family matters internally, often at the expense of own well-being.

Societal pressures further compound these challenges. As Oktay (2017) noted, “if a victim woman speaks up about the violence either physical or sexual, she is seen with contempt and considered that she has lost the dignity of her and her family.” This cultural silencing continues to uphold the norms which silence women and normalize gender based violence. A lawyer from Adana expressed concern on this reality stating, “*The rarity of pre-trial detention in violence against women cases, lack of effective and prompt sentencing... creating a perception of impunity for these crimes*”, which results in the reluctance of reporting violent crimes, concluding that systemic and societal barriers do sustain cycles

of abuse. Key findings additionally revealed that lack of awareness and inadequate funding, a lawyer emphasized:

“The state needs to contribute more to legal support ... however, the conditions for accessing this support are very strict.” With insufficient resources invested towards authoritative and support networks, it became evident that these situations are deprioritized and due to legal mechanisms which are although in place, often fail. Another lawyer from Izmir explained that cultural and traditional norms often “uphold these norms.. deviations from expected behavior ... can lead to violence, including femicide.”

This normalization of gender based violence becomes tied into societal norms which prioritize the head of household - the male authoritative figure - over the safety of women.

Addressing femicide requires a multifaceted approach where social and legal reforms see active efforts. It is evident that strengthening legal protections is crucial, but this requires initiatives to challenge deeply rooted patriarchal values. Support services must be significantly improved with greater access in both connecting with the victim as well as in providing greater access to safe spaces and increased awareness. Appropriate training and sensitivity must be prioritized, otherwise legal measures will continue to fall short. Challenging societal norms that promotes and prioritizes family unity, and treat violence as a private internal matter, further perpetuate the silence and inaction within the society that allows for this violence to continue. Sustained comprehensive strategies could contribute meaningful progress, but without addressing the systemic gaps, their impact will remain limited and insufficient.

### **4.3 Comparative Analysis of Turkey’s Legal Frameworks with International Standards**

A pro bono lawyer from KCDP highlights the disparity, confirming the existent gaps that exist in ensuring the safety of women and holding perpetrators accountable. *“In comparison to countries that uphold the Istanbul Convention or similar frameworks, Turkey’s current legal structure is less effective in ensuring women’s safety and holding perpetrators accountable. Turkey’s legal framework for femicide, while incorporating some protective measures, falls short of international standards, particularly after its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.”* Turkey’s shortcomings are in dire need for comprehensive reforms, ones that align better with international standards, to bridge the gap between the legal framework and international practices.

Human Rights Watch (2011) report sheds light on that despite amendments to the Penal and Civil Codes, significant gaps exist and the general trend continues to reflect these legal biases. Dismissive attitudes and inadequate documentations are two main issues which weakens the prosecutions ability to secure convictions. Knowledge of the dynamics in gender based violence are insufficient and often judges fail to account for the power imbalances that result in sentence leniency. To ensure more consistent prosecutions, targeted training should be considered to address these

shortcomings and to better adhere with international standards to better address gender based violence as a systemic issue, and not an internal family unit issue.

The main issues when comparing Turkey's legal framework with international standards were centered around governance requiring a further analysis of the governments inaction and Turkey's 2021 Convention withdrawal. Lawyer from KCDP highlighted these failures, stating:

“The biggest issue with the legal framework is the failure to protect women, and even when perpetrators are sentenced after a crime is committed, they spend very little time in prison due to the ineffectiveness of the execution law.”

Revealing a pattern of ineffective enforcement where perpetrators are not held accountable. She also noted:

“Although many legal regulations have been introduced over time, these laws are not effectively implemented, and investigations are not conducted diligently.” Proving that these laws are not supported in an adequate manner.

This lack of enforcement remains a critical issue which has revealed a pattern of consistent failure across the system throughout. As the lawyer from KCDP further commented, *“the state currently views femicides in Turkey as a routine occurrence and an unavoidable situation.”* Reduced protection is the main concern here, as perpetrators are let off on lenient measures.

Reform is necessary, and it is clear that advocacy efforts are attempting to put pressure on the governments approach. However, the *“issue is complex”* as the lawyer contributed, *“a significant factor is the 22 year tenure of the pro-Islamist AKP and its agenda,”* which has shaped policies that often fail to acknowledge and incorporate women's rights. They elaborate:

“In comparison to countries that uphold the Istanbul Convention or similar frameworks, Turkey's current legal structure is less effective in ensuring women's safety and holding perpetrators accountable. Turkey's legal framework for femicide, while incorporating some protective measures, falls short of international standards, particularly after its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.”

Overall, implying that advocacy efforts should continue to put pressure to strengthen Turkey's approach. Reduced protection is a high concern here, as perpetrators are rarely held accountable.

#### **4.4 Impact of Legal Frameworks and International Standards on Femicide Rates**

Upon comparison of the impact of legal frameworks and international standards on femicide rates, it is clear that enforcement aligned with comprehensive protective measures as well as with global

agreements significantly contributes to reducing gender based violence. The main codes that surfaced during the analyzation of the overall impact were societal fragmentation and state society power dynamics, highlighted how structural imbalances and inequalities in governance perpetuates systemic barriers further when concerning femicide.

Social fragmentation heavily influences femicide rates. There is a clear disconnect between legal frameworks and societal reality. Cultural practices and social norms undermine the protective frameworks in place and state-society power dynamics play a role in this as they effect the implementation and the impact of legal forts. The states inaction to femicide reflects a broader imbalance, as patriarchal values shape governance and legal enforcement.

Legal measures are not appropriately nor effectively translated into tangible protection for women which creates a crucial gap between legislation and actual enforcement. Aligning these two factors would ensure a more consistent effort and meaningful action, social and legal efforts should be integrated in a cohesive and unified way. Currently, legal implementation is often nonexistent, undermined the intended impact which initially placed these measures. State responses and power balances directly hinder the protection and support mechanisms for women, they demand strengthening to ensure women are not left victim to the violence.

#### **4.5 Consequences of Turkey's Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention**

This research specifically focused on the consequences of the widely criticized denunciation of the Istanbul Convention in 2021. Clear, consistent and evident patterns of judicial bias and government inaction emerged. These significant barriers hinder combating femicide in a long term and effective manner. The ruling governments patriarchal stance is further evidenced by the denunciation Convention signed in 2011 to ensure protection of women and gender equality. This withdraw immediately impacted women's rights and femicide rates, experiencing an immediate increase in risk and cases of violence. (Hafza Girdap et al., 2023) "It is not the 'inability' of the state but rather an 'unwillingness' to protect against and prevent gender-based violence against women in Turkey" (Bakshi, 2020)

Patterns in judicial biases in femicide cases reveal inconsistencies in adequately penalizing perpetrators, which reflects the deeper institutional prejudices. As a KADAV associate asserted:

"This [Istanbul Convention] is the most important of the steps I mentioned to encourage women killings. It was directly perceived that the state will not push the male if he beat or killed his wife. We have even heard perpetrators say —

'I thought the Istanbul Convention was annulled, why are you punishing me?'"

Government inaction has notably increased following Turkey's denunciation of the Istanbul Convention, it reduced state pressure to enforce protections and diminished legal and institutional responses. Overlooked cases, reduction in protection and deprioritization of Law No. 6284 – intended to prevent gender based violence – has resulted in the alarming rise of femicide occurrences in Turkey.

The withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention raised significant concerns, according to Apaydin (2023) “the fact that it was done by a presidential decision via the use of a decree as legal basis to reverse a rather sophisticated procedure to generate the consent of Turkey to be bound with an international treaty has incited constitutional controversies”, highlighting the erosion of democracy and jeopardizing legal accountability for protection of women.

The deterioration of legal frameworks is a prominent reason behind women's vulnerability. A significant rise in advocacy efforts is clearly visible from legal NGOs in addressing the government's shortcomings. For example, Izmir Kadin Dayanisma (IKDD) disclosed:

“As an association, we carry out many studies aimed at promoting gender equality, combating violence against women, increasing women's organizational capacity, and developing and implementing policies on all issues that concern women. These include: providing training to promote the ideas of gender equality and rights awareness, increasing visibility in the field through cultural activities and events to reach new members and volunteers, continuing to advocate and lobby local governments and the general administration by conducting monitoring activities on their policies and activities, engaging in advocacy work within local and national networks to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Receiving applications related to violence through the operation of the Women's Counseling Center and offering consultancy support to women via a network of volunteer lawyers and psychologists.” Despite these efforts, IKDD noted “Many NGOs and women's rights organizations reported a deterioration in support services for victims of violence after the withdrawal”

Similarly, an Istanbul based NGO underlined the importance of raising awareness and fostering solidarity with women:

“We have helped raise awareness about people's rights - i regularly create simplified legal content - What does the Istanbul Convention explain - What are our rights under Law No 6284 - What is the truth about alimony - This process first and foremost leads to increased awareness. Secondly, a community has formed under the umbrella of SEBUKA, which provides a beneficial environment for solidarity - Women empower each other through one another's stories.”

Urgent reforms in governmental responses are essential in effectively combatting femicide and IKDD and NGO engagement in advocacy efforts further demonstrates how crucial community engagement and awareness is. Unfortunately, the lack of state commitment further hinders progress.

Without addressing these systemic issues femicide rates will likely continue to rise, further exacerbating the gender gap in Turkey.

## **Chapter 5 | Intersection of Migration, Cultural Norms and Support Systems i Femicide Dynamics**

This chapter will elaborate on how cultural norms and traditional gender roles influence Turkey's support mechanisms and prevention of femicide. With both migration and femicide rates on the rise, this chapter will further explore whether rural to urban migration increases women's susceptibility to femicide. It will examine how these transitions may increase their exposure to violence as well as limit access to protective resources. This analysis will be supported by fieldwork research and provide firsthand insights to the experiences of human rights activists and women's platforms that work tirelessly to support all women and that kindly shared the systemic challenges and gaps existent in support, which contributes to their heightened vulnerability.

### **5.1 Effects of Rural to Urban Migration on Femicide Rates**

Womens susceptibility to femicide and violence is influenced by socio economic and cultural shifts introduced by rural to urban migration. As the president of the Turkish Federation of Women's Associations (TKDF) explained:

“In fact, even if time and place change, the cultural norm does not change. Even if it tries to change, it ends up as its own understanding. For example, since the economic conditions in the country cause the villagers to have difficulties in production and there are no policies that support industrial investment and employment, internal migration is quite intense. This situation causes the previous person to ask for help and support and to migrate to the same region, and ghettoization begins in that region. In fact, nothing changes. Gender roles are the same there, and women are responsible for domestic labor, and the situation is the same in the place they migrate to.”

Her contribution aligns with the patterns identified during the field work as migration journeys often result in limited access to resources and support services and the deeply rooted gender norms remain consistent in rural and urban settings. She added:

“When economic conditions become difficult, if women join the workforce and feel the existence of different lives in the environment, this change increases violence. The conditions of the man in the struggle and the change he sees create violence. A man who says, ‘Let the house stay the same but let me change,’ can create violence.”

Highlighting the tension caused by traditional patriarchal norms that clash with women's

exposure and newfound autonomy. With urbanization comes challenges, she further noted:

“The children who go to education start questioning the change with what they see and learn. Gender roles do not change with migration, that is for sure. For this, migration needs to be monitored by the government; it needs to be provided with information for harmonization, and the harmful aspects of cultural norms need to be explained. It needs to establish study centers that will support these children in terms of education and social and psychological counseling centers for women who migrate.”

Underscoring the need for systematic monitoring and improved support services to mitigate risks associated with migration to ensure protection for women is available during the transitioning contexts.

KCDP founder built on this:

“Women migrating from rural to urban areas often face conflicts between traditional gender roles and newfound individual freedoms, which can lead to an increase in violence. The lack of social networks in urban areas can make these women more vulnerable to violence.”

This was echoed by another activist from the platform who noted:

“In more developed cities, we encounter different faces of patriarchal relations. These include flexible working models, women being seen as secondary income earners, and not receiving equal pay for equal work”, further entrenching women in cycles of dependency.

When women move from rural regions to urban centers traditional gender roles become questioned through a new exposure which presents individual freedoms. Lawyer and member from Ankara’s Branch Management highlighted that *“women migration from rural to urban areas often face conflicts between traditional gender roles and newfound individual freedoms, which can lead to an increased violence. The lack of social networks in urban areas can make these women more vulnerable to violence.”* The transition journey exposes women to new opportunities but also places them in environments where their access to support systems are weaker, or, as new arrivals may be less known.

The connection of migration and femicide is evidently a complex and multifaceted one. KADAV observes:

“We don’t have reliable data on barriers in rural to urban migration context that affect the prevalence and reporting of femicide. Nevertheless, we know that most murders are committed in metropolitan areas. There is of course a relationship between urban migration and violence but it

cannot be a direct cause.’’

Their perspective brings to light the urgency for a reanalysis in order to ensure a comprehensive approach towards the link of migration and rates. Taking note from his discussion, he believes that focus needs to be turned towards the interplay of socio economic factors, cultural norms and the interplay with urbanization.

Urbanization has transformed femicide dynamics in Turkey. A knowledgeable associate professor from Tekirdag observes, *“we can talk about the fact of urbanization of the femicide. That is a good topic. Urbanization, to be, to live in the urban, how urbanization has affected the rates of femicide.”* Femicides prevalence and concentration in metropolitan cities suggests that these environments increases economic pressures, isolation cultural conflict and other risk factors for Turkish migrant women.

KCDP founder also highlights the contrast in womens struggle across variating regions:

“We also see that women are fighting for their rights in economically, socially, and politically underdeveloped cities, just as they are in the largest cities. In metropolitan cities, we observe a higher incidence of femicides, as there are more women striving to stand on their own feet. In other cities, women are more often silenced, but in metropolitan areas, they find more courage. Although gender roles have started to change in our struggle, men who want to hold onto these roles tightly are trying to violently suppress the progress and change of women.”

Thus, urbanization can be said to reshape economic and social landscapes but it is vital to note that it simultaneously increases the risks women face daily.

Migration journeys often carry with them rural cultural norms into urban settings. This shapes the socio cultural fabric of cities. A lawyer from Ankara, explains that *“since the 1950’s, uneducated and semi educated masses migrating from villages to cities have carried their conservative identities, customs and ways of life to the ghettos (shantytowns) they formed around newly developing cities.”* In return, this results in the transfer of rural customs and values into urban regions which further develops environments where patriarchal norms persist, even in the most modern of cities. They further explain, *“after the 1980’s and 1990’s, with the children of rural families moving closer to city centers, receiving university education and becoming white collar workers, and most importantly, finding roles in political parties, rural/ peasant culture began to be seen in every part of urban life.”*

Migration heightens an array of risks, but it is important to also note that it simultaneously offers opportunities for transformation, autonomy and empowerment. IKDD, an organization based in Izmir, relayed *“migration from rural to urban areas is a factor that enables women to gain more economic independence and access to educational opportunities. However, the traditional roles that women assume within the extended family structures present in rural areas are also undergoing transformation with migration, often becoming limited to only nuclear*

*family responsibilities.*” There is no denying that these shifts offer women autonomy in certain parts of their lives and experiences but it is important to note that this additionally leaves them also more isolated and reliant on nuclear family dynamics. If these relationships are abusive and violent, the vulnerability is further exacerbated.

These bring a nuanced perspective of the two sided nature of migration. Empowerment comes hand in hand with ne forms of vulnerability due to the weakened support systems, cultural conflicts and patriarchal norms. The intricate connections between migration and femicide calls for a deeper exploration of how these factors influence the lives of women in their new urban environments.

## **5.2 Influence of Traditional Cultural Norms and Gender Roles on Femicide Prevention**

To better understand the persistence and increase of femicide and its existent barriers, one must take into account the rigid cultural norms and gender roles deeply rooted into Turkish society. The double-sided dynamic becomes visible through the focus of migration. Migration has challenged the patriarchal norms but it has also translated them into their new contexts. An advocate for Human Rights Watch expressed that many people in Turkey believe “the rise of women is the fall of family” (2022) reflecting the deeply ingrained mindset prioritizing traditional family expectations. KCDP founder agrees:

“In more developed cities, we encounter different faces of patriarchal relations. These include flexible working models, women being seen as secondary income earners, and not receiving equal pay for equal work.”

This transition turns focus on the complex interplay between cultural exchange, dynamics in gender and social attitudes.

In patriarchal societies, migration exacerbates vulnerabilities through isolation. Traditional support systems are fractured through the transition and resettlement process brought upon by migration. A member and lawyer from Ankara’s Branch Management captured this dynamic:

“In a patriarchal context, this isolation can exacerbate their vulnerability and contribute to the factors leading to femicide. Additionally, the broader societal attitudes towards women and migration further influence how violence is perpetrated and addressed.”

They accentuate how deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes are. These attitudes spread into public and private spheres during the transition period. The isolation that she refers to is twofold: geographic, as women leave their familial and social safety nets for an unfamiliar and new urban

environment. In said environment - there are limited resources and connections. In this context societal attitudes subordinate women whilst simultaneously reinforces the systemic barriers to address violence. With rural to urban migration, often follows employment. Employment is directly linked to autonomy and demands a renegotiation of traditional gender roles. This new found autonomy often comes with backlash as the traditional patriarchal structures are disrupted.

However, KCDP's founder analyzed with consideration to history with material facts, supporting that there is an urgent need for state intervention in ensuring womens safety and rights are prioritized:

“There is a significant transformation and change taking place in Turkey. With modernization, women are courageously fighting for a more free and equal life. We see that women are advancing further and wanting to make decisions about their own lives. More women are questioning their lives. In contrast, the loss of male power is leading to a crisis. At this point, the position of the state is crucial. We believe the state should stand with women.”

An associate professor drew attention to this pivotal shift within migrant communities in Germany, where, like Turkey, a similar pattern of disruption has also been observed due to an increase in autonomy:

“There have been cases of femicide among the migrant population, which is quite large. It seems that many of these femicides stem from the conflict that arises when women begin to change. The men, stuck in their traditional roles, struggle to accept these changes”

This contribution underscores the unyielding and reoccurring pattern: men entrenched in patriarchal values often perceive change as a threat to authority. When women's social statuses evolve through exposure to modernity it then creates a violent environment which can escalate to violence and femicide. They elaborated further, specifying catalysts for the aforementioned tensions:

“One of the biggest complaints from refugee men was about their wives—specifically, the new demands these women were making. Their status is changing due to urbanization, education, social media, the internet, globalization—modernization in all its forms, even democracy.”

With consideration to their research, they find the process of modernization to be multi dimensional. Not only the women's autonomy which is gained through education or finding employment as the main catalyst but the cultural shifts that follow prior to this exposure - with empowerment comes friction.

The transfer of patriarchal norms in urban settings perpetuates traditional norms. The IKDD from Izmir warned against oversimplifying and stereotyping cultures when discussing violence with regard to migration:

“Although migration from rural to urban areas carries the risk of traditional values and patriarchal norms being transferred to urban life, merely making this visible in the context of migration, along with the cultural practices mentioned in the fight against femicide, poses a risk of creating cultural essentialist approaches and rationalizations that explain the causes of violence through culture.”

KDCP concurs:

“We believe it is necessary to approach the issue from a perspective that goes beyond the rural-urban dichotomy. I often observe that this approach is reduced to culture alone, following an orientalist lens. I frequently encounter this, particularly in European-based research, and I would like to express my critique of it.”

Throughout these engagements, it became evident that the priority and perspective from this association lays in challenging simplistic notions of femicide and violence, their belief being that it transcends beyond Turkish cultural and its traditional values. They shared that exclusively focusing on these two determinations risks consideration to the structural factors also at play. Inadequate legal protection and lack of access are also critical attributions. This transference into urban settings calls for solutions that surpass cultural critique. There is no disputing that migration reshapes household dynamics in ways that may intensify gendered conflict. KCDP’s founder observed:

“The phenomenon of migration is still widespread in Turkey. In more developed cities, we encounter different faces of patriarchal relations. These include flexible working models, women being seen as secondary income earners, and not receiving equal pay for equal work. There are also efforts by men to conceal their culpability through various methods by exploiting their influence.”

The women’s association in Ankara provided insight into how urban migration impacts family structures, sharing *“when families move from villages to cities like Istanbul or Ankara, and begin working, the household dynamics shift.”* But in what ways do these shifts in household dynamics manifest?

Traditional hierarchies are often disrupted when women contribute economically to the household, and gain financial independence. Albeit this brings upon newfound empowerment and autonomy, it is important to note that it introduces resistance from men who feel their position as sole

providers is undermined. This resistance is often met with controlling mannerisms and violence, as men attempt to reassert their dominance to maintain the traditional Turkish family household structure. *“But once women start living in urban areas, there are lots of extra factors, external factors that affect everything”* shared by the associate professor from Tekirdag, notes the importance of considering that influences go beyond a woman’s employment which bring upon new networks. Empowerment of women often goes hand in hand with vulnerabilities, such as navigating new urban systems and shifting dynamics, which may leave them more vulnerable.

While there is no arguing that urbanization and modernization bring upon opportunities for women’s empowerment they also generate tensions. Patriarchal norms migrate into their new urban environments, often escalating tensions and perpetuating the cycle of violence in what are seemingly progressive regions. In Turkey, fostering a society where women can thrive free from the threat of femicide, a comprehensive approach must be adopted. An approach that challenges the deeply ingrained structures and norms that perpetuate this violence to begin with.

### **5.3 Interplay Between Migration Dynamics and Cultural Norms in Femicide Trends**

Reshaping cultural norms and gender dynamics in Turkey requires focus on the role of internal migration. This section explores their contribution to femicide trends, drawing further insight from legal experts, academics and women’s platforms. The president of the Turkish Federation of Women’s Associations (TKDF) observed:

“Family unity and pressure continues. It is a system that is maintained that decisions made within the family are followed and that men have a say. Therefore, everything that happens should remain within the family; the punishment and the cost of wrongdoing are finalized by the decision of the men within the family. It is considered wrong for neighbors to take action on this issue. For this reason, no one can report much about the increasing violence and domestic abuse. A protective and supportive state mechanism is not sustainable. The lack of a sense of trust also requires submission to this system.”

Cultural norms dictating that domestic issues are private matters highlights how patriarchal family structures perpetuate control, even at the presence of abuse. Resistance to external intervention like support systems, the isolation of women becomes a concern in urban regions where their migration journeys may have interrupted extended family networks. TKDF’s president highlights that the authority of men remains unchallenged which limits access to support systems in place, rendering them ineffective.

Additionally, rural to urban migration introduces significant legal challenges for women. A lawyer from Istanbul who actively works with femicide cases elaborated on these systemic challenges:

“Internal migration can further complicate legal support. Migrant women may face additional barriers such as lack of language support, limited access to legal resources, and increased vulnerability due to their status.”

They underscore how the marginalized status of migrant women compounds their inability to access protection. The gap in legal mechanisms that address migrant specific vulnerabilities results in very little, if any, protection of women. In return, this forces women to remain in abusive relationships where this violence has been traditionally normalized. They elaborated:

“However, the judiciary often neglects to consider the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by migrant women, focusing instead on the general aspects of the case.”

Their observation underscores Turkey's systemic oversight in the system. Turkey's judicial systems failures in accounting for the intersectionality of migration and gender leads to a complete disregard of the unique socio economic pressures as well as the isolation aforementioned, that women experience, resulting in the legal system being complicit in the neglect of migrant women's lived realities, as well as reinforces the increasing patriarchal violence.

An associate professor, and pro bono lawyer for the KCDP shared that migration does exacerbate the isolation of the woman, which leads to heightened vulnerability to violence:

“Migrant women may face increased isolation, lacking extended family support and struggling to adapt to urban life. The stress of economic hardship, coupled with the clash between rural traditions and urban realities, can heighten tensions within families, leading to increased risks of domestic violence and femicide.”

Close knit communities and extended family provides a degree of protection for Turkish women, which is lost during the migration journey. This, in conjunction with economic instability and new stress imposed by the demands of urban living often leads to conflict. A reoccurring theme that has been established - migration disrupts established roles and intensifies control and resistance. She further emphasized the role of entrenched gender norms, revealing that patriarchal norms may even strengthen in new urban environments:

“In the context of migration, these gender norms can be exacerbated. Migrant women, particularly those from rural areas, may experience intensified isolation and vulnerability.”

Another associate professor contributed a case regarding the Kurdish migrating population in Turkey, where urbanization has disrupted established expectations, *“even though they are often seen as very traditional, you can observe how they too are starting to change”*, it is possible to claim that the woman’s shift in behavior and aspirations is what initially challenges tradition. *“That’s one of the points where women begin to change, because they see other women’s don their lives, and they start questioning things. In total, urbanization has a big impact of the changing status of women.”* Interestingly, she further observed a countertrend:

“Now, there’s even a shift in the opposite direction, with some people moving away from cities like Istanbul and back to rural areas.”

This reversal complicates the interplay between migration dynamics and cultural norms, as the return implies a search for stability. These returns create a dynamic where progress is reversed or stalled.

Women are excluded from stable employment opportunities, especially those without formal educational background. In Turkey, this accounts for 13.3% of the female population, which means over 11 million women (Türkstat, 2023) who are forced into exploitative jobs with little pay and no security. The economic marginalization reinforces the dependency on male family members, further limiting their abilities. Ankara Kadın Dayanisma Vakfi concurred that economic and educational barriers further exacerbate the vulnerabilities experienced by internal migrant women:

“Women from villages, however, often face additional challenges, as many haven’t completed their education, making it difficult for them to find formal jobs. They often end up in low paying, invisible jobs, adding further layers of difficulty to their situations.”

Tailored support systems must be introduced to address the unique challenges of the completely overlooked case of migrant women, as they find themselves affected and neglected in the fight against femicide.

## **Chapter 6 | Conclusion**

Through investigating the intricate links shaping femicide in Turkey, this study reveals a consistent interplay of rural-urban migration dynamics and patriarchal governance structures that sustains and amplifies gender based violence. Using qualitative methods the study

Through theoretical lenses of gendered migration theory and systemic violence frameworks the analysis uncovers how traditional gender expectations, legal shortcomings and institutional biases place women at heightened risk. It contributes to the understanding that femicide is not an isolated phenomenon but deeply rooted in Turkey’s socio political and economic mechanisms. While migration is a route to socioeconomic opportunities it presents multifaceted vulnerabilities for migrant women;

where fractured support systems and insufficient legal protections compound risks. Traditional gender role expectations ingrained in Turkish society manifests in cultural and legal areas reinforcing a patriarchal order. Legal loopholes - like the “unjust provocation” defense - exemplifies how these legal structures sustain patriarchal systems where violence is normalized instead of strictly condemned. These biases are deeply rooted and reflects a broader societal acceptance that obstructs meaningful progress.

Turkey’s significant setback in the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, weakened its capacity to protect women from violence. This denunciation presents more than a policy change, it demonstrates a disregard for domestic reforms essential for femicide protection and signals a retreat from international commitments. The uneven enforcement of Law No. 6284 has further led to inadequate outcomes, although its intent is to provide a legal basis for protecting women.

Additionally, urban migration demonstrated a complex duality for migrant women. Migration offers opportunities for autonomy but it simultaneously exposes women further, as they face economic marginalization, lack legal protections and are often relegated to informal labor markets. This leaves them financially dependent to patriarchal pressures, exacerbating their vulnerabilities. Escalated domestic violence rooted in perceived losses of control intensifies the precarious circumstances migrant women navigate, perpetuating cycles of abuse in their new environments without sufficient support systems.

Finally, patriarchal norms and entrenched cultural values perpetuate the systemic violence against women. These norms undermine womens autonomy and by normalizing gender based violence it contributes to a culture of impunity for perpetrators and discourages women from seeking justice. Lenient sentencing used under Article 29 of the Penal code further erode accountability and emboldens perpetrators. This disproportionately affects migrant women who face resistance during their navigation of urban systems, with these patriarchal structures amplifying their marginalization.

Despite these challenges, civil society organizations and womens platforms play a critical role in addressing femicide by providing essential services, documenting cases and advocating for reforms. Their impact is visible constrained by limited resources and governmental resistance but their persistent efforts continue to raise awareness and push for systemic change. Their efforts actively challenge patriarchal norms, fostering hope for justice and equity. However, the absence of consistent state support deepens these challenges, leaving significant gaps in the protection and empowerment of women.

Addressing femicide in Turkey requires a multi dimensional approach. Legal reforms must align with international standards, including rejoining of hte Istanbul Convention and implementing stricter enforcement mechanisms for laws like Law No. 6284. A human rights based approach to dismantle the

socio cultural roots of gender based violence is crucial for establishing support networks through structural reform. However, addressing femicide goes beyond policy reforms, it calls for a fundamental shift in cultural values and legal mechanisms. Equally important is the societal effort to build awareness, enhance public accountability and foster resilience to support and protect migrant women.

In concluding, it would be valuable for future research to explore this intersection, investigating the effectiveness of community based interventions and state collaboration in addressing systemic violence. This studies emphasis on the need for multi dimensional approach to femicide prevention suggests it should integrate a nuanced understanding of the interplay between migration, patriarchal norms and systemic violence. Only by addressing these intersecting factors can Turkey hope to create an environment where all women can exercise their rights to live without fear, where their safety and autonomy is guaranteed. Through coordinated efforts between state, civil society and international actors, meaningful progress can be achieved in ending femicide in Turkey.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Guide**

*Introduced myself and my interest behind this research. Asked if there were any inquiries regarding consent, and reassured anonymity and confidentiality. Received permission prior to recording the interview.*

Introduction

Background information: where they are from and what they do or name of organization.

Legal Frameworks and Governance:

- How do Turkey's legal frameworks address femicide, and how do they reinforce or challenge patriarchal norms, including in the context of internal migration?
- In your experience, how does Turkey's patriarchal governance structure influence the legal outcomes of femicide cases?
- How effective are Turkey's legal frameworks in addressing femicide compared to international standards, especially after the denunciation of the Istanbul Convention?
- How are legal defenses such as 'unjust provocation' or emotional distress used in femicide cases and how do they affect prosecution outcomes?

Gender Roles, Migration, and Femicide:

- How have traditional gender roles in Turkey contributed to gender inequalities and femicide patterns particularly in the context of rural-to-urban migration?
- What are the impacts of internal migration from rural to urban areas on femicide rates and how do legal and policy frameworks address these cases?
- How do cultural practices and patriarchal government structures uphold norms that perpetuate femicide particularly with the added context of migration?

Challenges and Strategies:

- What challenges do lawyers face when representing victims of femicide, particularly those who have migrated from rural to urban areas and how can these challenges be addressed to improve legal outcomes?
- What strategies have been effective in challenging patriarchal norms in Turkey to reduce femicide and improve support services for victims?
- How has the denunciation of the Istanbul Convention in 2021 impacted Turkey's ability to address femicide and protect victims?

*Inquired if they were interested in a copy of the final research and shared my personal contact to help keep in touch during the process of my research and after.*

## Appendix B

| Participants | Position                       | Important notes   |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---|
| A            | Human Rights Activist          |   |
| B            | Human Rights Activist          | Works in highlighting the repression of women under current government and on the persecution of citizens |
| C            | Lawyer and founder             | Support services focused  |
| D            | Lawyer and association founder | Adana based, foundation monitors and publishes data reports   |
| E            | Lawyer and writer              |   |
| F            | Womens platform                | Founder and general secretary   |
| G            | Womens platform                | Longest serving platform - 14 years   |
| H            | Womens platform                |   |
| I            | President                      |   |
| J            | Founder                        |   |
| K            | Professor                      |   |
| L            | Professor                      |   |
| M            | Professor                      | Expert on femicide, ethnicity migration and refugee studies   |

