

Gender and Parliamentary Speeches in Turkish Parliament

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the gender speeches and women's representation in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The analysis examines women's representation and gendered speeches during the AKP government's turn towards authoritarianism since 2010, specifically focusing on the 24th, 26th, and 27th parliamentary terms. Specifically, it analyzes how women are interrupted and their position in parliamentary taunts, as well as speeches where women are prominent. The results reveal that women are underrepresented, but women are leading the way in advocating for and addressing women's issues.

Keywords: representation, parliamentary speech, women, gender, Turkish parliament

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Introduction

It is an indisputable fact that particular groups hold advantages in specific domains. With regard to gender, it is crucial to recognize that men possess significantly more privileges than women within our contemporary society. In this patriarchal world, women's visibility in every field is critical, especially in legislation to establish a legal foundation for addressing the challenges and disparities women face in their everyday lives, whether in the workplace, at home, in school, in the marketplace, or on the streets. It is also essential to promote awareness in this field. The field of parliament can significantly impact addressing the challenges and inequalities women face in their daily lives, whether at work, home, school, in the market or on the street. It provides a platform to acquire rights, establish legitimate problem-solving mechanisms, and bring these issues to the forefront of public discourse within the state's highest institutions. This will enhance their rights and equality, as well as result in improved representation in their life. Furthermore, democracy fundamentally entails "rule by the people." However, in ancient Greece, this was limited to Athenian-born males over the age of 20, which is an exceedingly narrow segment of society. In contemporary times, genuine democracy must comprise the representation of women, who constitute a substantial portion of society. Considering that the speeches, studies, laws and commissions made in this arena form the basis of the functioning of the country, it is important to increase the representation of women in the parliament in order to create a more democratic environment.

1.1 Research Problem

In order to fully grasp the importance of women's representation in Turkey, patriarchy in the country should be analyzed, and the current situation of women's rights should be evaluated. Prior to the founding of the Turkish Republic, the Ottoman Empire operated under strict patrimonialism, and patriarchy was at the center of Ottoman patrimonialism as Weber says (Adam, 2005). During this period, discussing women's rights was a challenging topic. There were very few feminist movements in the Ottoman Empire back then (Yıldız, 2015). Although their activism does not lead to great results, they have a great role in raising women's awareness and gaining their rights in the future, especially in political rights acquisitions.

Moreover, there is another issue that makes the examination of the Türkiye case important. Türkiye is governed by a party that has held government power for 22 years. Over the past 22 years, society has undergone numerous socio-cultural changes. Unfortunately, it appears that women's rights are slowly diminishing both socially and legally. Every year, incidents like femicide and sexual harassment are on the rise. Additionally, the Istanbul Convention, which safeguards women's rights in the legal system, has been terminated. These are clear examples of the current situation.

Numerous studies have indicated that the AKP government in Turkey has undergone changes since 2010. Scholars argued that since the 2010 constitutional referendum, there has been a decline in human rights, and the AKP government has pursued a divisive policy of polarization. The era of tutelage democracy has come to an end, and an Islamic conservative authoritarian shift has taken place, leading to cultural hegemony (Adaman & Akbulut, 2021; Baser & Ozturk, 2017; Cinar, 2016; Ugur-Cinar, 2023; Esen & Gumuscu, 2015; Yilmaz &

Erturk, 2023). In light of the authoritarianism that has emerged in Turkey since 2010, it is crucial to analyze the development of women's and gender-related discourse in parliament.

1.2 Research Question

Does gender matter in parliamentary speeches in Turkey during the authoritarian AKP period (2011-2023) ?

This research aims to analyze gender representation in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. After the authoritarian regime in 2010, parliamentary speeches were scrutinized, and their impacts were evaluated. It has been attempted to analyze women's representation and speaking rate in parliament during the 24th, 26th, and 27th parliamentary periods. It was observed how deputies acted based on party and gender by examining parliamentary speeches by topic. Finally, gender-based analysis was conducted on parliamentary interruptions and taunts.

Literature Review

There are several studies examining the issue of gender in parliament. However, most have been done in states with a well-established understanding of democracy, such as European countries and the United States, but this issue is understudied for the Turkish parliament. Although their democracies are established countries, patriarchy also shows its power there, and women have some problems in the parliament.

2.1 Case of Other Countries Parliaments

For example, in their study in the US, Miller and Sutherland stated that women are more likely to be interrupted during committee work, especially when discussing women's

issues, and they are usually interrupted by men (2022). In another American example, where women are disadvantaged, it was found that when women are in the minority, they participate less in decision-making groups and remain more passive (Mendelberg & Karpowitz, 2016). In the US Congress, female legislators introduced more bills addressing women's issues compared to their male counterparts (Gerrity et al., 2007)). Similarly, a recent study on the Ecuadorian Congress by Vera and Vidal (2022) found that women experience more frequent interruptions and are more likely to deal with issues specifically affecting women. In a study on parliamentary speeches in Sweden, where women's representation is very high, it was found that women spoke less than male representatives; in addition, women spoke less about hard topics such as the economy, transportation, banking, and energy (Back et al., 2014). Another study conducted by Back and Debus (2019), the representation of women in speeches across various European countries was examined. The research findings indicate that gender stereotypes have a detrimental impact on women's presence in parliament. Furthermore, the research indicates that female deputies in parties with a higher proportion of women are more likely to speak. Moreover, the study found that women who have experience in parliament are more likely to participate in speeches, suggesting a positive impact of their involvement in the political arena. Based on her research conducted at the Colorado State House, Kathlene's findings align with previous studies. It was discovered that women tend to speak less, experience more interruptions, and propose fewer significant non-technical amendments during committee sessions. Nonetheless, there is a positive outcome: the number of bills sponsored by women that are successfully enacted is equivalent to those sponsored by men (Kathlene, 1994).

2.2 Case of Turkish Parliament

According to studies on the Turkish parliament, there seems to be no significant difference in the results compared to other parliaments. Uçaray-Mangitli and Yıldırım

conducted a study that between 2002 and 2020 revealed women were more involved in committees concerning topics of lower prestige, such as family, health, and education. In contrast, committees dealing with defense, economy, and justice were considered more masculine (2020).

According to Konak-Ünal, women MPs are as interested in foreign policy and economy as men between 2002 and 2011 but talk about other issues less than men (2020). They also find that despite underrepresentation, women did not speak less than men during this period; it is stated that women are very active on the legislative floor. Research has shown that political parties considerably impact both speeches and policies. It is indicated that right-wing parties tend to have fewer women in leadership roles but are more likely to appoint women to social committees (Ucaray-Mangitli & Yıldırım, 2020). Additionally, research suggests notable differences in the types of laws female politicians propose in left-wing and right-wing parties. Left-wing female deputies tend to draft laws focusing on equality and rights, while right-wing female deputies prioritize family and children (Bektas & Ekinci, 2019). Finally, according to a recent study by Aleman and Konak-Ünal, the conversion rate of bill sponsorships into laws is considerably lower for female MPs than their male counterparts law. The study sheds light on gender discrimination in the legislative area (2023).

Methods and Data

Given the rise of authoritarianism under the governance of AKP post 2011, researchers have studied the effects of ideological degeneration on gender and representation. Gender dynamics are a powerful determinant of a group's communication dynamics (Miller and Sutherland, 2023). These dynamics are likely to clash in the parliament, highlighting how power in the parliament is distributed amongst genders. This research aims to analyze the

representation of genders in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT). The study aimed to understand gender differences in the Turkish parliament through an inductive approach, conducted under a positivist scope. We conducted this observational inductive study to understand the differences gender creates in the Turkish parliament.

In order to tackle the representational differences with regards to gender in the GNAT, we use data from the GNAT website, which compiles data of the transcription of 73670 speeches done during the hearings in the parliament and the biographies of the Members of Parliament (MPs). We analyze congressional hearings published by GNAT from 2011 to 2023 (24, 26, 27th parliaments). We merged the parliamentary hearings data to the biographies of the MPs based on the assigned number of the MPs.

Each biography consists of two major components: basic features, such as the languages an MP speaks, marital status, and number of children, which were processed using simple Python scripts, and complex attributes like the committees to which MPs belong, which were analysed through the use of Name Entity Recognition (NER) combined with the `turkishstemmer`. After the initial automated processing, we cross checked all 45 features manually to ensure accuracy. In this part we evaluated functional dependencies with MPs from previous terms to ensure consistent data representation. We ensured consistency by representing all features using the English alphabet and created a standardized dataset.

Gender plays a significant role in shaping political concepts such as representation in legislative environments. Initial concern over the formation of the gender asymmetry and the apparent ineffectiveness of women, were focused around the descriptive under representation of women. Knowing this, we initially analysed the descriptive representation of women in the parliament by calculating the percentage of per parliament. After seeing that while constituting half of the population only 17% of the seats in GNAT are held by women we improved our search by including the speech per capita ratio with regards to gender in the

parliament (Yargıç, 2020). Our results corresponded with the previous research done by scholars. We then hypothesized that the amount of interruptions may have a reflection on the gender asymmetry with regards to the amount of speeches done in the parliament. The transcripts were coded to detect interruptions in the machine-readable text in the form of “Devamla” at the end of a chunk of speech. We counted the number of occurrences of “Devamla” per MPs to illustrate the rate of interruptions differentiated by gender and political party affiliations.

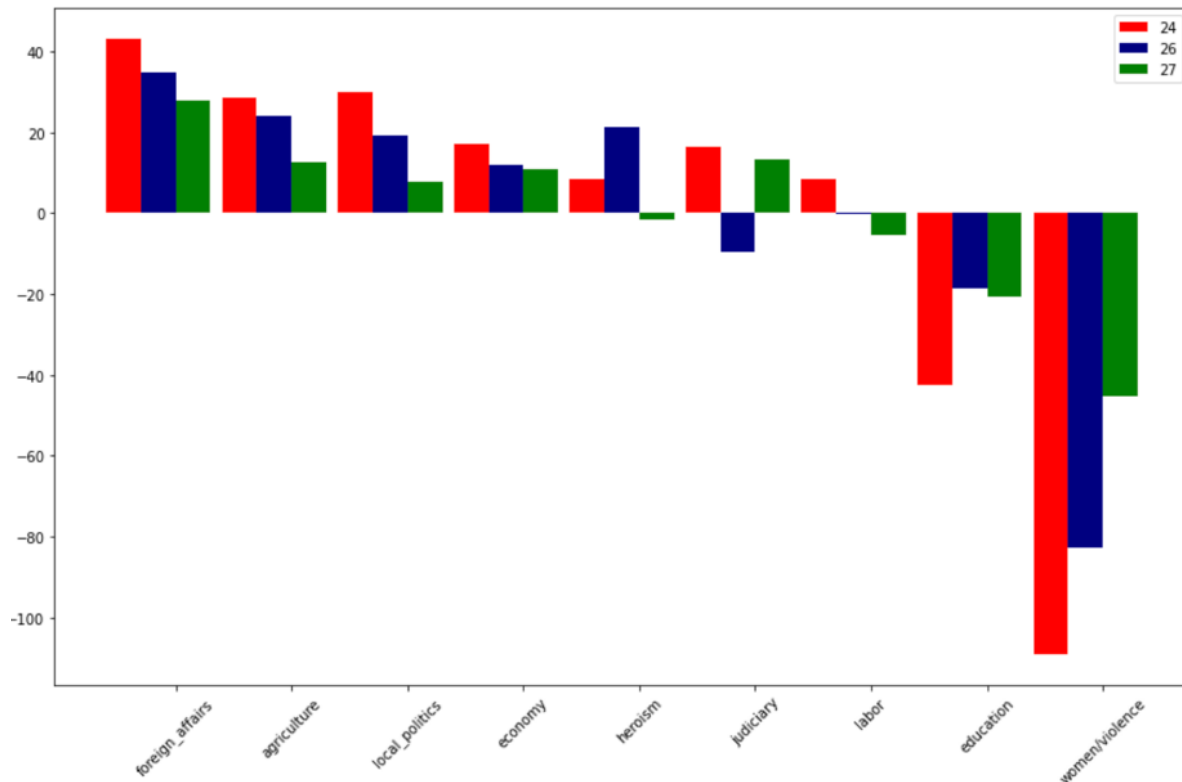
Then, for the speeches we conducted unsupervised topic modeling to identify the main topics. We made use of the contextual embedding model “emreca/bert-base-turkish-cased-mean-nli-stsb-tr” since this model, having been pre-trained for Turkish texts, can be used for generating word and sentence embedding thus capture the semantic meaning of chunks. We used a series of regular expressions to process the speeches into chunks of 128 words. These chunks were clustered by the use of Spark NLP model tokenising the speeches and by the application of a lemmatizer. We discarded extraneous text chunks that were not attributable to a MP’s speech, such as the MP’s locale embedded within their name (e.g., “Ayşe_TÜRKMENOĞLU(KONYA)”) or exclude common words that might not add significant meaning to the text in a topic modeling context.

Finally during the detailed analysis of the speeches we were interested in the confrontational discourses of the deputies based on gender. We filtered out the confrontation and identified both the initiator and recipient of these disclosures. These interactions were represented as ‘edges’ for network analysis, while features of parliamentarians served as ‘nodes’. We have provided a comprehensive profile of each MP by enriching these nodes with features derived from cv files. We then created an undirected graph by using Gephi software. We conducted the analysis of the data in Gephi focusing on political parties that the MPs belong to, their gender and the periods they served. Based on these criteria , we identified patterns such as who confronts whom more often, in which parties or periods such interactions are intensified.

Findings

4.1 Speech Topics:

Figures 1



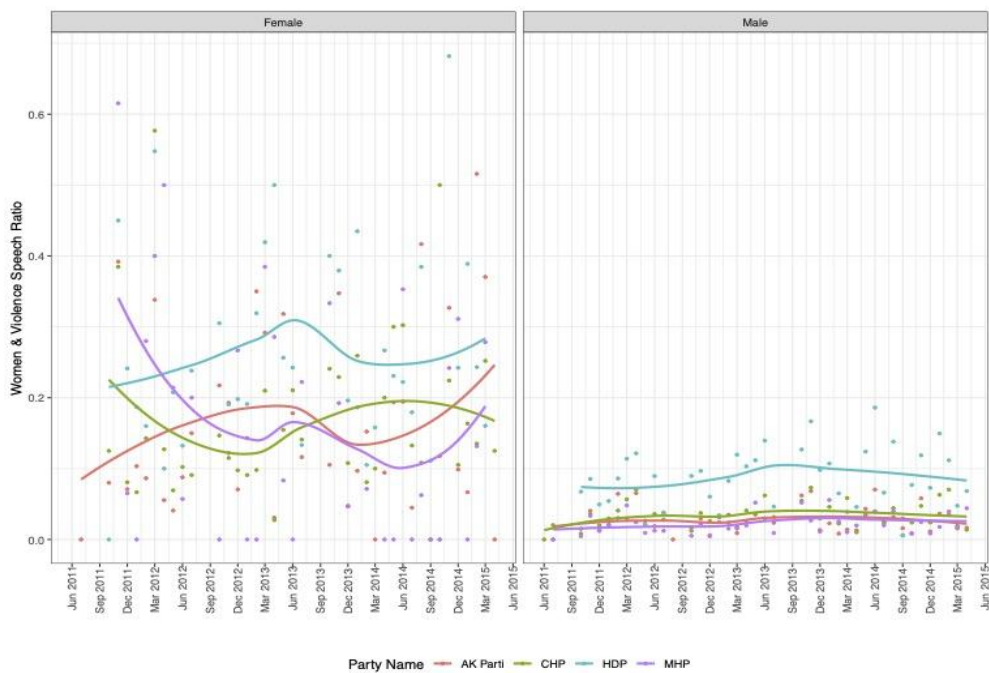
24, 26 and 27th Terms Common Topics Graph.

In the y-axis, it indicates the majority of males towards the positive and females towards the negative. Our analysis of the topics discussed across the 24th, 26th, and 27th legislative terms revealed distinct gender-based patterns in discourse. In *Figure 1*, traditional gender roles seem to shape discussions, particularly evident in the consistent male dominance in topics like "agriculture" and "foreign affairs" across all terms. Meanwhile, the enduring emphasis by women on "education" and "women/violence" underscores their commitment to social issues and gender concerns. However, the dynamics are not static. Notably, the gender discourse within "judiciary" and "economy" topics evolved over the terms, hinting at

changing interests among male and female MPs. For instance, while "judiciary" saw a shift from male dominance in the 24th term to a female lead in the 26th, it reverted in the 27th term. Additionally, fluctuations in the gender dynamics for "heroism" and "local politics" could indicate external influences or shifts in party agendas.

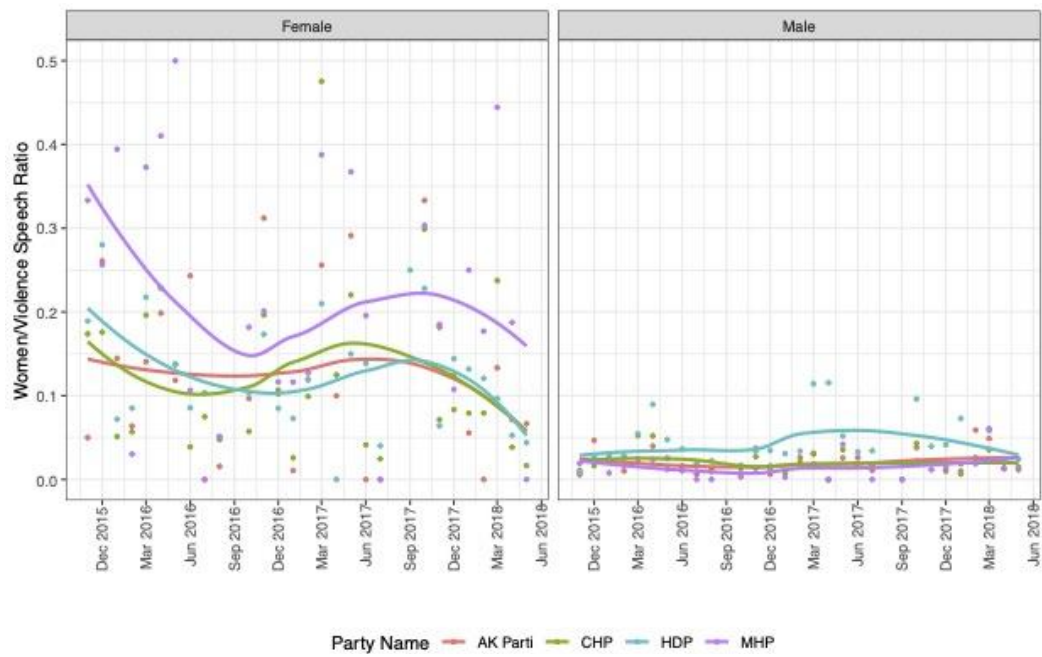
4.1.1 Women/Violence Speeches

Figure 2



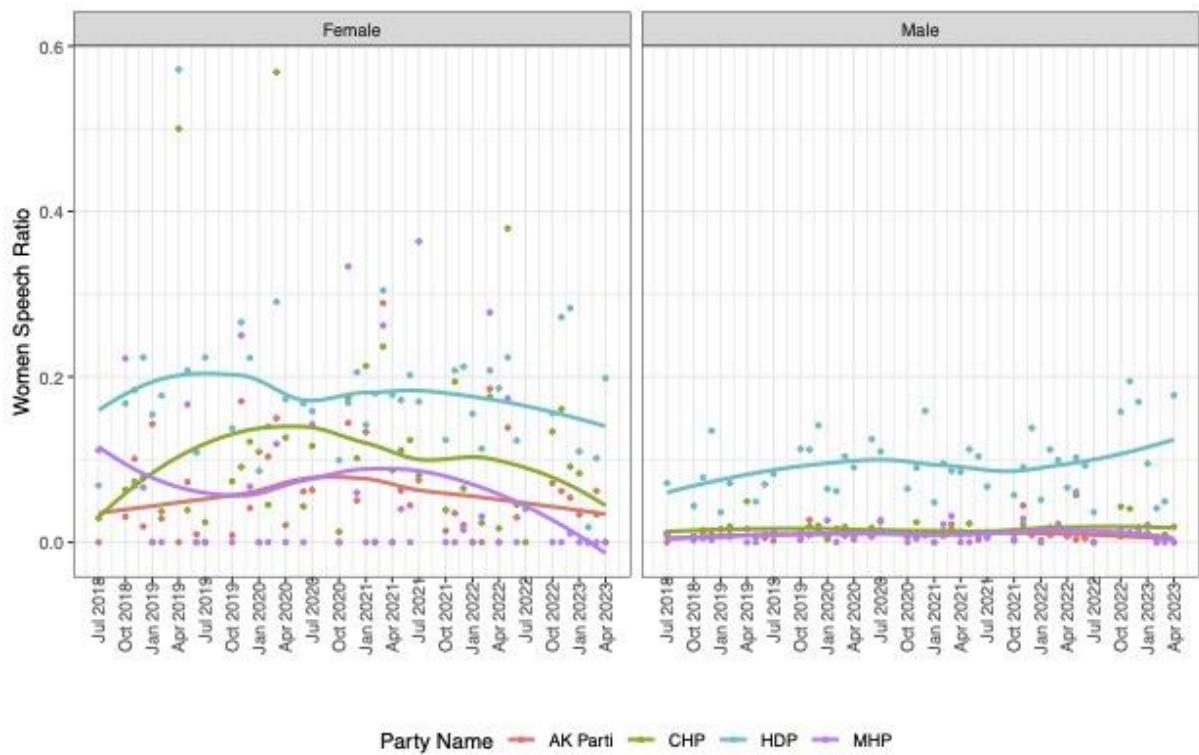
24th Term Women/Violence Speeches

Figure 3



26th Term Women/Violence Speeches

Figure 4

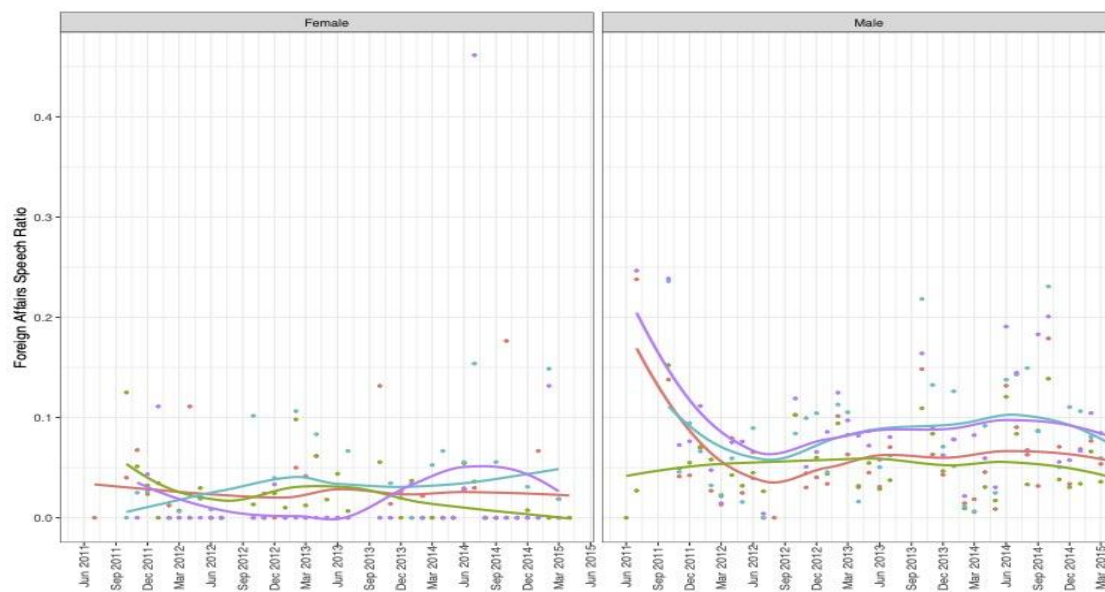


27th Term Women Speeches

The women/violence topic was the subject with a high margin in *Figure 1*. *Figures 2, 3 and 4* demonstrate the changes that women have experienced over the years in relation to political parties. These changes are shown in relation to the topic with the highest margin, which is women and violence. It is worth noting that the only thing that has remained consistent over the years is that women talk a lot more about men than any other subject.

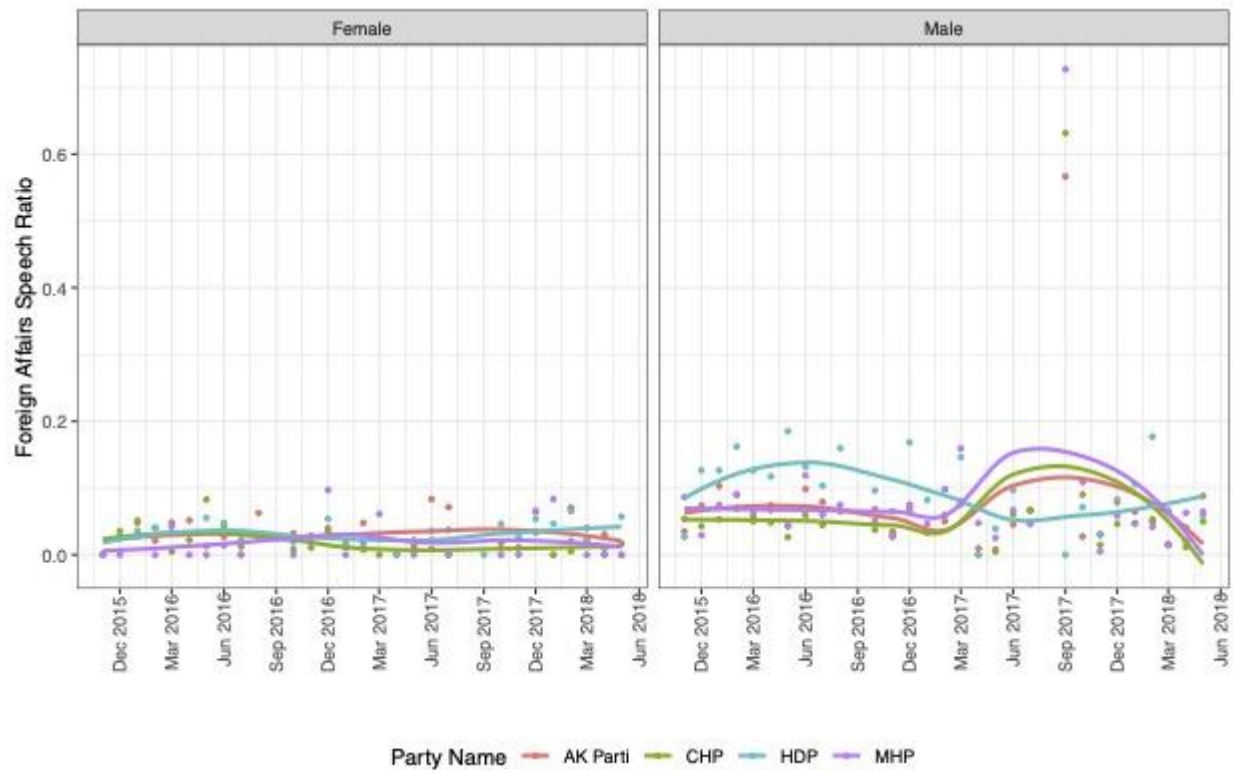
4.1.2 Foreign Affairs Speeches

Figure 5



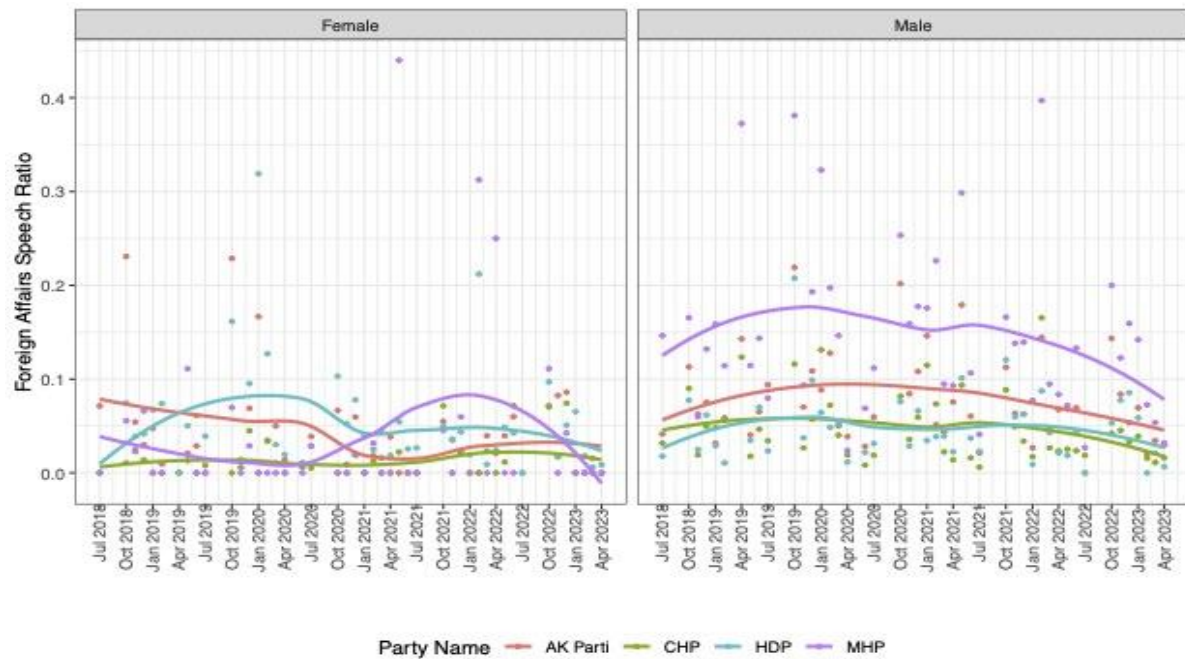
24th Term Foreign Affairs Speeches

Figure 6



26th Term Foreign Affairs Speeches

Figure 7

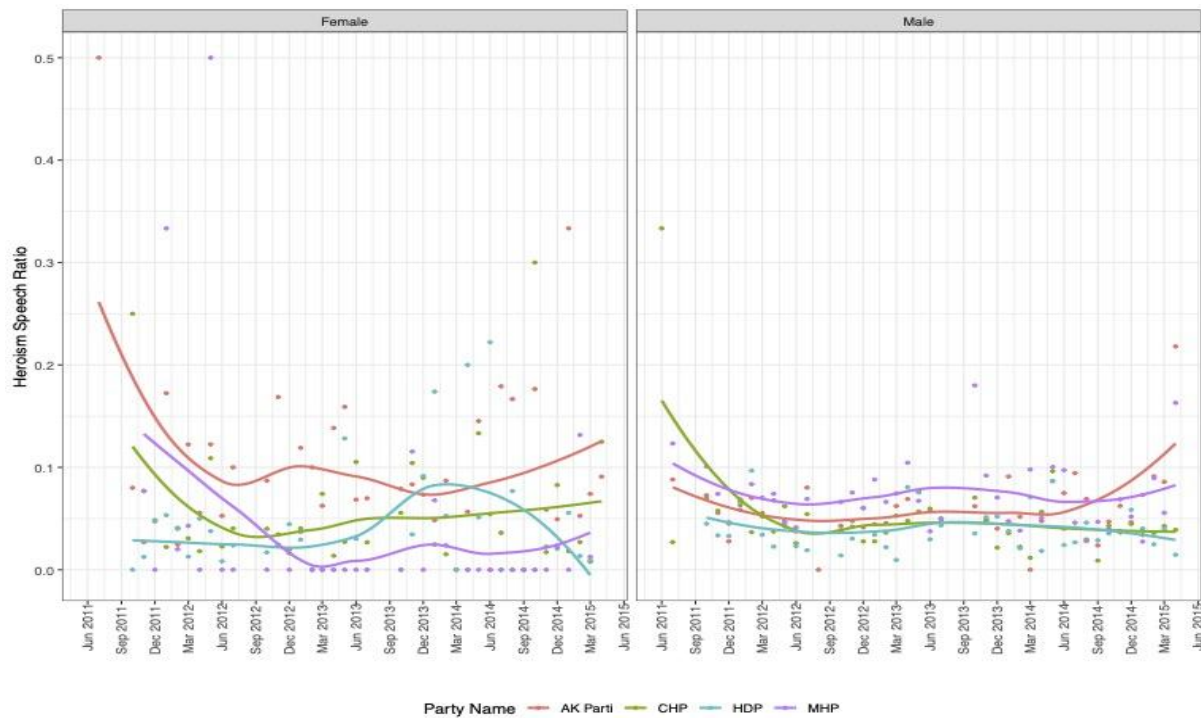


27th Term Foreign Affairs Speeches

In Figure 1, foreign affairs have been an issue with a high margin towards the positive. That is the topic that men talk about the most. However, in Figures 5, 6 and 7, women/violence, where women differ the most, it is seen that women are not as passive as men when men's speeches and women's speech graphics in foreign affairs are compared.

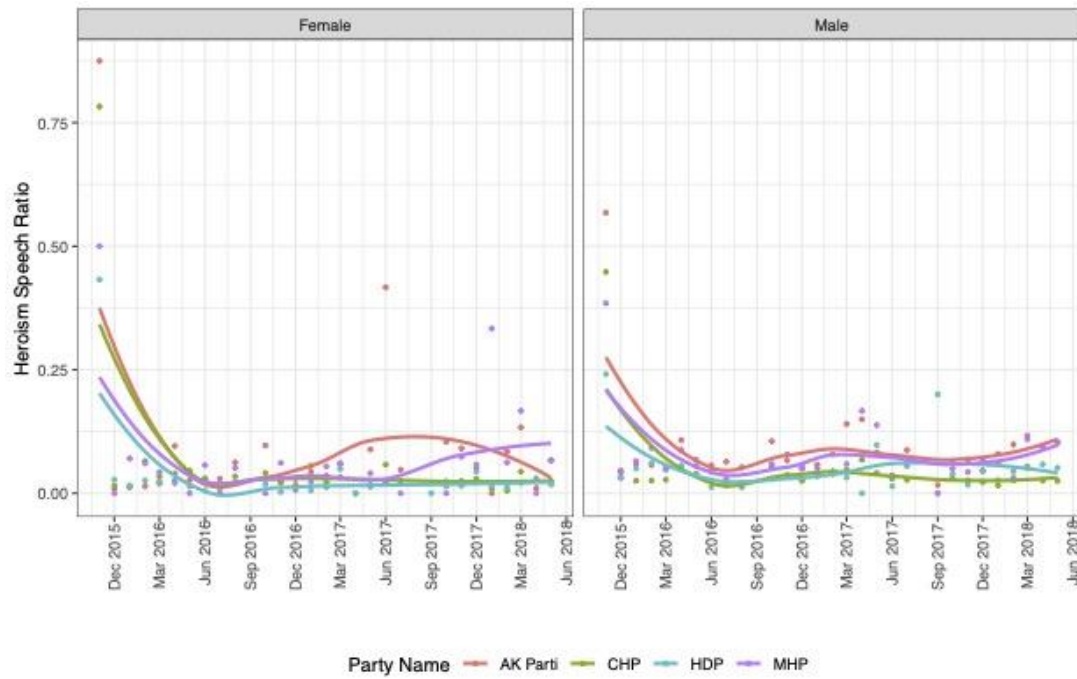
4.2.3 Heroism Speeches

Figure 8



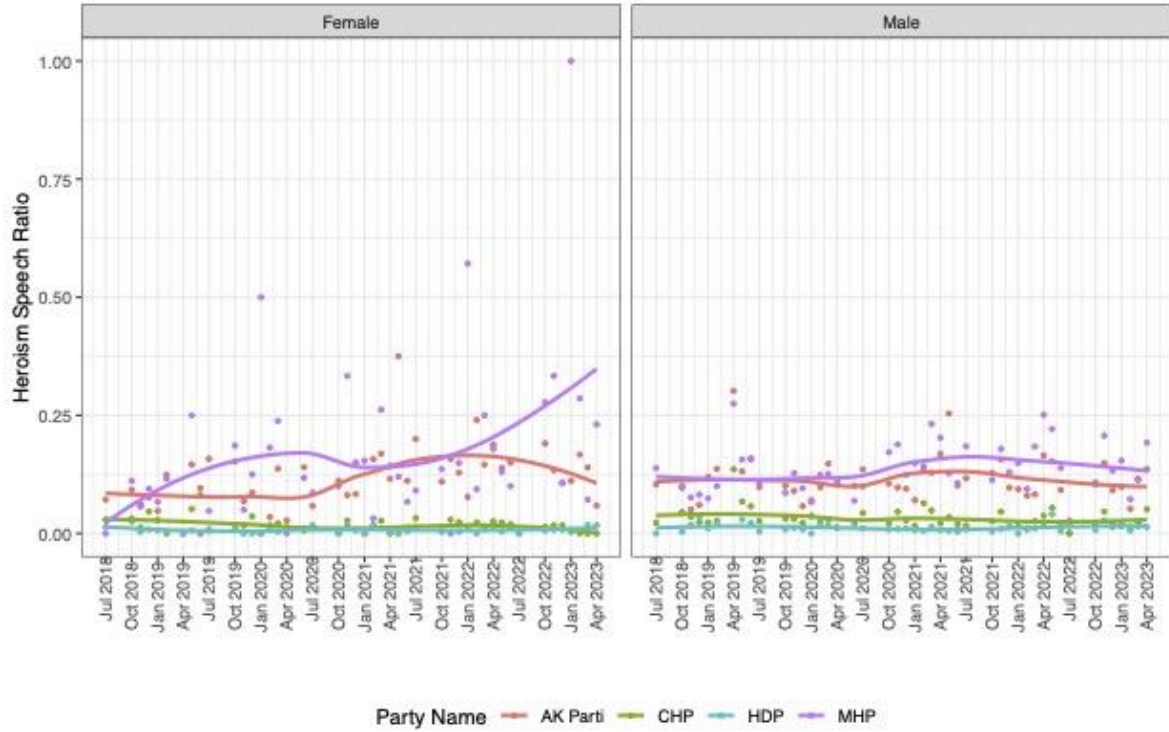
24th Term Heroism Speeches

Figure 9



26th Term Heroism Speeches

Figure 10

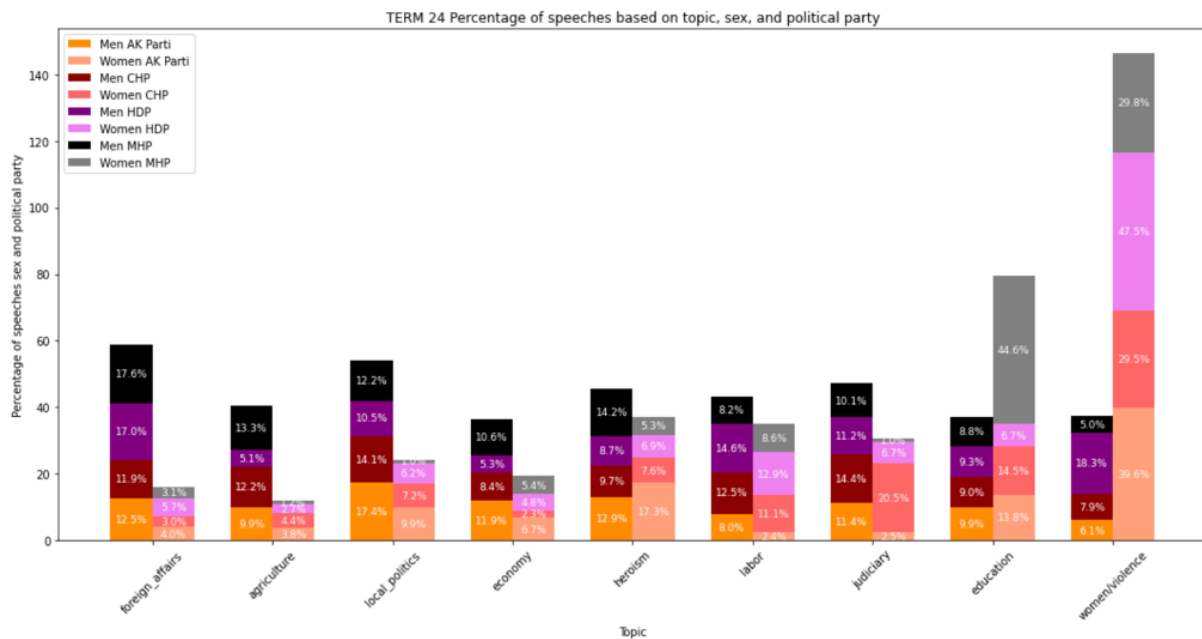


27th Term Heroism Speeches

Figures 8, 9, and 10 show how women differ by party on heroism, which comprises populist discourses. Especially after the alliances were formed, it can be easily seen that the talk of AKP-MHP women on this issue increased.

4.1.4 Percentage of topics by gender and party

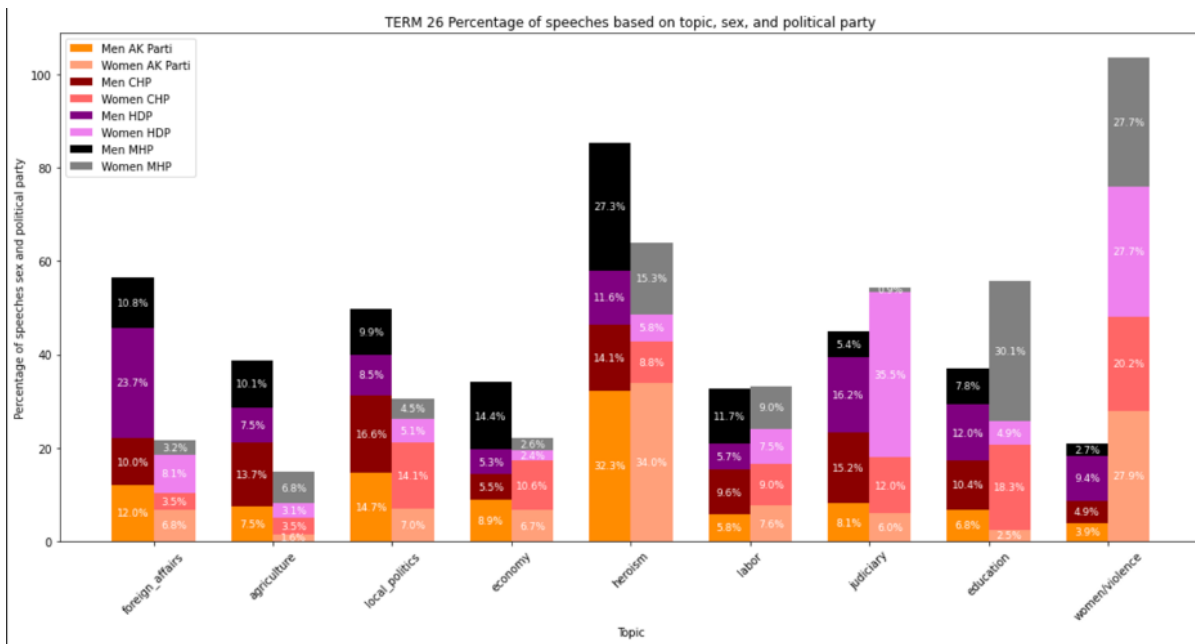
Figure 11



Term 24 refers to the legislative period spanning from 2011 to 2015. During this term, analyses were conducted on four major political parties: AKP, CHP, HDP, and MHP. *Figure 11*, men frequently addressed foreign affairs and agriculture, while issues related to women and violence were primarily associated with feminine discourse. These topic trends reveal ongoing antagonistic relationships. Specifically, AKP's focuses can be indicated as local politics, heroism, and women/violence, while gender matters on women/violence and local politics. heroism is among the most two discussed topics regardless of sex. Regarding CHP, there was a more balanced distribution of topics among topics. Notably, the judiciary was a recurrent theme discussed equally by both CHP men and women. However, apart from the

male representatives of the HDP, the issue of women/violence in most parties was handled by men at least. Regardless of gender, the primary focus for HDP was women/violence. The men of the MHP have a leading position in heroism and foreign relations. In addition, MHP women drew attention with their broad discourses on education and led the parliament with a significant margin in the debates on this issue.

Figure 12

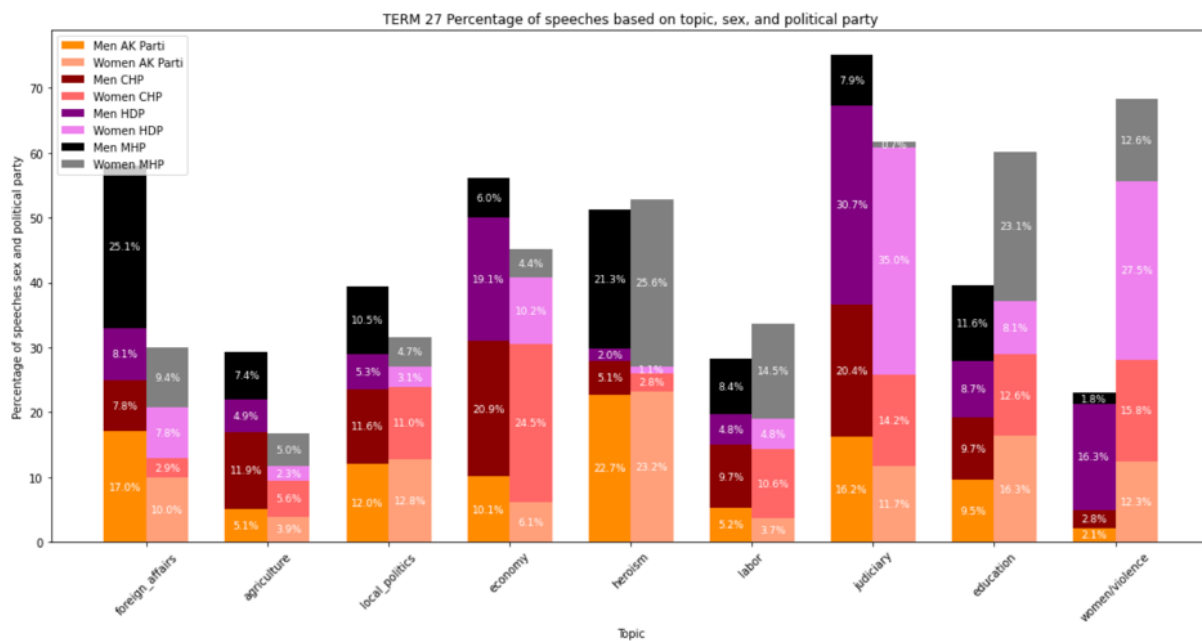


Term 26 refers to the legislative period spanning from 2015 to 2018. During this term, analyses were conducted on four major political parties: AKP, CHP, HDP, and MHP. As depicted in *Figure 12*, the gender differences observed in previous terms persisted in Term 26. Men predominantly discussed foreign affairs and agriculture, whereas issues concerning women and violence were primarily associated with women's discourse. In the case of AKP, the party maintained its emphasis on heroism and local politics as observed in the 24th term. Interestingly, there's a noticeable uptick in discussions related to heroism. For AKP, heroism stands out as the most discussed topic across both genders. Notably, the theme of heroism has

seen a remarkable surge among all parties. Both AKP and MHP, in particular, have shown a pronounced interest, with heroism becoming the most discussed topic for them. CHP, on the other hand, displays a balanced distribution on various issues, but shares the increasing interest in education, especially with the women of the MHP.

These two organizations have made education one of the two most discussed topics. HDP's focus turned to the judiciary; both men and women are actively discussing this topic, which marks a break with the trends of the 24th era. Meanwhile, MHP women are leading the discussion on education, reinforcing their dominant stance on this issue.

Figure 13



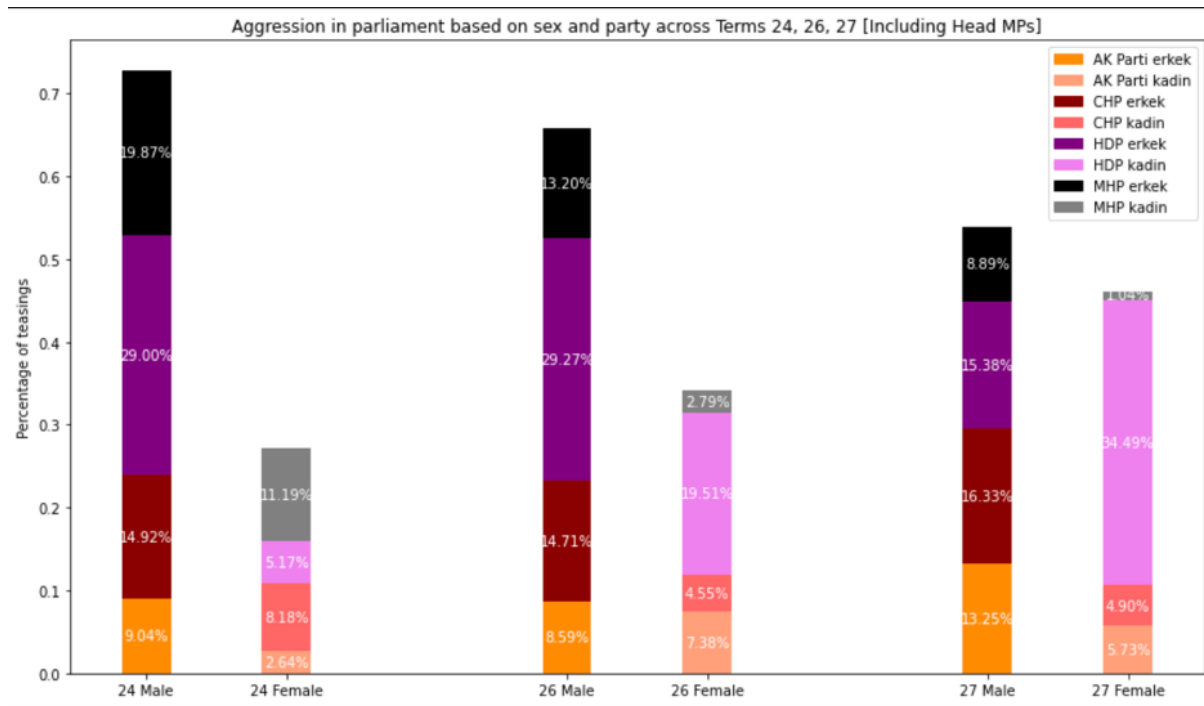
In Figure 13, AKP has consistently emphasized heroism over the last three legislative terms, a trend also mirrored by the MHP. For both parties, heroism has emerged as one of their two primary focal points, irrespective of the gender of their MPs. Interestingly, discussions on foreign affairs have been replaced by local politics in term 27. The CHP continues to distribute its attention evenly across various subjects. However, the economy has increased prominence, especially among male and female MPs. This heightened focus on the economy by the CHP is further accompanied by the HDP. Meanwhile, the HDP has

emphasised the judiciary since the 26th term. The judiciary and the economy have seen increased discussion by both the CHP and HDP.

4.2 Aggressions and Taunts

4.2.1 Agression Graph

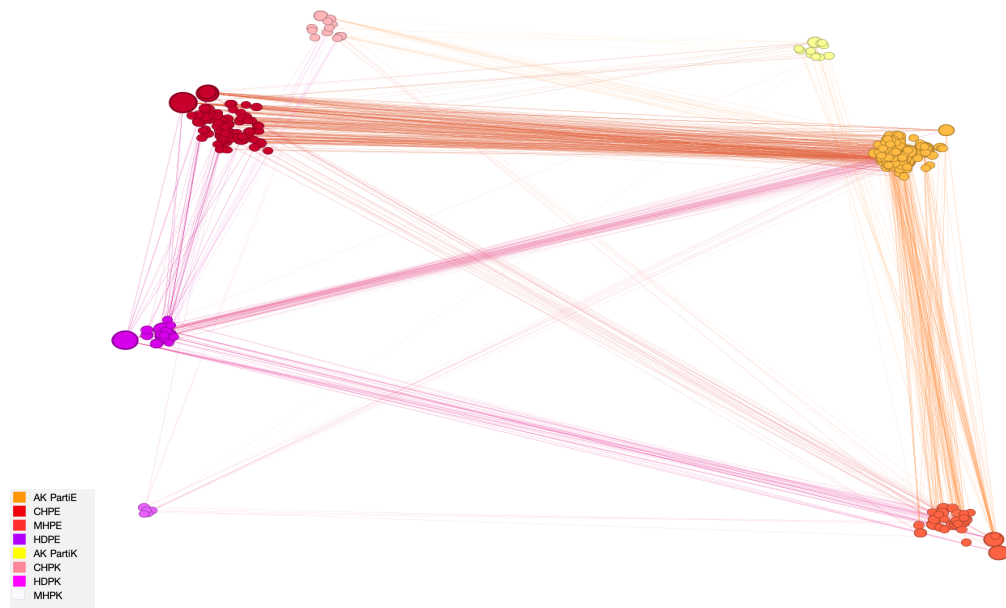
Figure 14



When the parliamentary speeches were examined, it was observed that the speeches reserved for the taunts in the parliament constituted an important part. It has been observed how these taunts have changed in the parliament based on parties and gender. Although the data is in the edge dimension, which is divided into two as taunted and a person who taunts, it was thought that it could be examined in the context of aggression in the parliament (Figure 14) in both cases and then taunt was examined in one dimension. In this case, it was observed that in Figures 15, 16 and 17, there was an increase in aggression activities from the 24th to the 27th period in the direction of women. HDP women were the most bullied group in the 27th period, while the AKP women also observed an increase in being included in the aggression, from 2% to 7% and 5% compared to the 24th period. This situation has been tried to be explained with a scatter plot. Figure 5 shows the first 50 MPs involved in the aggression. It is clear that the number of women is relatively low, but as the number of female group head MPs starts to increase (Meral Daniş Beştaş, İlknur İnceöz, Filiz Kerestecioğlu Demir, Özlem Zengin)) women's involvement in aggression increased in favour of both the AKP and HDP and even in the 27th term. However, CHP could not follow the same path since, during three terms, they have not nominated any women head MPs, unlike AKP and HDP.

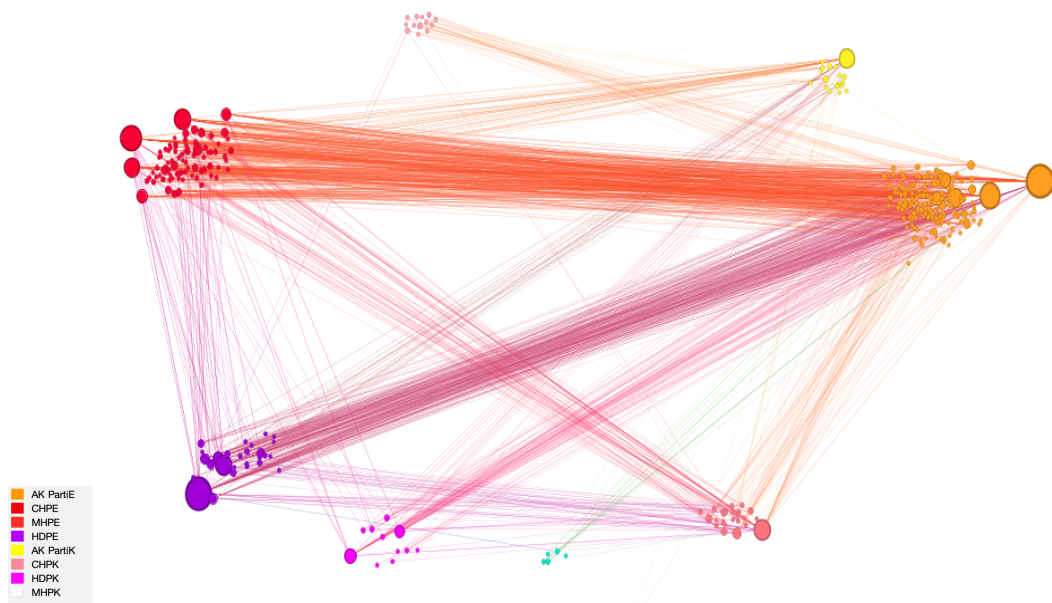
4.2.3 Taunting Networks

Figure 18



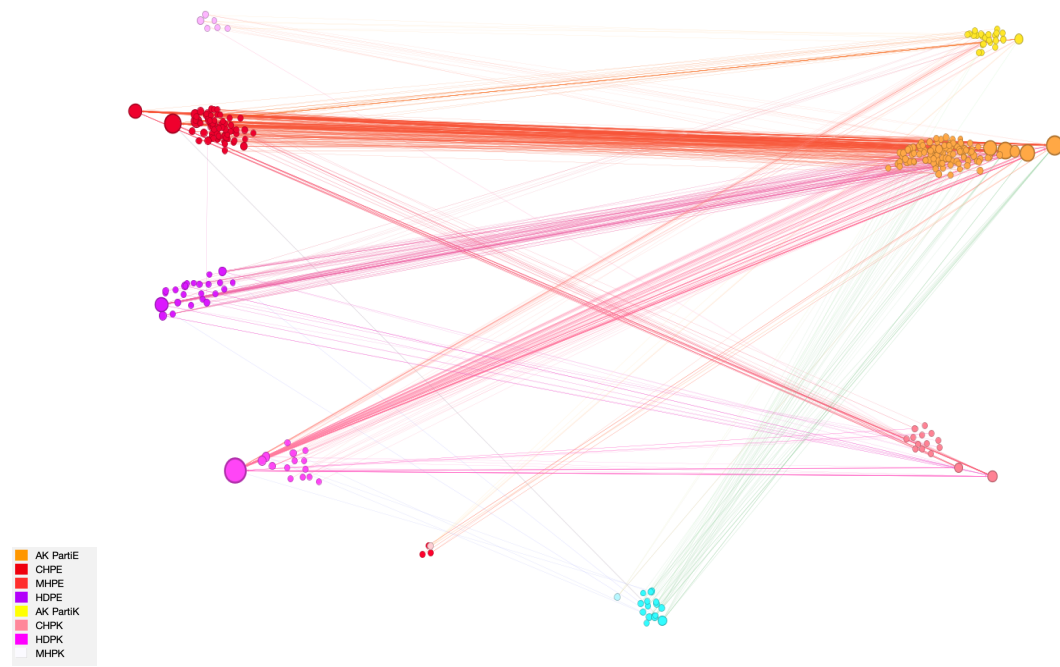
24th Term Taunting Network

Figure 19



26th Term Taunting Network

Figure 20



27th Term Taunting Network

Also, aggressions in parliament are indented to show with network analysis in Figures 18, 19 and 20. In 24 and 26th terms, all parties were attacking and attacked each other; however, in the main clashes between AKP-CHP and AKP-HDP, women were relatively less dense in between these clashes even though HDP women more involved compared to CHP and MHP women. With alliance arrangements, the 27th term demonstrated its dynamics on the aggression network. One of the remarkable situations is that the taunts between the MHP and the AKP ceased, and the İYİP that broke away from the MHP did not engage in taunts with the MPs in an exciting way, with the formation of its own parliamentary group on the 27th term. Between the HDP and CHP, the taunts present in the 24th and 26th periods can be attributed to the de facto alliance of the Nation, which ceased with the 27th period.

4.3 Interruptions:

Figure 21

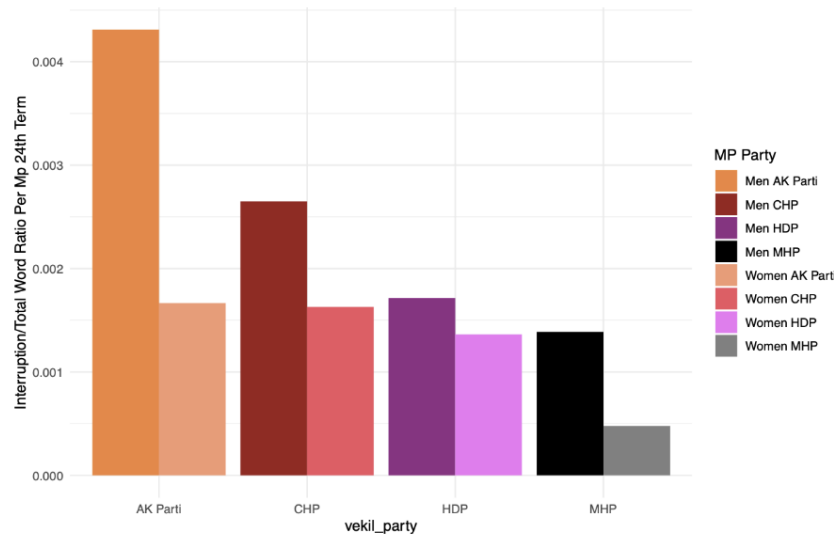


Figure 22

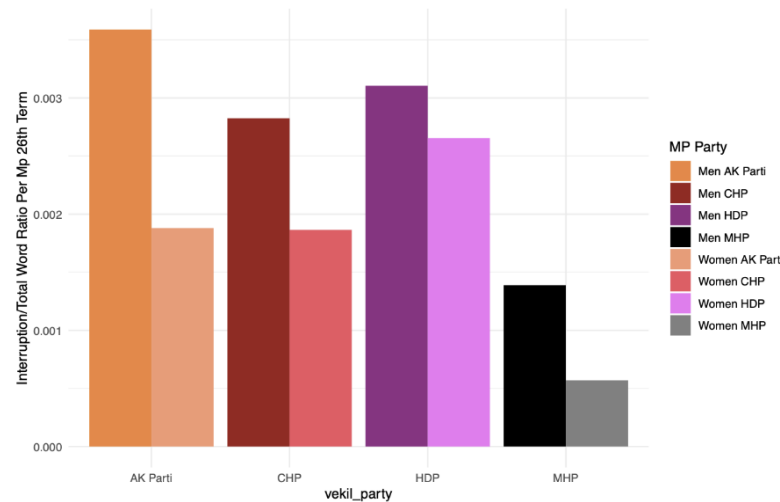
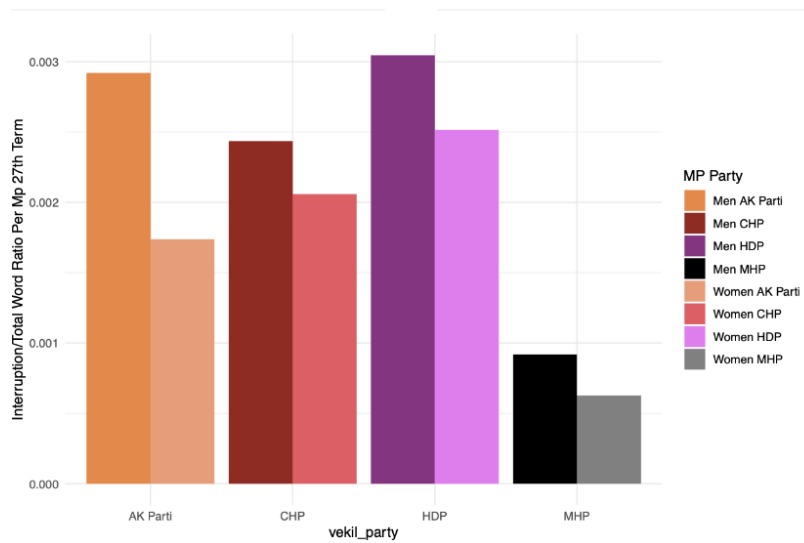


Figure 23



The figures presented are derived from a rigorous analysis of the 24th, 26th and 27th legislative periods and show the proportion of interruptions relative to the total number of words in the speeches of MPs. This analysis is segmented by party affiliation and gender. In essence, the charts shed light on the prevalence of interruptions that MPs experience during their speeches and compare the number of interruptions to the overall word length of their contributions. Such an approach offers a nuanced understanding by highlighting potential differences or trends in how MPs categorized by party and gender are potentially distorted during legislative debates.

Figure 24

Political Party/Gender	24	26	27
AKP WOMEN	49.9	71.3	79.3
AKP MEN	128.4	85.1	103.8
CHP WOMEN	197.9	231.8	304.3
CHP MEN	352.6	253.9	337.8
HDP WOMEN	219.4	448.0	529.6
HDP MEN	666.5	302.1	508.2
MHP WOMEN	303.3	516.0	321.3
MHP MEN	603.8	454.3	336.5

The infographic shows the average speech frequency of MPs, disaggregating by political party affiliation and gender. The derived values were calculated methodically by summing the speeches made by MPs from certain political parties and gender categories and then dividing this by the total number of MPs in the respective groups. For example, when the female representatives of the AKP are taken into account, the calculation is as follows:

AKP Women's Average Speech Count=

Total number of AKP Women representatives / Total number of speeches delivered by AKP
Women

This approach provides an insightful perspective on speech frequency per capita, allowing for fair comparison between different parties and gender groups. (See Figure 2 for graphical representation).

Discussion & Conclusion

Women's representation in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT) in the rising authoritarian governing under AKP post 2011 has been an important issue regarding the descriptive and substantive representation of women in Turkey. Nonetheless, it is challenging to manually identify the topics with high probability of occurrence in the speeches done by Members of Parliament (MP). In this article, we propose the application of unsupervised topic modeling tools to evaluate the gender-related discourse in the GNAT.

Our chunk-level topic modeling analysis yields evidence that overall women in the GNAT, are significantly underrepresented, yet achieve substantively representing themselves on more feminine topics, such as topics regarding "Women/Violence" & "Education" (Figure: Sex Term Comparisons). Our subsequent analysis

Our results reveal that traditional gender roles shape discussions in the GNAT, with male MPs speeches' dominate the traditionally "masculine" fields, such as "Agriculture" and "Foreign Affairs"; while more "feminine" topics such as "Education" & "Women/Violence" occur in women MPs speeches. However, these dynamics are not static, they are open to changes over legislative terms. For instance, there have been fluctuations regarding the topics falling on the middle of the masculinity spectrum, such as "Judiciary" and "Economy" indicating external influences. It is highly unlikely however that we have discovered ultimate results as to how much a topic is spoken by each gender, since this figure only represents the difference based on gender of the amount of speeches done. Future work should more fully consider the gender based difference between the frequencies of the amount of speeches done regarding a topic.

Our findings regarding the topics spoken by MPs differentiated by political party affiliation of MPs seem to be reflective of the ideological differences in the parliament. We

find that, overall, there is a strong correlation between the topics most discussed by parties and their individual ideologies. For instance, in the cases of women of AKP and MHP, falling on the right wing of the political spectrum, tend to speak on “Women/Violence” and “Heroism” topics in all 24, 26, 27th terms. Meanwhile, for parties falling on the left wing of the spectrum there seems to be a more balanced distribution amongst genders and most discussed topics. Regardless, the differential effects we report for the topics discussed by the women of each political party is a reminder that political ideologies do shape MPs’ agendas. Future work should examine the link, if any, between these factors and MPs political agendas.

Our findings regarding taunting and aggression networks in the parliament warrant further exploration that is beyond the scope of this article. Regardless of their political party, the likelihood of taunting increases as we move through the terms in a chronological order. Moreover, this growth occurs significantly faster for HDP women. In the parliament aggression towards group head MPs seems to be higher than others’. This said, our analysis should not be taken as a definitive study of how experience affects legislative aggression.

Finally, it is worth more fully considering the likelihood to be interrupted on the basis of gender. Moreover, a substantive analysis with regards to the interruption that occurs in the parliament could be beneficial to analyze. We believe future scholarship should more fully consider the substantive reflection of gendered interruption in the GNAT. Although we leave the answers to these questions for subsequent work, we encourage future efforts to answer them. Doing so will advance a more complete understanding of the substantive and descriptive representation based on interruption among the members of the GNAT.

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