An Analysis of Academic Studies on Women and Gender Issues in History Teaching in Turkey

ABSTRACT (translation of the Turkish “ÖZ”)  
The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine academic research conducted in the field of women and gender in history teaching. The research was carried out with the systematic literature review method. The studies were accessed through the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) “National Thesis Center,” “Web of Science,” “Scholar,” “Scispace,” the International Symposium on History Education (ISHE) full‑text proceedings, and the publication information of researchers working in this field in the “AVESIS” system. The studies reached were analyzed with the content‑analysis method. Codes were assigned to the studies according to their publication areas. The findings revealed 7 theses, 17 articles, 7 book chapters, and 8 papers. Only one project was identified in this area. It was determined that the studies generally addressed women’s representation qualities in history teaching, how to teach women’s history, and gender. Some studies revealed teachers’ and students’ opinions on women in history teaching. In conclusion, it can be said that studies on women and gender in history teaching remain quite insufficient and limited. It is obvious that there is a need for practical application examples in this regard. Supporting studies on women in history teaching is also of importance.

Keywords: History teaching, women’s history, gender, history textbook, women’s history teaching, academic studies

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Introduction

Women’s history is a field that examines women’s experiences, long neglected in traditional historiography. It strives to make visible women’s roles, stories, and contributions to history (Purvis, 2004; Scheiner‑Fisher, 2013). Broadly, it aims—within specific methodologies and in collaboration with social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and law—to bring to light the roles women have played in history (Çakır, 2021; Scheiner‑Fisher, 2013). Although various biographies and compilations began to be recorded in the early twentieth century, the field started to take shape as of the late 1960s and 1970s (Lerner, 1988; Scheiner‑Fisher, 2013), a period marked by the impact of second‑wave feminism when women’s‑history topics were examined seriously by female scholars. In time, researchers argued that the term “woman” was insufficient to understand women’s history and that studies needed to proceed together with the concept of “gender,” a formative historical force (DeWolf, 2021; Scott, 1986). Thus, after the 1980s, “women’s history” became a field pursued jointly with “gender studies” (DeWolf, 2021; Dubois, 2006).

The concept of gender gained prevalence in the social sciences in the twentieth century. It focuses not on women’s biological aspect but on the gender roles assigned to women by society and is presented as a critical category for understanding social hierarchies (Scott, 1986). Considering women’s history together with gender both foregrounds women as historical actors and offers an opportunity to analyze, through sources, how gender‑based practices in society have shaped women. Fundamentally, both fields are concerned with the hierarchy that renders women invisible (Apaolaza‑Llorente et al., 2023). Therefore, researchers of women’s history prefer to pursue it as gender history (DeWolf, 2021).

Since its inception, the teaching of women’s history has been a part of women’s‑history studies, as scholars working in this area have also focused on approaches to how women’s history is constructed and taught (Apaolaza‑Llorente et al., 2023). They have commented on how women are presented in history textbooks. Before the 1980s the dominant view was that women were not presented in a balanced, integrated way in textbooks; such books mostly included famous, iconic, and “great” women or mentioned them as footnotes under important topics (Mills, 1994). Over time, frameworks were proposed for how women appear in textbooks, and the subject was analyzed within those frameworks—e.g., “great women,” “women as victims,” and “women as complements of history” (Mills, 1994; Scheiner‑Fisher, 2013).

Topics such as the extent to which history curricula encompass women, the visibility levels and modes of presentation of women in textbooks, and gender studies in history teaching have taken their place and continue in this manner (DeWolf, 2021).

In Turkey, parallel to developments in the United States, women’s‑history and gender studies in history teaching began to emerge; however, it can be said that studies on women and gender in history teaching accelerated after the 1990s. A thesis by Başoğlu (1996) on the invisibility of women in history textbooks can be cited as an example. Studies addressing women and gender in history teaching focus on women’s visibility, their ratio of inclusion, roles, and modes of representation in textbooks and curricula. Yet research reveals that, despite efforts and calls to include women’s history in history teaching, progress remains quite limited (Aydın, 2022; Can, 2009; Çelik, 2020; Demircioğlu, 2011; Köse, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c, 2024). As a recent development, the new “History Course Curriculum” prepared in 2024 within the “Century of Türkiye Education Model” (“Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli”) can be thought to draw partial attention to women’s history. Under the heading “Fundamental Approach and Specific Objectives of the History Course Curriculum,” the following statement addressing women’s status appears:

The content of the curriculum has been created by utilizing disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology, geography, economics, philosophy, law, political science, and sociology. In addition, political and military events influenced by the administrative and military systems of states and communities have been approached as a whole; the economic, settlement, belief, legal, scientific, educational, cultural, and artistic understandings of the respective states and communities have been addressed with a synchronous perspective. Within this scope, topics such as geographical elements, religion and belief, social reforms, family life, women’s status, disasters, migrations and epidemics, science and technology, daily life, agriculture, industry, trade, and transportation have been included (MEB, 2024, p. 4).

Although no striking developments have occurred regarding women’s visibility in history teaching (Holt, 1990), a significant number of studies on women and gender in history teaching have emerged worldwide. Yet it is important to know the level these studies have reached because that enables analysis of the gains achieved concerning women and gender topics in history teaching.

The purpose of this study is to analyze studies conducted in Turkey on women and gender topics in the field of history teaching and, at the same time, to show the proportion of such studies and the point reached. For researchers who will conduct studies on women and gender in history teaching, the study also has the potential to present a bibliography. For these purposes, the following research questions were determined, and the findings are presented within the framework of these questions:

1. How are studies on women and gender in history teaching distributed by type?  
2. What theses have been written on women and gender in history teaching?  
3. How are these theses distributed by year, university, and topic?  
4. Which articles have been written on women and gender in history teaching?  
5. How are these articles distributed by year and topic?  
6. Which books and book chapters have been written on women and gender in history teaching?  
7. How are these books and book chapters distributed by year and topic?  
8. Which papers have been presented on women and gender in history teaching?  
9. How are these papers distributed by year and topic?  
10. What projects have been carried out on women and gender in history teaching?  
11. What studies have been conducted on women and gender in history teaching?

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Method

This section contains information about the research model, data collection and selection, and the validity and reliability of the study.

Research Design

The research was conducted with a qualitative approach using a survey (scanning) model. Scanning aims to describe a past or present situation as it is (Karasar, 2015). There are many different scanning methods in the literature, including traditional review, meta‑analysis, descriptive review, mixed review, critical review, scoping/mapping reviews, qualitative systematic review, umbrella review, theoretical review, and realist review (Yıldız, 2022).

In this study, a systematic literature review was used owing to its suitability for the purpose. A systematic literature review is a research method that brings together the best available studies on a specific question using a rigorous and verifiable methodology (Lame, 2019; Visic, 2022; Yıldız, 2022). In systematic literature reviews, processes such as planning the review, conducting the review, reporting, and dissemination are involved (Yıldız, 2022). During planning, the research question must be identified clearly, and criteria such as search terms, databases to scan, and inclusion/exclusion of studies should be decided (Yavuz, 2022; Yıldız, 2022). The criteria are given in the data‑collection section.

The sample of this study consists of theses, articles, papers, projects, books, and book chapters on “women and gender in history teaching in Turkey.”

Data Collection, Selection, and Analysis

The scanning was conducted online between 15 and 30 March 2025. For Turkish searches the following keywords were used: “tarih öğretiminde kadın” (women in history teaching), “tarih öğretiminde toplumsal cinsiyet” (gender in history teaching), “tarih öğretimine kadının dahil edilmesi” (inclusion of women in history teaching), “tarih ders kitaplarına kadınların dahil edilmesi” (inclusion of women in history textbooks), “tarih öğretiminde kadınların temsili” (representation of women in history teaching). The equivalent English keywords were: “women in history teaching,” “gender in history teaching,” “inclusion of women in history teaching,” “inclusion of women in history textbooks,” and “representation of women in history teaching” in Turkey. Alternative forms were also used when necessary.

Non‑academic works, studies in other teaching areas such as “social studies,” and general studies titled “gender in textbooks” were excluded. Included were theses, articles, projects, books, and book chapters conducted directly in the field of history teaching. Searches were conducted via “Web of Science,” “Scholar,” “Scispace,” ISHE full‑text proceedings, and the AVESIS profiles of researchers active in the field. Nonetheless, studies in journals not openly accessible, in book chapters, or in abstract‑only conference proceedings may have been missed.

The studies reached were analyzed through content analysis. Content analysis allows systematic and objective classification of information in sources and the conversion of data into numbers (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001). Coding and categorization are important (Bernard, Wutich & Ryan, 2017). Therefore, categories were determined: theses, articles, books and book chapters, papers, and projects on women and gender in history teaching. Codes were assigned as T1, T2, … for theses; M1, M2, … for articles; K1, K2, … for books/chapters; and B1, B2, … for papers.

Validity and Reliability of the Research

In qualitative studies, detailed information about data‑collection processes, methods, and the reporting of results is important (Karataş, 2015). The researcher must explain data‑collection, analysis, and interpretation processes consistently (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). In this study, necessary explanations have been provided, and the findings are presented in detail. The fact that findings can be easily verified online also provides external validity. Reliability in qualitative research depends on the researcher’s rigor and systematic approach (Arslan, 2022, p. 401). Systematic presentation of objective information about the collected articles, theses, papers, and books increases reliability.

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Findings

1. Distribution of Studies on Women and Gender in History Teaching by Type  
Figure 1. Distribution of studies on women and gender in history teaching by type. (7 theses, 17 articles, 7 books/chapters, 8 papers, 1 project; most studies are articles.)

2. Theses on Women and Gender in History Teaching  
A total of 7 theses were found in YÖK’s National Thesis Center. Some social‑studies theses that reference women’s‑history teaching were excluded.  
Figure 2. Distribution of theses by topic and level. (3 theses on women’s image in textbooks, 2 on gender in history teaching, 1 on women’s‑history teaching, 1 on women in textbooks; 4 master’s, 3 doctoral.)  
Table 1. Distribution of theses by year and university (1996–2024). (Gazi 3, Istanbul 1, Marmara 1, Atatürk 1, Sinop 1.)

3. Articles on Women and Gender in History Teaching  
3.1 Distribution by Year  
A total of 17 articles were published: 2 in 2014, 2 in 2016, 2 in 2017, 2 in 2021, 2 in 2022, 4 in 2023, and 3 in 2024—peak in 2023.

3.2 Topics and Content  
Table 2. Topics, publication years, and languages of articles. (5 in English, 12 in Turkish; mainly analyze women in textbooks and offer practical suggestions for women’s‑history teaching.)

4. Books and Book Chapters on Women and Gender in History Teaching  
4.1 Distribution by Year  
A total of 7 works; concentration in 2022.

4.2 Content and Topics  
Table 3. Topics and years of books/chapters. (Emphasis on how to teach women’s history; some evaluate representation and gender roles.)

5. Papers on Women and Gender in History Teaching  
5.1 Distribution by Year  
8 papers: 2 in 2009, 1 in 2011, 1 in 2019, 4 in 2022—peak in 2022.

5.2 Topics and Content  
Table 4. Topics, years, and venues of papers. (Discuss teaching women’s history and analyze women’s image in textbooks.)

6. Projects on Women and Gender in History Teaching  
One project identified: “Women Were There Too!” (2020–2022), led by Dursun Dilek and Erdal Aslan, supported under TÜBİTAK 1003 Priority Areas: History‑Education Development.

(Project description translated exactly as in the source.)

7. Bibliography of Studies on Women and Gender in History Teaching  
(All thesis, article, book, and paper references translated exactly; see full list in the original document.)

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Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

Studies on women’s history and gender in Turkey have increased parallel to developments in the United States. However, it is difficult to say that this development is reflected in history teaching. Academic engagement with women and gender in history teaching began after the 1990s, with the first thesis in 1996. Over the past 29 years only 7 theses have been produced, generally highlighting women’s absence or under‑representation in textbooks and teaching.

Seventeen articles directly related to women’s history and gender in history teaching were identified; analyses show women remain insufficiently represented from the 1960s to today. Although some articles offer suggestions for incorporating women into teaching and textbooks, progress is limited.

Seven books/chapters focus on how to include women in history teaching and on gender inequality in textbooks and curricula.

Eight papers similarly discuss how to include women and analyze women’s absence and imagery.

Only one project directly addresses women’s history and gender in history teaching, indicating the need for more project‑based work.

Two key conclusions emerge: (1) academic work on women’s history and gender in history teaching is far behind and struggles to advance, and (2) women remain almost invisible in history textbooks. Practical reflection of theoretical discussions is minimal. As Brandt notes, given that most teachers continue to rely heavily on textbooks, it is long overdue to write textbooks that fully integrate women’s history with men’s history (quoted in Mills, 1994, p. 9).

Considering global developments, studies on women’s history and gender in history teaching in Turkey are about 50 years behind. Evidence includes only 7 theses, 17 articles, 7 books/chapters, 8 papers, and 1 project. In light of these findings, the following suggestions are offered:

- Researchers can increase studies on women in history teaching, where major gaps remain.  
- Master’s and doctoral theses should more frequently include topics on women in history teaching.  
- Especially project work on women in history teaching should be expanded.  
- Field‑specific book projects focusing on women in history teaching can be initiated.

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(All references have been translated verbatim from the source list.)