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Turkey's gender gap in higher education: An analysis of IR doctoral students

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ABSTRACT

This article assesses gender research patterns among Ph.D. students in International Relations (IR) discipline in Turkey with a particular focus on women. We examined 622 IR doctoral dissertations accepted by institutions of higher education in Turkey between 2009 and 2019. We found a statistically significant gender-based pairing among students and advisors, in addition to a higher number of male students and advisors, which suggests greater male visibility in graduate school and academia. Dissertation keyword analysis shows that similar topics are studied by both men and women, and reveals a noticeable absence of gender-sensitive issues, even among the work of female researchers. The striking omission of feminist IR reveals the importance of 'minding the gap' in contexts outside of the Western domain.

Introduction

Academia is a gendered institution. Men make up the majority of the senior academic and administrative positions around the world, but this impact of gender is not observed merely in terms of numbers. Historically, gendered socio-cultural traits define academic research practices, work roles, academic performance, and professional advancement (Acker, 1992; Machado-Taylor & Özkanlı, 2013; Makarem & Wang, 2020). However, much of our knowledge about the gendered aspects of academia stems from research conducted in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (Hart, 2016). This gender-related discourse is equally pertinent in social science faculties where research is often characterized by masculinized perspectives, as exemplified in the field of International Relations (IR). World politics are dominated by cis men; and reflecting this, the mainstream IR is deficient in the understanding and explanation of the realities, experiences, and contributions of underrepresented genders in international politics. Instead, the traditional IR agenda involves masculine accounts of leadership, hard politics, security, war, and armaments (Breuning & Sanders, 2007; Hancock et al., 2013; Hoagland et al., 2020; Phull et al., 2019; Youngs, 2004). The IR faculties are also predominantly staffed by men across the globe (Curtin, 2013; Jordan et al., 2009; Maliniak et al., 2008; Nyklová et al., 2019; Schoeman, 2009). However, the existing literature on gender differences in academic work focuses generally on STEM fields with comparatively less attention paid to the IR discipline. This

article therefore examines the gender distribution of doctoral students and their advisors, and gender research patterns in Turkish IR dissertations from 2009 to 2019.

A closer look at the gender differences in graduate studies will increase our understanding of how research traditions and professional practices are (re)produced during the early stages of academic careers. It is important that doctoral students develop scholarly skills, gain proficiency in their field's theoretical and epistemological foundations, and form academic networks in order to ensure an educational environment that upholds principles of equity and inclusivity. The student experience significantly shapes both professional performance and the representation of diverse groups and ideas within the next generation of academics. Mitigating gender-based challenges faced by students is instrumental in fostering long-term attainment of gender equality within the academic profession. Studies on higher education have reported five main issues affecting the status of early-career women in academia. First, persistent gender gaps in economic well-being and social capital may impede women from attending conferences, purchasing work-related equipment and materials, and establishing collaborations (Lindahl et al., 2021). Second, doctoral studies often coincide with the period of starting a family and becoming a parent (Dickson, 2018; Lynch, 2008; Serrano, 2008). Thus, family responsibilities, coupled with other socio-economic, cultural, and organizational factors hinder women's ability to invest time in teaching, research, and academic service, and affect their likelihood of achieving higher academic ranks (Appel & Dahlgren, 2003;

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Dikmen & Maden, 2012; Goodwin & Huppertz, 2010; Kulp, 2016; Maliniak et al., 2008). Consequently, despite the increasing number of women attending graduate school in many countries, they are more likely than men to take longer to earn a degree and to abandon their studies (Mastekaasa, 2005; Nerad & Cerny, 1999). Third, the underrepresentation of senior women academics decreases the possibility of pairing doctoral students with a female advisor, with a potentially better understanding of the challenges associated with work and family time allocation (Heinrich, 1995). Fourth, gender stereotypes often portray women as less competent, and this bias can unfairly favor men in performance evaluations, hiring committees, promotions, network opportunities, and research funding (Akram & Pflaeger Young, 2021). Finally, the advisor's gender affects the selection of the dissertation topic; male supervisors are more likely to guide female students towards topics within the 'malestream' IR (Kantola, 2008).

Most existing findings, however, were obtained from studies that examine political science and international relations faculties in developed countries (Jordan et al., 2009). In contrast, this paper provides insights into the status of women and feminist research in the field of IR in Turkey, where the gender gap is pervasive and takes different forms. In the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index, Turkey's overall rank was 133rd out of 156 countries (World Economic Forum, 2021).¹ Gender disparity is most evident in economic participation and opportunity subindex; only 38.5 % of Turkish women (aged 15–64) participated actively in the labor market, versus 78 % of men in 2021. Similarly, only 16.2 % of women held senior roles, including legislators, senior officials and managers, versus 83.8 % of men (World Economic Forum, 2021). Women also face significant underrepresentation in political power, holding only 101 of 583 seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, placing Turkey 129th in the world ranking on women in national parliaments in 2021 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). With respect to socio-demographic factors, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development data show that 6.7 % of Turkish women married between the ages of 15 and 19 in 2019, compared to an average of 1.3 % across the European Union (EU) countries (OECD Data, 2019). Furthermore, almost 66 % of Turkish people agree that children will suffer when a mother is in paid work outside of the home, compared to 37 % in the EU countries (OECD Data, 2019). Turkey's pervasive gender inequality makes it an ideal case to explore the experiences of women in non-Western academic settings. Research on Turkey can offer valuable insights for developing culturally sensitive approaches which can promote gender equality in higher education, particularly in regions facing similar challenges.

Against this background, this paper explores gender differences in IR graduate students, the student-advisor match and dissertation topics. We consider whether female doctoral students have a substantial presence in a field of study and academic environment heavily shaped by masculine experience. Are women generally mentored by other women, or are their research capacity and skills generally nurtured by male advisors? What do women study? Do they study gender-sensitive topics? To answer these questions, we examined 622 IR doctoral dissertations accepted by institutions of higher education in Turkey between 2009 and 2019 and found a statistically significant gender-based pairing among students and advisors. In addition, the larger number of male students and advisors suggests the male presence is more visible in graduate school and academia. Dissertation keyword analysis shows men and women study similar topics, with a noticeable absence of gender-sensitive topics and feminist research, even among female researchers. We acknowledge that gender and sex are not synonymous, but due to data availability, we study gender from a binary categorization.

¹ The only countries behind Turkey are Côte d'Ivoire, Papua New Guinea, Algeria, Bahrain, Niger, Nigeria, India, Vanuatu, Qatar, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Chad, Mali, Iran, Congo, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan.

Authors fully understand that the binary approach to gender research, and the practice of assigning biological sex based on names is problematic. Despite such limitations, this research contributes to the existing literature by enhancing the discourse on gender inclusivity and providing insights that can inform the development of strategies aimed at creating women-friendly institutions within academia in a non-Western context.

Gendered international relations

The gender differences in the field of IR require special attention. Men's domination of power in international and domestic politics maintains their position at the center of the discipline's narrative and research agenda worldwide (Aggestam & Towns, 2019). Thus, not only are women IR scholars relatively fewer, but also, the research field is shaped by "the gendered subject matter of the discipline" and "the gendered language in which the discipline describes and analyzes global politics" (Sjoberg, 2008: 175; Lake, 2016). In an analysis of topics published in high-impact IR journals, Breuning et al. (2005), for example, found that the majority of scholars, both women and men, focus on international political economy, conflict/conflict processes, and international organizations at the expense of gendered issues. Starting with 1990, gendered accounts of IR have prioritized the visibility of women's concerns and needs, and adopted a critical stance towards the masculine interpretation of wars, violence, armament, and conflict (Tickner, 2010). However, the intersectionality of gender has generally remained the preserve of women authors due to their "lived experiences, social roles and interests" (Key & Sumner, 2019: 666). Men's general lack of interest in gendered IR means that the alternative perspectives are less cited and published, and hence, less likely to be correlated with appointment to positions and tenure (Maliniak et al., 2013; Pearse et al., 2019; Vickers, 2015).

Gender diversity is important for the overall development of any research field; inclusion helps to build stronger research agendas, arrive at solutions that address complexity, and identify areas of neglect. Previous research reports on regrettable disadvantages for women in various stages of their professionalization. From graduate school training to the development of career paths, they seem to face the challenge of navigating a more complicated roadmap,² i.e., disproportionately more difficult working conditions that make for a less attractive and emotionally more demanding professional environment.

To fully address gender disparities in higher education, it is important to consider the specific contextual and cultural factors. However, most of our knowledge comes from studies that examine political science and international relations faculties in the United States and/or Western European countries (Jordan et al., 2009), providing limited insights into the unique challenges faced by women in other regions. This is unsurprising because although IR is a global discipline, its mainstream theoretical and empirical choices are dominated by the perspectives, concerns, and strengths of scholars from Global North. This strand of scholarly work fails to engage critically with research traditions and debates in other parts of the world, due to a lack of interest, resources, and language skills. The leading English-language academic journals provide limited accounts of regional differences in IR scholarship (Goh, 2019; Jørgensen & Knudsen, 2006; Kristensen, 2015; Wæver & Tickner, 2009). However, as Ackelsberg et al. (2004: 880) suggest, "state laws and regulations, collective bargaining practices and agreements, and university policies" result in distinctive academic environments and practices for scholars across countries. Moreover, cross-national variations in patriarchal mechanisms affect the degree of

² There is also encouraging news. Breuning et al. (2018) find that the review process is not gendered. In addition, there is no gender gap in the use of skills once political science Ph.D. students receive relevant training (Gatto et al., 2020).

female academics' isolation from professional activities in different ways (Timmers et al., 2010).

Gender gap in Turkish higher education

Women, along with LGBTQ+ community, face various challenges in Turkey. Despite the persisting political and economic gender inequalities, there has been improvement in representation of women in education in the country over the last century. In 1915, women gained access to higher education, albeit at a college admitting only female students and faculty. In response to the challenge of finding female instructors and the strong demand from women to study alongside men, Turkish universities began coeducation with mixed-gender staff in 1921. Women's educational attainment was also increased by the rise of the middle-class, the increase in rural to urban migration, and the early republic's commitment to improving women's participation in governance and the labor market. The growth in the number of universities and available academic positions, men's preference for better paid careers outside academia, and the introduction of gender-neutral policies have also increased job opportunities for women, especially in social sciences (Grünell & Vöten, 1997; Healy et al., 2005; Özbilgin & Healy, 2004; Şentürk, 2015; Suğur & Cangöz, 2016).³ As of today, in the 207 higher education institutions across the country, 49 % of students and about 45 % of faculty members are women (YÖK, 2021).

However, despite the institutional and socio-economic factors that sustain women's participation in higher education, women are still underrepresented across different stages of academic life in Turkey (Şentürk, 2015; Tahtaloğlu, 2016; Yıldız, 2018). In the overall population, 0.34 % of women have attained a Ph.D. compared to 0.51 % of men in 2021 (World Economic Forum, 2021). The gender distribution of faculty by academic rank in all fields as of 2022 is presented in Fig. 1. The gender composition is balanced at lower ranks; almost 52 % of all research assistants and 51 % of all instructors are women, but this share decreases with higher academic rank. Women make up about 45 % of assistant professors, 40 % of associate professors, and only 33 % of all professors employed in higher education institutions. The gender gap is even wider in the field of IR. Fig. 2 shows that women make up about 40 % of research assistants and instructors, but only 27 % of professors.

From a sociological perspective, an important reason for gender inequality in Turkish universities is work-family conflict. Gender roles associated with marital status determine the ability of women and men to cope with unpredictable academic schedules and heavy workloads. Academic duties, including teaching, research, competing for external funding, advising, administrative roles, and conference participation, extend beyond traditional work hours. The gendered responsibilities of housework and caregiving decrease the time women can devote to the hectic schedule of academic life (Bianchi et al., 2012: 55; Fauser, 2019; Göktürk & Tülübaş, 2021; Toffoletti & Starr, 2016; Yıldız, 2018). Previous research reported that for men, in contrast, marriage acts as a facilitator "increasing their social networks and providing material and emotional assistance with their careers" (Baker-Doyle, 2010: 2).

Gender bias within the Turkish legal system further cements this pattern. After the founding of the Turkish Republic, it is true that, to a certain extent, reforms advanced women's social and economic status. For instance, the 1924 Constitution removed the enforcement of the sharia code while the 1926 Civil Code "prohibited polygamy, outlawed unilateral divorce, and recognized gender equality in inheritance rights and the custody of children" (Dedeoğlu, 2012: 274). However, before its amendment in 2001, the same Civil Code had also declared that the husband was the chief of the family (Article 152), women should assist

the husband (Article 153) and should obtain the husband's consent to work outside home (Article 159). The "conservative approach emphasizing women 'within the family' instead of as individual citizens" continues to dominate the state policies and gendered practices (Arat, 2010; Aybars et al., 2019: 785). In the absence of generous social insurance and service arrangements, women remain the main caregivers to children, dependent elders, and persons with disabilities (Aybars et al., 2019; Bugra, 2014; Kaya, 2015). Accordingly, the current Labor Law grants women the right to receive severance pay if they leave their job within one year of marriage (Article 14). Since coming to power in 2002, the ruling Erdoğan administration has used religious and conservative values to further legitimize the traditional gendered family roles, often calling on women to have at least three children (Korkut & Eslen-Ziya, 2016). In sum, the established socio-cultural norms and the family mainstreaming policies and laws encourage women to marry, become mothers, stay in marriage and take on family responsibilities (Adak, 2021; Yıldız, 2018). In contrast, such norms create a supporting professional environment for men. Unsurprisingly, women successful in academia report a zero-sum game between their professional and personal lives (Göktürk & Tülübaş, 2021).

The Higher Education Council (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, YÖK), a state institution that centrally regulates and monitors Turkish universities' administrative affairs including academic appointments, has taken the step of enacting gender-neutral employment legislation since 1981.⁴ More recently in 2021, YÖK also, introduced a new strategy for strengthening women in academia by calling on Turkish female rectors to produce a report on women empowerment in faculties, as well as the necessary safety measures in campuses.⁵ Nevertheless, scholars point to the lack of formal and systematic programs available to promote women's access to higher learning and senior posts in academia (Özbilgin & Healy, 2004). In fact, in 2019, YÖK removed its gender equality policy 'the Document of Stance on Gender Equality' from its website, and canceled 'the Higher Education Institutions Gender Equality Project', citing incompatibility with national social values (Bianet, 2019).

Despite the absence of explicit references to gender in YÖK regulations, implicit biases against women in Turkish academia remain prevalent due to the influence of paternalistic traditions, values, and culture. For example, research has shown that when women engage in academic activities outside office hours because of their family duties, their male superiors perceive them as less committed and competent (Göktürk & Tülübaş, 2021). Women are expected to make more effort to be agreeable and avoid being assertive in the workplace, and are more likely to face sexist remarks from their peers and students, which can hinder their research networks or even exclude them from academia altogether (Tepe, 2019).

The gender differences in the field of IR require special attention. Mainstream IR originated in higher education institutions of North America and Western Europe by predominantly white males. Men's domination of positions of power in international and domestic politics maintains their position at the center of the discipline's composition, narrative and research agenda around the world (Aggestam & Towns, 2019). Gender gaps are noted in the submission of works to IR journals (Breuning et al., 2018) and the representation of women as authors (Breuning & Sanders, 2007; Cellini, 2022; Teele & Thelen, 2017). Even when published, women's writing is less acknowledged. Dion et al. (2018) find that works by female authors are under-cited, even in the

⁴ For the related legislation, see <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.2547.pdf> (accessed January 24, 2022) and <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2018/06/20180612-6.htm> (accessed January 24, 2022).

⁵ YÖK (2021) <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2021/yok-baskan-i-sarac-kadin-ректорlerle-toplantı-duzenledi.aspx>.

³ The number of higher education institutions, including the public and foundation universities and vocational schools, increased from 73 in 2002 to 207 in 2021. As a result, the number of academic staff also increased from 10,080 in 2003 to 181,436 as of October 2021 (YÖK, 2021).

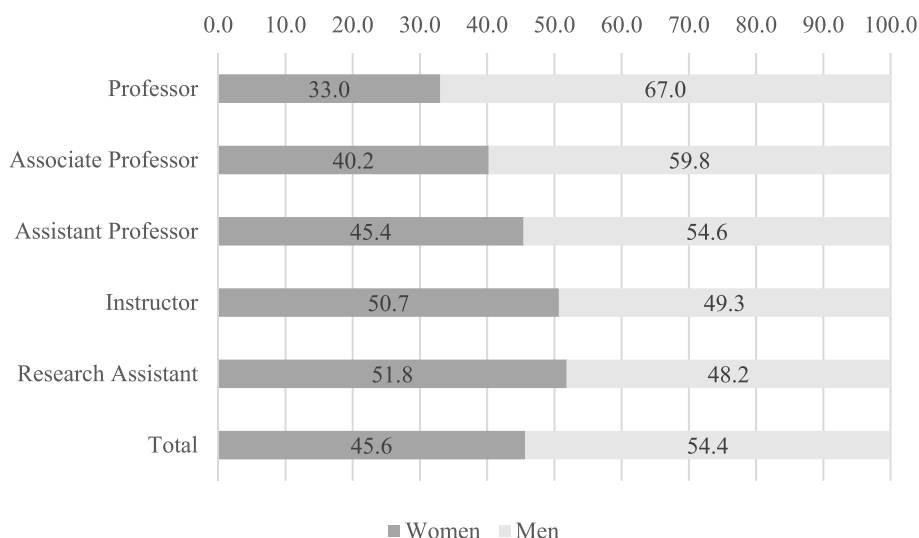


Fig. 1. Percentage of female and male faculties in Turkish universities (2021).
 Data: Compiled by the authors based on the Higher Education Council (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, YÖK) data (2021).

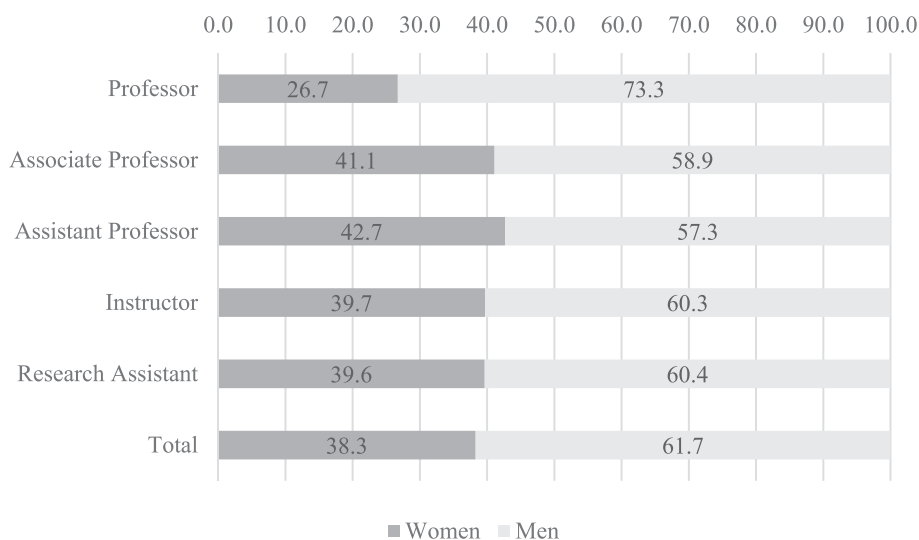


Fig. 2. Distribution of gender across all ranks in the field of IR in Turkey (2021).
 Data: Compiled by the authors based on the YÖK data (2021).

journals that publish mainly women scholars' research.⁶ IR graduate course syllabi are similarly gendered; women instructors are more likely to cite works of other women, and less likely to cite their own (Colgan, 2017). The research field is also shaped by “the gendered subject matter of the discipline” and “the gendered language in which the discipline describes and analyzes global politics” (Sjoberg, 2008: 175). In an analysis of topics published in high-impact IR journals, Breuning et al. (2005), for example, found that the majority of scholars, both women and men, focus on international political economy, conflict/conflict processes, and international organizations as the expense of gendered issues. Starting with 1990, gendered accounts of IR have prioritized the visibility of women's concerns and needs, and adopted a critical stance towards the masculine interpretation of wars, violence, armament, and conflict (Tickner, 2010). However, the intersectionality of gender has generally remained the preserve of women authors due to their “lived experiences, social roles and interests” (Key & Sumner, 2019: 666).

⁶ For a deeper dive into gendered citation gaps, see (Esarey & Bryant, 2018), (Murdie, 2018), and (Peterson, 2018).

Men's general lack of interest in writing about gendered IR means that the alternative perspectives are less cited and published, and hence, less likely to be correlated with appointment to positions and tenure (Mali-niak et al., 2013; Pearse et al., 2019; Vickers, 2015).

Over the past two decades, a wider scholarly interest in feminist IR has been observed in Turkey, with several reviews that map out the strengths, omissions, and priorities in Western feminist academic's IR research (Ataman, 2009; Doğan & Özlük, 2016; Tür & Koyuncu, 2010). Furthermore, a number of studies have examined the career experiences of female IR academics in Turkey (Demirtaş & Yeşilyurt Gündüz, 2020; Öner & Özdemirkiran, 2017; Özdemirkiran & Selcen, 2017). Other works have offered a gender perspective on major issues in the field, such as war (Taner & Gökalp, 2019), diplomacy (Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm & Rumelili, 2018), foreign policy leadership (Öztürk, 2012), and security (Koyuncu, 2012). However, despite these efforts, the existing feminist IR literature in Turkey continues to be fragmented across the key areas of inquiry, rather than presenting a systematic research agenda and the coherent theoretical framework necessary to capture the gendered experiences unique to the Turkish context. Research suggests

that, in Turkey, male colleagues discourage women from pursuing gender-related topics, considered outside the mainstream IR and as having secondary importance (Demirtaş & Yeşilyurt Gündüz, 2020; Öner & Özdemirkiran, 2017). This could be consequential for Turkish women scholars because Feminist IR is central to IR education. In the United States, feminist IR is commonly taught alongside mainstream theories such as realism and liberalism, and many institutions offer IR courses with a gender focus. In addition, previous research notes female researchers might have different preferences, for example, be more likely to use case study methods (Breuning & Sanders, 2007) and have different topic preferences (Key & Sumner, 2019). When able to exercise a choice, women may be denigrated for conducting “research like a girl” (Key & Sumner, 2019: 663). Denying women opportunities to pursue topics of interest result in limiting their ability to grow and express themselves as scholars.

Gender diversity is important for the overall development of any research field, including IR. Inclusion helps to build stronger research agendas, arrive at solutions that address complexity, and identify areas of neglect. Previous research notes, regrettably, clear disadvantages for women in various stages of their professionalization. From graduate school training to the development of career paths, women seem to face the challenge of navigating a more complicated roadmap⁷; disproportionately more difficult working conditions make for a less attractive and emotionally more demanding professional environment.

Data collection, analysis, and key findings

This paper builds on the existing discussion by investigating (a) the representation of female doctoral students in the field of IR, (b) the gender distribution of advisors in this field, (c) the gender match of doctoral students and their advisors, and (d) the thematic topics addressed in dissertations. To this end, the study systematically reviewed data from the YÖK National Thesis Center spanning the years 2009–2019. This database provides information on dissertation titles, keywords, authors, universities, degree programs, and advisors. Because of the lack of relevant data, it was not possible to study potential intersectional differences of ethnicity, religion, non-binary and social class. The collection of data, spanning a 10-year period, was limited by the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic. In March 2020, the first case of Covid-19 was observed in Turkey. As a response, the YÖK issued a directive titled “Education Processes in the New Coronavirus Disease Pandemic” mandating that in the 2019–2020 academic year's Spring semester, all educational activities to be conducted through distance education rather than face-to-face method. The emergency remote learning presented significant challenges for postgraduate students, particularly as it emerged after the start of the spring semester. The add-drop period for courses in universities had ended, and some lacked the necessary resources such as stable internet connection and technological devices to continue with distance learning. In response, YÖK decided to allow active postgraduate students to request the freezing of their registrations for the 2019–2020 academic year Spring semester. In the subsequent academic year (2020–2021), due to the ongoing pandemic, YÖK extended this option. Then, in February 2023, due to an earthquake in Southeastern Turkey resulting in nearly 50,000 deaths, universities adopted a hybrid educational model, creating challenges for students in accessing their advisors, collecting data, and connecting with their

⁷ There is also encouraging news. Breuning et al. (2018) find that the review process is not gendered. However, this might also suggest women are more willing to do unpaid work and are burdened with less impactful professional tasks for tenure and promotion. In addition, there is no gender gap in the use of skills once political science Ph.D. students receive relevant training (Gatto et al., 2020).

peers.⁸ As a result of these consecutive disruptions, we made the decision to limit our data collection to the years 2009–2019 to ensure it would not be disproportionately affected by the disruptions caused by academic hiatus and the transition to distance learning. Taking this approach, we investigate gender research patterns among Ph.D. students and their advisors. Our three-stage analysis aims to describe and analyze gender representation, student-mentor pairings by gender, and dissertation topics through an analysis of their key words. First, we look into gender distribution over the period (2009–2019) and location (institutions and type of programs) using descriptive statistical methods. This section sets the stage for the following two parts by providing a focus on changes in the gender distribution of doctoral students over time. Second, using cross-tabulation and Pearson, Cochran's and Mantel-Haenszel's chi-square tests, we explore statistical significance of gender-based pairings among mentors and mentees. In addition, we provide the theoretical distribution of pairings to display the distribution in cases where the genders of students and advisors were independent. In the final stage of the analysis, using the keywords tagged for each study, we show frequency of key words in general, as well as their distribution across male and female-authored dissertations.

Using the available database, first, we identified the dissertations submitted to doctoral programs whose title contained the term ‘IR’ or an IR subfield. Across Turkey, there were 56 active doctoral programs, with one of the following titles: ‘IR’, ‘European Union Politics and IR’, ‘Middle East Political History and IR’, ‘Political Science and IR’, ‘National and International Security Strategies’ and ‘International Security and Terrorism’. We found a total of 622 doctoral dissertations submitted to these programs from 2009 to 2019. Second, we identified students' gender based on their first names, and if these were non-traditional, unisex, or non-Turkish, we referred to images on faculty websites or LinkedIn and Facebook.⁹

Table 1 presents the distribution of female and male doctoral students who completed their degrees and submitted their dissertations to the YÖK's thesis center across 34 higher education institutions between 2009 and 2019. In the whole dataset, there were 224 female (36 %) and 398 male (64 %) doctoral students. Female students were found in higher concentrations in the older universities with long-established doctoral programs, including Marmara University, Middle East Technical University, Istanbul University, and Ankara University.¹⁰ The highest number of male students (n = 51) were from Gazi University, which had only 11 female graduates.

Fig. 3 shows the number of female and male-authored dissertations over time. The results reveal that the number of dissertations written by both men and women increased 3.7-fold over the decade. However, in the most recent year studied, men produced 62 dissertations, and women, only 41. In addition, men submitted more theses than women in every year. Fig. 4 shows the number of female and male-authored dissertations across IR departments. The number of women was higher only in the European Union Politics and IR departments. There was only a single author, a female, in the National and International Security Strategies program, probably because of the transfer of students to other universities following the closure of the War Academy after the 2016 coup attempt. The number of men in the remaining programs is

⁸ The authors of this paper plan to compare the effects of the pandemic on doctoral student before and after the Covid pandemic in a separate study.

⁹ The name-centric approach is limited to a binary understanding of gender. Future works need to look beyond a binary system of male and female and assess doctoral students across a more diverse range of gender variant identities. However, such inclusive gender identification opportunities are not widely used in Turkey. In terms of underrepresented gender identities, woman was the only category on which we could gather data.

¹⁰ The starting dates of IR doctoral programs were not publicly available for the majority of universities; therefore, it was not possible to test the relationship with the program age and the number of female students.

Table 1
Doctoral students across universities by gender.

Higher education institutions	Female	Male
Marmara University	37	28
Middle East Technical University	36	42
Istanbul University	30	51
Ankara University	20	38
Gazi University	11	51
Bilkent University	10	10
Yeditepe University	10	25
Sabahattin Zaim University	7	16
Sakarya University	7	12
Dokuz Eylül University	6	2
Trakya University	6	11
Galatasaray University	5	4
Kocaeli University	5	5
Uludağ University	4	13
Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University	3	4
War Academy ^a	3	5
Karadeniz Teknik University	3	11
Kadir Has University	3	2
Akdeniz University	2	3
Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University	2	10
Boğaziçi University	2	1
Kırıkkale University	2	3
Koç University	2	4
Police Academy	2	11
Yıldız Technical University	2	9
Bahçeşehir University	1	1
Ege University	1	1
Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University	1	6
Yalova University	1	1
Fatih University	0	2
İst. Gelişim University	0	1
Military Academy ^a	0	1
S. Demirel University	0	1
Selçuk University	0	13
Total students	224	398

^a The Decree-Law issued on 31 July 2016 closed War Colleges.

gender composition. This difference in the gender proportions for advisors may be influenced by a variety of factors. Notably, a significant gender imbalance among full professors and associate professors, as previously depicted in Fig. 2, may limit the pool of female academics available. Moreover, women's familial responsibilities might discourage them from taking on advisory roles, especially in cases requiring substantial time and effort. Structural barriers within academic institutions, such as inadequate childcare support, may further discourage female academics from assuming such responsibilities (Misra et al., 2012). In some cases, women may prioritize their own career advancement and research productivity over taking on advisory roles, reflecting their efforts to navigate existing gender disparities in academia.

Table 2 shows the cross-tabulation and chi-square analysis of the student-advisor match.¹¹ There are 622 observations included in cross tabulation and chi-square analysis. Out of 622 theses, 16 list more than one advisor. If these multiple advisors are all male or female, they are considered as a single male or female advisor, but if groups are mixed, they are excluded from the analysis; 7 theses were excluded for this reason. Results show a statistically significant gender-based pairing among students and advisors. Pearson, Cochran's and Mantel-Haenszel's chi-square tests are all statistically significant with a p value = 0.000. Fisher's exact test is also significant with a p value = 0.000. In addition, there are more male students and advisors, which suggests the male presence has a greater visibility in graduate school and academia. Female advisors appear to work with fairly equal proportions of male and female students, but male advisors are more likely to work with males. From students' perspectives, both genders are more likely to work with male advisors. In other words, the only relatively balanced distribution across the two genders is the tendency for female advisors' work with both male and females.

In order to understand the distribution in the case that genders of students and advisors were independent, we looked at the theoretical distribution. Table 3 shows the theoretical distribution of pairings of student-advisor given the marginal distribution of each variable and

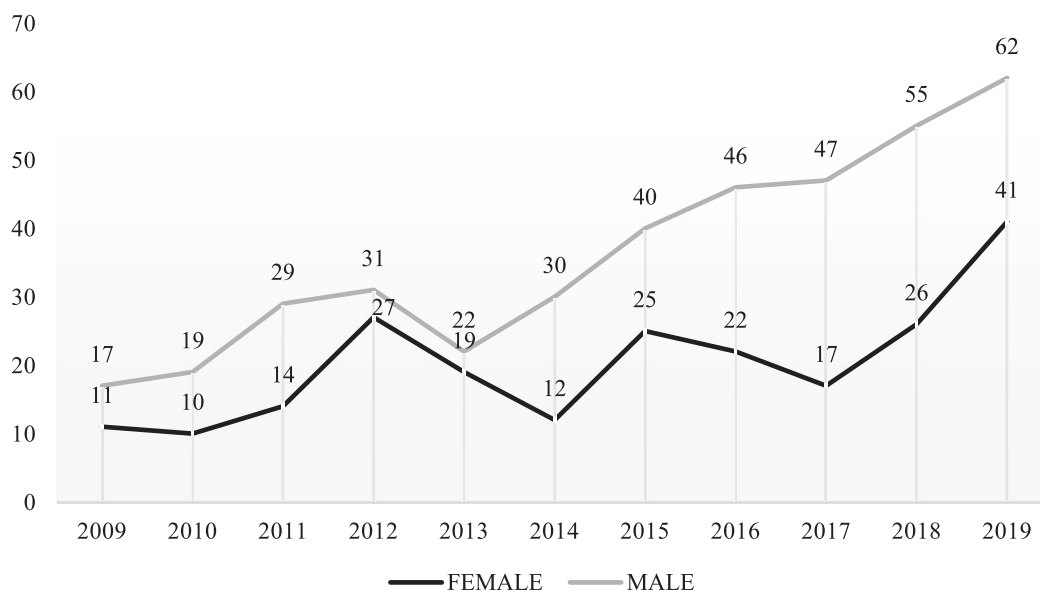


Fig. 3. The number of authors by gender across years.

significantly higher than women.

Fig. 5 shows the distribution of advisors by gender across years. Out of 622 dissertations, 433 (almost 68 %) had only male advisors, while 171 dissertations (almost 29 %) were supervised by female only advisors. There were more male than female advisors in all years. Out of 622 theses, 16 list multiple advisors, but only 7 of these were of mixed

assuming independence between the two. In other words, if gender was not a determinant, distributions would appear as in Table 3.¹² When this

¹¹ Since this study engages with categorical variables based on gender of students and advisees, we used cross-tabulation and chi-square analysis.

¹² Note that Table 3 shows the theoretical distribution, not actual distribution.

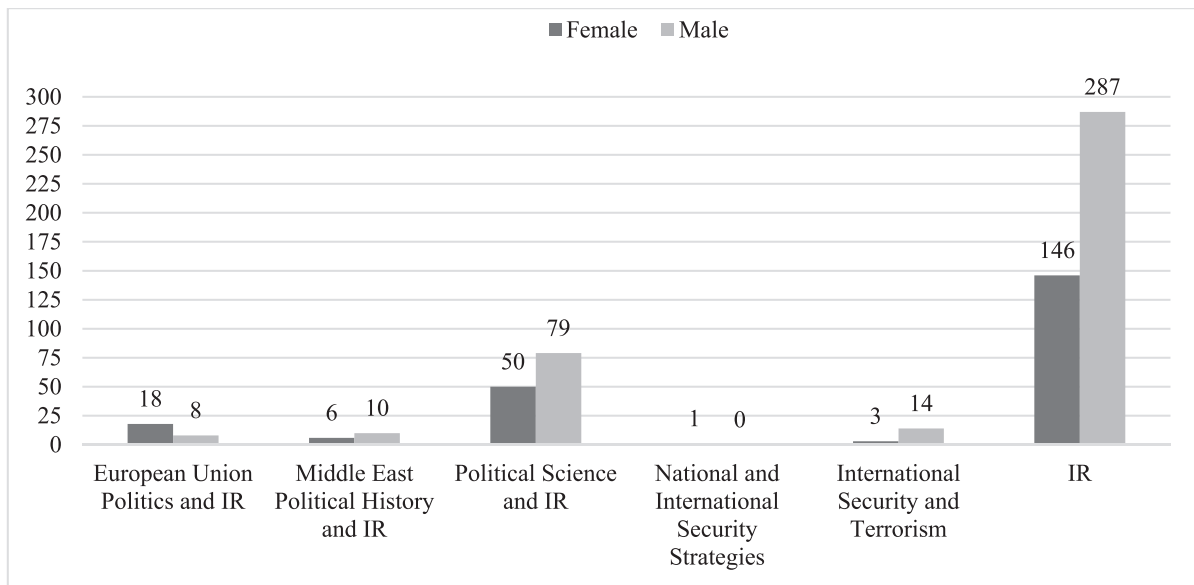


Fig. 4. The number of authors by gender across programs.

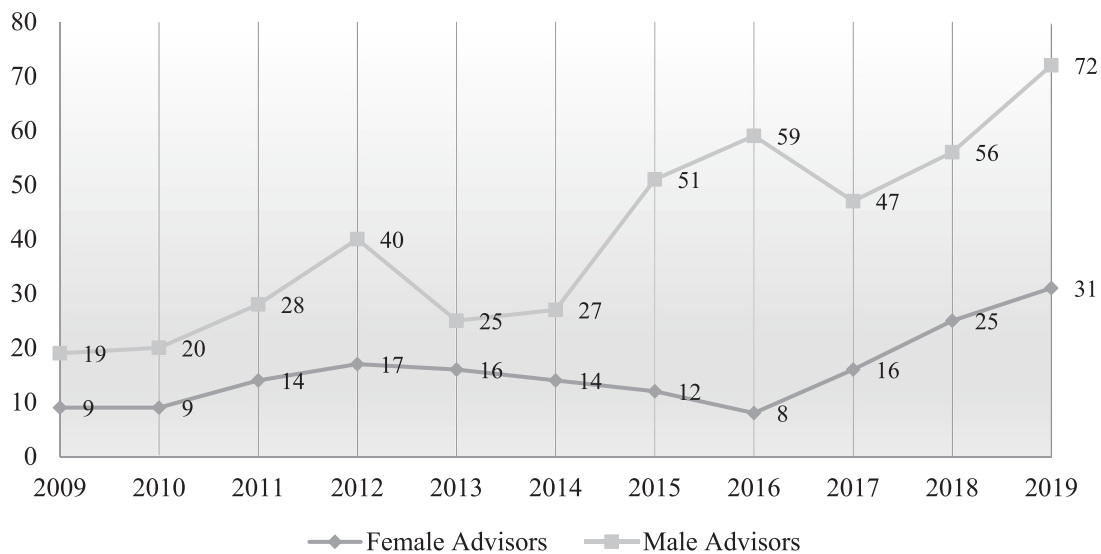


Fig. 5. The number of advisors by gender across years.

Table 2
Cross tabulation and chi-square tests.

	Female advisor	Male advisor	Total
Female student	87	134	221
Male student	84	310	394
Total	171	444	615

Table 3
Theoretical distribution by gender of student and advisor.^a

	Female advisor	Male advisor	Total
Female student	61.44878	159.5512	221
Male student	109.5512	284.4488	394
Total	171	444	615

^a This is the theoretical distribution of pairings of student-advisor given the marginal distribution of each variable and assuming independence between the two. These are not actual numbers.

is considered, it is clear that if gender was irrelevant, male advisors would have fewer male students and more female students and for female advisors, vice versa. All of these collectively show the importance of the role of gender in advisor-student pairings and encourages us to look deeper into the gender related dynamics of mentorship.

We analyzed keywords tagged for each study included in the analysis to understand the topics favored by doctoral students, and whether or not female and male doctorate students focus on similar topics. These keywords were available in the YÖK database in both Turkish and English for authors to select when submitting their dissertation. Keywords were considered in three categories: all keywords in all studies (3930 words), in studies authored by females (1396), and in studies authored by males (2534). We examined the frequency of keywords for each category. In some cases, key words were phrases, and some key words overlapped, i.e., referred to similar concepts. We made no adjustments, to avoid involving our own interpretation of these concepts. For the same reason, we avoided editing language errors in phrases.

Table 4 outlines the most frequently used keywords in all categories. In the first row, there are examples of keywords from all works in this

Table 4
Frequency of key words.

Category	15 most frequently used words (frequency)	Key words on gender (frequency)	Total number of words in for this category
All key words	International policy (198)	Women (5)	3930 words
	International Relations (196)	Women movements (2)	
	Turkey (81)	Women problems (1)	
	European Union (80)	Women rights (1)	
	Security (65)	Women's associations (1)	
	Turkish foreign policy (63)	Gender (1)	
	United States of America (59)	Gender identity (1)	
	Russia (56)	Sex offenses (1)	
	International security (41)	Sex workers (1)	
	Middle East (37)	Feminism (zero)	
	Security policies (27)	Intersectionality (zero)	
	Middle East policy (26)		
	International law (25)		
	Energy (24)		
	Iran (23)		
Key words of male authors	International Relations (128)	Women (zero)	2534 words
	International policy (126)	Women movements (zero)	
	Turkey (56)	Women problems (zero)	
	Security (50)	Women rights (zero)	
	European Union (42)	Women's associations (zero)	
	Turkish foreign policy (39)	Gender (zero)	
	United States of America (39)	Gender identity (zero)	
	Russia (36)	Sex offenses (1)	
	International Security (32)	Sex workers (zero)	
	Middle East (30)	Feminism (zero)	
	Middle East policy (22)	Intersectionality (zero)	
	NATO (19)		
	Security policies (19)		
	Energy (17)		
	International law (16)		
Key words of female authors	International policy (70)	Women (5)	1396 words
	International relations (66)	Women movements (2)	
	European Union (38)	Women problems (1)	
	Turkey (25)	Women rights (1)	
	Turkish foreign policy (24)	Women's associations (1)	
	Russia (20)	Gender (1)	
	United States of America (20)	Gender identity (1)	
	Security (15)	Sex offenses (0)	
	Identity (11)	Sex workers (1)	
	International law (9)	Feminism (zero)	
	International security (9)	Intersectionality (zero)	
	Migrations (9)		
	Conflict (8)		
	Democracy (8)		
	Europeanization (8)		

study, and in the second, the 15 most frequently used keywords. As seen, none of these reflect a gender-based focus. Gender-focused¹³ keywords and their frequencies are listed in the third column, with the highest frequency, 'women', appearing only 5 times. A notable absence is the term 'feminism', and there is no record of the keywords 'feminism', 'feminist theory', or 'feminist IR'. In the second row, the keywords of studies authored by men, only one study, with a keyword 'sex offenses', uses gender-focused keywords, and none of the most frequently used words indicate gender-sensitive research agendas. Finally, female authors' most frequently used words include no gender-based perspectives, with the possible exception of 'identity', if it was the case that the identity referred to is gender-based. There are some, although few, studies that tagged women-related keywords, such as 'women' (5), 'women movements' (2), 'women problems' (1), 'women rights' (1), and 'women's associations' (1). Two keywords on gender are noted: 'gender' (1) and 'gender identity' (1). One study among female-authored pieces contains the phrase 'sex workers' as a keyword. Table 4 reveals that gender studies and feminist IR have almost no presence in IR scholarship. It also shows some, although limited, interest in gender-sensitive approaches among female students. This spark of interest, however, appears relatively small in comparison to security or foreign policy-focused ones. There is, as expected, dominance of traditional IR keywords, such as 'security' or well-established research agendas, such as 'Turkish foreign policy'. The almost total absence of reference to feminist IR and the limited presence of gender-focused language points to the widespread lack of exposure, acceptance, and appreciation of gender-sensitive perspectives in higher education institutions in Turkey.

To contextualize these findings, we examined the state of feminist IR Teaching, Research & International Policy faculty surveys, which provide valuable insight into the professional experiences of IR scholars (TRIP, 2004). The 2004 TRIP faculty survey included only IR scholars in the US,¹⁴ but it gradually increased its outreach to include scholars from 36 countries including Turkey in 2017.¹⁵ One of the survey questions inquires about respondents' approach to the study of IR (Which of the following best describes your approach to the study of IR?). Only 3.51 % of female respondents, and 0 % of male respondents in Turkey identified with feminism,¹⁶ and for all respondents in Turkey, only 2.56 % chose this approach. Feminist IR scholars identify themselves in the 35–54 age group, representing the younger end of the spectrum.¹⁷ When all countries considered the same question, 2.29 % opted for feminism,¹⁸ broken down as 6.14 % of female and 0.44 % of male respondents.¹⁹ Turkey, in fact, is not the country with the fewest responses on feminism (e.g., 0 % of respondents in multiple countries, including Chile²⁰ and Denmark²¹), but is far behind the leader Ireland, where the corresponding figures are 11.11 % of all respondents,²² and 30 % of female respondents.²³ This is not a like-to-like comparison due to differences in response rates across countries, yet, it gives enough context to suggest substantial variation in the application of feminism among IR scholars worldwide. These responses also hint at potential issues with widely cast

¹³ We searched for all the entries with "women", "gender", "feminism", "sex", and "intersectionality" to identify the frequency of gender-focused keywords. We examined all variants of "women", "gender", "feminism" and "sex", in other words, any phrase that included a derivation of these words.

¹⁴ <https://trip.wm.edu/data/dashboard/faculty-survey> (accessed June 14, 2022).

¹⁵ <https://trip.wm.edu/data/dashboard/faculty-survey> (accessed June 14, 2022).

¹⁶ <https://is.gd/NUpbXE> (accessed June 14, 2022).

¹⁷ <https://is.gd/Ps0V7P> (accessed June 14, 2022).

¹⁸ <https://is.gd/cGxvrp> (accessed June 14, 2022).

¹⁹ <https://is.gd/vIipk7> (accessed June 14, 2022).

²⁰ <https://is.gd/mnudZO> (accessed June 14, 2022).

²¹ <https://is.gd/FUEooR> (accessed June 14, 2022).

²² <https://is.gd/dtKD7j> (accessed June 14, 2022).

²³ <https://is.gd/wbAzgW> (accessed June 14, 2022).

nets, to explain the state of IR research from a woman's perspective, or narrowly cast nets, which claim to represent the professional conditions for many. Finally, it locates Turkey in the wider context. Although still relatively low in numbers, a growing proportion of the younger generation of scholars are showing an interest in feminist IR. Like any minority group, they face greater challenges than experienced by the majority.

Conclusion

This study focused on gender research patterns in Turkish IR dissertations from 2009 to 2019. Our multi-layered analysis of doctorate students explored gender-based distribution over time and place, statistical significance of gender-based pairings among mentors and mentees, as well as topics of dissertations. We found a majority of male students and advisors in the field, particularly in senior faculty. The cross-tabulation and chi-square analysis of the student-advisor match indicates statistically significant gender-based pairing among students and advisors. Dissertation keyword analysis also shows similar topics between genders, with a noticeable absence of gender-sensitive issues, even among works of female researchers.

These findings have important implications. Androcentric knowledge-making practices dominate the discipline in Turkey. The relatively low number of female academics in the field results in fewer opportunities for mentorship from other women, limited access to academic social networks, and a scarcity of collaborative research opportunities for junior scholars. Furthermore, the underrepresentation of women among IR doctoral graduates leads to a diminished talent pool in the discipline. Moreover, the almost complete absence of references to feminist IR and the limited presence of gender-focused language in doctoral dissertations imply the widespread lack of exposure, acceptance, and appreciation of gender-sensitive perspectives within higher education institutions in Turkey. These factors not only diminish diversity within the field, but also limit women's influence in shaping the IR agenda and discussions. In response to these challenges, women may find themselves forced to prioritize traditionally male-dominated issues, often setting aside feminist concerns to avoid further isolation.

The absence of feminist IR research underscores the pressing need to address this gap, particularly in non-Western contexts. While our study primarily diagnoses the representation of female doctoral students in the field, we also draw attention to the lack of systematic feminist IR research in Turkey. Establishing a more rigorous feminist IR research agenda holds the potential to deconstruct androcentric assumptions, theories, and observations, and, through a woman's perspective, offer alternative visions to the current masculinist framing of knowledge. Feminist scholarship could bring a women's perspective to the reframing of pressing regional issues, such as the conflict in Gaza and the refugee flow from Syria, challenging the prevailing state-centric and masculine paradigms within the field. To effectively foster this agenda, it is crucial to create research networks that facilitate interdisciplinary knowledge-sharing among female scholars. However, it is essential to recognize that robust institutional action is required to increase the presence of female academics engaged in feminist IR, or at least gender-related issues within the field. Gender-neutral academic recruitment processes, such as those designed by the YÖK, may fall short in substantially increasing the number of female staff unless faculties take proactive steps, including providing academic mentoring programs for junior staff, enacting transparent policies for committee selections, offering daycare facilities or subsidies for both staff and students, and extending health insurance benefits for staff family members. Furthermore, it may be necessary to make more effort to encourage female doctoral students to adopt a feminist approach, as the findings of this study points to a notable absence of gender theorizing in their dissertations. One approach to address this could be designing programs incorporating gender-related readings and courses focused on gender issues.

This study compared women's work with that of men. However, it is

important to remember that women's experience varies greatly based on their ethnicity, religious background, marital status, and social class. Thus, future studies should focus on individual differences among women in the field, and thus shed light into women's expectations and preferences for institutional change. Similarly, there is need for nonbinary data to understand the role of gender in education. Moreover, in the Western context, research need to focus on leaky pipelines, gendered research agendas, publication trends, and citation patterns, but in Turkey, it is equally important to understand the significance of the small minority of female students who were courageous enough to pick gender-sensitive research topics.

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