

## Women and Football in Turkey

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### Abstract

*As one of the first countries to constitute women's rights, Turkey failed to bring into force the rights that it granted women by means of laws, in terms of their de facto application. Although the time at which women began to take place effectively in society coincides with the beginning of the Republican Period, some discrimination stipulated as "women's sport" and "male sport", depending on social gender discrimination, caused women to remain underdeveloped. Despite the increasing interest of women in football today, the slogan of "Football is the sport of men" led women in Turkey to be alienated from this field, and caused football to be considered as a sports branch that belongs only to men. These misvaluations and wrong approaches prevented the number of women football players, women spectators, women managers, women referees and women football coaches — who might have taken place in both women football and football in Turkey — from reaching the desired level. In this study, determinations are made on women's rights, social gender discrimination, and women football in Turkey; their interaction with one another is investigated; and the results are introduced.*

**Keywords:** Women, Football, Gender discrimination, Women's rights, Women's football in Turkey

### Introduction

As a result of my struggle intended for generalizing women's football in Turkey and of my experiences that I had ever since the 1970s, in which I was a girl with the desire of playing football, I decided to write this article. One of the most important causes of my decision is the almost non-existence of publications about this subject as well as the fact that the existing ones were containing wrong or imperfect information. As the first woman football player, goalkeeper, team captain, football coach, commentator, FIFA-licensed referee of Turkey, the first woman in all European countries, who served as a referee in a professional men's league at the highest level, who awarded the "Women and Sport Award" of the International Olympic Committee in 2002 for the European Continent, and with my academic Dr. identity as the most important one, I felt the responsibility of making research and writing about the "historical development of women's football in Turkey". These opinions belong to the author of this article, and it constitutes the main idea of the preparation of this article.

In our research, the effects of women's rights and social gender discrimination on the historical development of women's football, and the difficulties encountered in this process are discussed within the frame of the relation between women and football. The required data is based on the written and printed literature as well as Internet sources. The fact that the author of the article has personally taken part in the development process of women's football made extra contribution to this study. In addition, those who have taken place in women's football from the beginning to the present time were interviewed.

Sports action is a dynamic area open for communicating with other people, and has an organizational value in terms of the future life of individuals. By means of sports, human gains both individual and social experience; and besides social learning and togetherness, sports also contributes in enabling human to gain his/her freedom of choice and independence.

Those who will take the community forward in a more knowledgeable, more civilized and healthier way in science, arts, education, health, sports, i.e. all the areas embracing the life, as a requirement of modern life, are the women and men of a country. Unfortunately, any country that does not attach the required and adequate importance to women could not be among the developed countries in the civilized world. This situation reflects on that the country's legislature, education, science, art, business life and the sport (Central, 2011).

While a person selects a sports branch, the learned culture and social values are considered to be effective on that choice. In some societies, sports is categorized as "women's sports" and "men's sports". This categorization is structured according to the characters of the social group, to which they belong, rather than their own skills. Social gender perspective is formed by social prejudices and values. Due to these reasons, the women in Turkey did not or could not choose playing football, for years.

The opinion of "Football is the sport of men", which was dominant in all the public from football managers to the media in Turkey for years, prevented the women league from being started. These incorrect assessments and approaches prevented the women in Turkey from playing football widely; and they also led the women active in the field of football to act masculinely or led those who has masculine characters to tend to play football.

With its rules, economy, culture, national and international cups, visual and aesthetic pleasure, struggle, transfers and excitement, football is the number one sports in many countries of the world that succeeds in huddling together tens of thousands of people in stadiums and millions of people in front of radios and televisions, regardless of their genders. The principal one of the factors enabling Football to be loved throughout the world is that it is both a sports and an enjoyable game, which can be played everywhere by everyone.

Our study consists of five sections. The introduction section discusses the general status of the women and sports in Turkey. The second section discusses the historical development process of women's rights in Turkey. The third section describes the subject of gender-based discrimination. The fourth section provides information about the historical development of women's football in Turkey. The last section contains the evaluations and suggestions about our subject.

### ***Development of Women's Rights in Turkey***

As one of the first countries to constitute the legal frame of women's rights, Turkey failed to bring into force the rights that it granted women based on the laws, in terms of their de facto application. The main reason of this can be explained as the continuance of negative traces of the social perspective regarding the participation of women to economic and social life (Çolak and Kılıç, 2001).

Effective participation of women to society began with the Republican Period. Therefore, the status of women must be evaluated in two separate periods as before and after the Republican Periods. After the proclamation of the republic, fundamental changes were also made in women's rights issues, besides many other areas (Mardin, 2000).

Active participation of women to active living in Turkey took place in the mid 20th century. Beginning from the 1970s, the development of urban culture and living conditions appeared as a factor increasing the number of women, who want to work in the business life. (Ecevit, 1995)

If we list in chronological order the important developments related to women's rights in Turkey:

1923: The Republic was proclaimed Upon the proclamation of the Republic, the legal and structural reforms enabling women to enter into public life accelerated.

1924: Education Union Law was enacted. Thus, education was secularized and affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. Girls and boys began to have education with equal rights.

1926: Turkish Civil Law was adopted The law annulled the regulations related to polygamy and unilateral divorce; and granted women the right to divorce, guardianship right, property right, guardianship right as well as right to dispose of the property.

1930: Municipal Act was enacted. By the law, women were granted the right to vote and stand for elections in municipal elections.

1933: Amendment was made on the Village Law, and women were granted the right to become a village headman, and to be elected for village councils.

1934: With the Constitutional amendment, women granted the right to vote and stand for elections.

1935: In consequence of the 5th election of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, 17 female deputies entered the parliament for the first time, and their number reached 18 in the by-elections.

1949: Old age insurance was arranged in accordance with the equal bases for both women and men by means of the Law No. 5417.

1950: The First woman mayor was elected.

1966: The contract ensuring wage equality between men and women workers for any works with equal values was approved.

1985: Turkey signed the UN "Convention on Elimination all form of Discrimination Against Women" (CEDAW), which came into force in 1986.

1985: In the 5 Five-Year Development Plan, the subject matter of women was given place as a sector, and policies were determined for it.

1990: The Civil Code Article 159 stipulating that women need their husbands' consent for working outside the home was annulled by the Constitutional Court.

1991: The first woman governor was appointed by the 48th government.

1993: The first woman prime minister of Turkey formed the government.

1999: Turkey ratified the Convention on Elimination all form of Discrimination Against Women.

2002: The new Turkish Civil Code prepared with the perspective of women and men equality, which gave equal rights and obligations to men and women, came into force.

2003: Amendment was made to the Turkish Citizenship Law, with the perspective of women and men equality, and it came into force.

2004: The amendment was made to the Constitution articles with intent to render the International Treaties regarding equality before the law, fundamental rights and freedoms superior to the laws.

2004: The new Turkish Penal Code was adopted; which contains modern arrangements regarding Gender equality and violence against women (Forumdas, 2011).

### ***Gender Discrimination in Turkey***

Applications containing gender discrimination are still seen in developing countries (Tunçsiper and Sürekçi, 2004). As "social gender equality", the concept of social gender is one of the development and democratization objectives of the countries. In many countries of the world, women are suffered by gender-based discrimination at the ratios varying depending on their social lives. This situation negatively affects the development and democratization processes. Countries develop projects, policies and methods in order to overcome this situation (Sahin, 2003).

Social gender signifies the historically fictionalized power relations between men and women. The ideological process that legitimized the sports experience of women began with the idea of male superiority created by the biological difference between men and women. Biological differences between the genders serves the idea of that woman subordinate to man. The social reality of women in sports, i.e. their secondary position is closely related to the perception and evaluation way of the sports activity. According as the sports activity is defined with high-level performance, superior physical properties, ability, achievement, ambition and records, the biological differences are normalized and turned into social subordination (Koca and Bulgu, 2005).

Occupational stratification is discussed in two dimensions as horizontal and vertical dimensions. Categorization of the occupations as "women's jobs" and "men's jobs", horizontal stratification, different work positions of men and women in the same occupation works are defined as vertical stratification (Işığışık et al, 2002). From this point of view, making discrimination in sports through the concepts of "women's sport" and "male sport" is the indication of a horizontal stratification. According to the selected occupations in Turkey, "gender-based occupational discrimination" is important in terms of gender-based prejudices and values of the community. Increasing participation of girls in sports in Turkey and the creation of gender equality in sports is one of the subjects more emphasized in the recent days. Various sports programs containing social gender sensitivity gain successful results in many countries; and in the scientific research shows that the girls' participation in sports have positive effects on them (Koca and Arslan, 2010).

The interactions of the country's economic, social and cultural factors lead to gender discrimination. The concept of social gender is defined as that the gender identity is determined according to the social values; and it emphasizes that the inequality is naturalized (Demirbilek, 2007).

In the community, houseworks and child care are deemed to be the main responsibilities of women, while the task of bringing home the bread is deemed to be the main responsibilities of men. The facts about these social norms and perceptions are not compatible with the daily lives of many women, men and families (Anker, 1997).

The role of education must be determined in order to understand why women in Turkey are suffered by gender-based discrimination. All the knowledge and skills that an individual gains through education take an important place in development of the country. For this reason, school education is a right for each individual, and an important public duty for the state. It is emphasized that the countries, which deprive their women of education, can not truly develop and reach the level of modern civilization (Saylan, 2006). In Turkey's eastern regions with low level of development, the decisions on allowing girls or women to go to school are shaped by the gender-based values of the community. Women's encountering inequality of opportunity in education is the indication of that women encounters gender-based discrimination in all aspects of their lives.

Differences between women and men appear in consequence of socio-cultural impositions in the community. These kinds of social-cultural impositions show that the place of woman in the life is her home, and her primary duty is the care of her husband and children. Pushing woman into the background in the community, this concept referred to as gender discrimination causes woman to encounter social exclusion, exploitation, and oppression; and also leads the young generation to the same (Aslantepe, 2006). According to the labor statistics carried out by the Turkish Statistical Institute in 2011, the labor force participation rate of men in Turkey is 72.2%, while that of women is 29.5 (TÜİK-a, 2012).

The women in Turkey encounter gender discrimination in their social lives. According to Family Structure Survey carried out by the Turkish Statistical Institute in 2009, 64,7% of the men and 60.7% of the women stated that "the primary duty of woman is houseworks and child care". This data shows the fact that Turkey adopts the traditional structure and that it has a male-dominated social structure (TÜİK-b, 2012)

### ***Development of Women's Football in Turkey***

We ascertain that women began to play football in Turkey in 1954. A mixed football match participated by 6 female players was played in Izmir in May 24, 1954 (Anka, 1954) The "first match among women" consisting of completely female players was played between "Izmir Women Football Team" and "Istanbul Women Football Team" in Mithatpaşa Stadium on July 4, 1954 (Milliyet, 1954). Another match was played between Women's Football Teams in the Sports Festival organized in Mithatpaşa Stadium on July 10, 1955 (Önemli, 1955).

There is not any evidence showing that women played football in Turkey within the 15-year period from 1955 until 1969. The first international women's football match was played in Turkey in 1969. The match played between the "Italian girl team" and "European Mixed Girl team" in Istanbul Mithatpaşa Stadium on August 22, 1969 resulted in a 1-1 draw. A Turkish woman football player who played in the European mixed team is deemed to be the reason of why that international-level match between the national teams was played in Turkey, where at that date women's football was not adopted. The first goal of the European team came from that Turkish women football player. (Milliyet, 1969)

The reflections on women's football that started and became widespread in Europe, and the women's football matches played in Turkey between Italy and European Mixed team paved the way for the foundation of a women's football team in Kınalıada Sports Club in 1969 (Milliyet, 1971a). Kınalıada Girls Football Team that started its activities by playing miniature football in sports halls continued its activities by playing matches with young men teams (Milliyet, 1971b).

Kınalıada Girls Football Team (also known as Istanbulspor Girls Football Team) was given the name "Dostlukspor Girls Football Team" in 1972. It was officially registered in 1973, under the name of "Dostlukspor Girls Football Club Association", and consequently it became the first name Girls Football Club of Turkey (Sarah Özaksoy, 1977).

Dostlukspor girls football team played matches with men teams, before jubilee matches, derby matches or in opening events of football teams, because of the fact that girls football teams were not available in Turkey between 1973-1978. Due to lack of a rival women football team, they continued their activities by generally playing exhibition matches with teams consisting of young players and ex-football players (Yusuf Alp Aslan and Dursun, 1977). Dostlukspor girls football team enabled women's football to be known, adopted and widespread in Turkey, by playing matches in each city of Anatolia (Famous, 1977; Söyler, 1979).

Besides being the first girls football club of Turkey, Dostlukspor also managed to become the focus of everyone's attention, by displaying exemplary behaviors. The news with the headline "The women football players will play a match and send its income to Van" (Köktuna, 1976) made public through the press after the earthquake in Van showed that fact that they have also carried out exemplary studies in terms of social sensitivity. When the call of Dostlukspor team announced in the newspapers with the headline "we are in search of football players" resulted positively, and began to attract attentions of young girls. (Detailed news, 1977)

After Istanbul, a girls football team was founded in Izmir in 1978. The girls football team formed of the students of Izmir Namik Kemal High School was given the name "Filizspor" (Bob Seven, 1978). The match played between Filizspor and Dostlukspor in Alsancak Stadium on October 30, 1978 resulted in 14-0 as the victory of Dostlukspor. In the same year, "İncirlispor Girls football Club" and "Nazendespor Girls Football Club" was established as the two more girls football team (Günaydın, 1978).

In 1979, a match was played in Istanbul İnönü Stadium, between Dostlukspor Girls football team and the team Bad Neuenahr, which was the champion of the women's football league in Germany; and Dostlukspor Girls football team lost 4-0 to that team (Çelik, 1979). That match was the first international match of Dostlukspor Girls Football team, and it was also the first international football match played at clubs-level in Turkey.

Dostlukspor' and Filizspor played a match once again on August 17, 1980 in Istanbul Vefa Stadium. Although the first match played between these two teams in 1978 resulted in such a big score as 14-0, that difference was removed in a 2-year process, and the match resulted in 2-1 as the victory of Dostlukspor (Tercuman, 1980).

In the 1980s, Istanbul, Istanbul Atılımspor and Deryaspor Girls Football Teams were founded in the 1980s, and the number of girls football team in Istanbul increased up to 5. Upon that, the first football tournament between women was organized in Istanbul in 1984. The tournament was participated by Dostlukspor, Atılımspor and Deryaspor girls football teams; and Dostlukspor become the champion, Atılımspor became second and Deryaspor became third. 5000 spectators watched the final game (Güven, 1984).

In 1985, attempts were made by the Turkish Football Federation for the establishment of the Women's League. Although there were women football teams at that time in Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, Samsun, and Kocaeli, the foundation of the women's football league was postponed on the grounds that there were not an adequate number of women's football teams, and their qualities were not adequate (Bulvar, 1986).

The studies carried out for many years with intent to establish the Turkish Women's Football League and Turkish Women's National Team constitutes the beginning of the official period, in which the Turkish Women's Football League was established on April 2, 1994, and "Turkey Women's Football League" in 1995. The first official women's match of the Turkish Football history was played in Ankara, between Ankara Metropolitan Municipality and Istanbul Acarlarspor. Totally 16 teams from 7 cities and four separate groups contested in the "Women's Football League" applied by the Football Federation for the first time in 1994. In the league without the rule of dropping from the league, the group leaders reached the semi-final. (Milliyet, 1994) Dinarsu became the first official champion of Turkey (Yasar, 1994). "Dinarsu Girls Football Club" founded as a company club in 1992 gave acceleration to women's football in Turkey. Dinarsu Girls Football Team became the champions four times between 1993-1994, 1994-1995, 1995-1996, 1996-1997 seasons successively. Dinarsu Girls Football Team was unrivalled in the Turkish Women's Football League until the end of 1997-1998 when it had withdrawn from the league, and made the following statistics in 54 matches it played in the Turkish League; 50 wins, 2 draws and 2 losses, scored 276 goals and conceded only 11 goals. On 11 October 1997, Dinarsu Girls Soccer Team declared that it withdrew from the league, by showing the reason as the lack of interest of the Football Federation in women's football (Milliyet Life, 1997).

In the 1995-1996 football season, relegation rule was adopted for the league consisting of 28 teams and 2 categories (Alkiş and Sümerer, 1995). In the 1996-1997 season, the 1st category consisted of 12 teams and the 2nd category consisted of 7 teams. In the 1997-1998 season, 9 teams participated in the first league, and 10 teams participated in the second league. Site Marshall team won the championship for the first time (Milliyet, 1998). Bursa Delphi Packhard and Istanbul Dinarsu teams withdrew from the league. In the 1998-1999 season, 8 teams participated in the first league, and 6 teams participated in the second league. In 2000 women, the experienced violence in women's matches (Onal, 2000), the match-fixing rumors (Ercan, 2000) and the postponements due to that some of the teams did not go out for the matches caused the Women's League to be called as "The Scandals League" (Milliyet, 2000a).

Various problems arose in consequence of that the number of teams in the Women's League with only 6 years of history decreased from 28 to 11 (Malgır, 1999); during that time the 2nd league was removed and combined with the 1st league; and there were only 2 teams that can struggle for the championship (Milliyet, 2000b). In the Women's Football League, which has become a league containing scandals and doubts, Marshallspor that defeated Mersin Çamspor 11-0 became the champion (Milliyet, 2000c), however, the Turkish Football Federation concluded that a match-fixing was made (Milliyet, 2000d). Since it has been ascertained that the factor of why the rivals of Deltaspor did not go out for the matches is the managers of Istanbul Marshall Club, championship of Istanbul Marshall was taken back and given to İstanbul Deltaspor. In addition, Bursa Gemlik Zeytinspor and Istanbul Marshall were dropped from the league. Since there was not a second second category, these two teams were banned from the events by the federation for one year.

In the 2000-2001 football season, only 12 teams played in the First League of Turkish Women's Football with displacement. In the 2002-2003 season, the Women's Football League was suspended by the Football Federation, on grounds of being unproductive. The suspended league was resumed on 09.03.2003, with the participation of 10 teams (Milliyet, 2003).

Women's football declined due to financial, administrative, and social problems; teams were closed one after another; and at the end of that process, the Women's League was postponed and the activities of the Women's National team were interrupted in the 2003-2004 season.

The U17 young girls Turkey Championship was organized as a mini tournament in the 2005-2006 season, and by this means, the women's football activities were resumed at the level of young girls. At the end of that tournament, Turkey U19 young girls national football team was established. Again, U18 young girls league with displacement, participated by 15 teams and consisted of 3 groups, was founded in the 2005-2006 season. With the participation of 16 teams, the women's football league with the category of adults started again in the 2006-2007 football season. In addition, also the tournament with junior category was organized in the same year. In the 2011-2012 Football season, there were 12 teams in the; Women's 1st League; and 42 teams in the Women's 2nd League (T.F.F., 2012a).

The number of teams and champion teams in the Women's Football League, started in the 1993-1994 football season, are shown in Table 1 and the Table 2 respectively, according to the football seasons.

The Turkish Women's National Team lost its first match 8-0, that it played against Romania (Milliyet, 1995). The Turkish Women's National Team gained its first victory, by winning the elimination group match 1-0 against Georgia on September 25, 1997 (Milliyet, 1997). U-18 team was founded in 1997, U19 team in 2001, U17 team in 2006, and U15 team in 2010 (T.F.F. 2012b, 2012c, 2012d). U-15 National Girls team became 3rd in the 1st Singapore Youth Olympic Games organized in Singapore (TFF, 2012e).

### ***Conclusions and Recommendations***

Turkey failed to bring into force the rights that it granted women by means of laws, in terms of their de facto application. According to the selected occupations in Turkey, "gender-based occupational discrimination" is important in terms of gender-based prejudices and values of the community, and it caused woman to remain undeveloped in many areas. Increasing participation of girls in sports in Turkey and the creation of gender equality in sports is one of the subjects more emphasized in the recent days.

Despite the increasing interest of women in football in the recent years, the slogan of "Football is the sport of men" led women in Turkey to be alienated from this field, and caused football to be considered as a sports branch that belongs only to men. These incorrect assessments and approaches prevented the women in Turkey from playing football; and they also led the women active in the field of football to act masculinely or led those who have masculine characters to tend to play football.

In order to enable the women's sports to develop in parallel with men's sports, first the sport culture must be generalized in the community. Sports must be made an indispensable part of the basic education, making sports must be emphasized as a constitutional right of each Turkish citizen, and as the most important one, all kinds of sports activities, organizations, events and investments intended for men must be carried out for women as well. The state should provide all the opportunities for the citizens who want to make sports, should support them to grow healthy generations, and should create equality of opportunity in sport, in terms of gender.

Women must be able to make both in individual and team sports in all sports branches that they want. This case must be related to that person's own free will, liking and desire. All the sports as both individual and team sports are universal, and they all belong to everyone. Sports is a cultural phenomenon and social action containing international values. The essence of sports consists of contest, competition, and performance. Human is an entity who shows performance and acts. Sports action is a dynamic area open for communicating with other people, and has an organizational value in terms of the future life of individuals. By means of sports, human gains both individual and social experience; and besides social learning and togetherness, sports also contributes in enabling human to gain his/her freedom of choice and independence. Sports allow an individual to control herself/himself. It ensures an individual to gain inside and outside discipline, and to protect and maintain them. It enhances his/her cognitive, emotional and kinesthetic sensitivity. Thus, she/he can keep her/his health under control, by means of physical sensation.

Football aims to train people in terms of sports, to strengthen their character and moral values, and to form a modern and sophisticated people. In this context, as in other sports branches, football must be evaluated in the same philosophy, for all the humanity and without making gender-based discrimination. In the countries that could not complete their intellectual development due to various reasons, women's football must be considered to be a sports activity, instead of a magazinish activity. Promoting women's football in terms of enabling women to use their skills and to get courage and self-confidence is the basic point for its future and dignity. With the increasing effect and power of the interest in football as well as the mass media, awareness of sports must be created in the community, and the people of our country must be imbued with the fact that sports is a life style. The interest in football must be increased, and the positive effect of football on our children and young people in the form of training and keeping them away from bad habits must be highlighted, and it must be allowed to carry out its principal task in the social structure.

Nowadays, women's football is intended to be spread across the country, with the project of 'Football for Everyone'. In project of 'Football for Everyone'; Everyone can play football, everyone has the opportunity to play, and most importantly, there is not discrimination. Contrary to the common public opinion, football has not any negative physical, spiritual, mental, social and cultural effects on women. Football is a lifestyle, the way of learning how to struggle against the life, the place where enhancing the team spirit and becoming a team are learned, and a place where the need for working relentlessly in order to reach the success is understood.

The start of the futsal matches between the universities in Turkey in 2005, and keeping them continuing every year on a regular basis made a positive contribution to the development of women's football. The start of the junior category girls football matches in the elementary education in 2006, and the organizations of the girls football matches both in between elementary education schools and high schools enabled the development of women's football to gain speed, and increased the interests of girls in football.

The development and philosophy of women's football must be ensured to be more familiarized and understood in Turkey. Equality of opportunity should be created in football in terms of gender, as required in everything. Girls in schools must be enabled to be more active in football, and the number of their participation in contests between schools must be increased.

The football clubs in Turkey must provide football training without gender discrimination for the age groups up to 12 years. Teams consisting of 12-14 years old girls must be formed in the age groups of the professional football clubs, they must be provided with football training, and women's football must have a place in the university clubs.

By increasing the interests of the women of the community in football, the base of the future players and spectators must be constituted. Regional mixed teams must be formed in order to popularize women's football in the regions of the Turkish Football Federation.

The social and cultural contribution of women's football must be utilized in Turkey, with intent to reinforce the feelings of love, friendship and peace in football, and strengthen the human relations with the understanding of fair play.

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