

Cyber Sexism

Received: 02 March 2026; Revised: 20 May 2026; Published: 21 October 2026

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Abstract:

This article presents a critical analysis of posts and images shared by male X users about women in Turkey. Focusing on two X accounts (Erkkod and Yalnız Adam), the article aims to reveal the importance of online texts and images in the meaning-making and the politicization of women subjects, highlighting the misogynistic discourse prevalent on online media. A multi-modal discourse analysis approach is employed to reveal how texts and images are selected to construct ideological narratives. The analysis reveals that these texts and images ideologically serve to reinforce the discourse and policies of the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-Justice and Development Party), which has been targeting secular segments of society that have adopted Western lifestyles, particularly women since the party assumed power in 2002. Misogynistic stereotypes, along with the portrayal of the female body and women's non-Islamic clothing were portrayed as symbols of a moral crisis, which is utilised by the AKP and its supporters to lay the groundwork for creating an Islamic society. The article argues that misogynistic online male platforms have capitalised on the government's pro-Islamic gender policies to disseminate their misogynistic rhetoric to a wider audience.

Keywords: secular, Islamist, misogyny, gender-based violence, discourse analysis

1. Introduction

Sexism has a long tradition that spans several civilisations and eras. It is an oppressive ideology defined by societal attitudes rooted in the underlying belief in the inherent inferiority of women (Rosen, 1971: 541). In the modern world, sexism predominantly manifests as misogyny. Misogyny is the institutionalised bias and discrimination directed towards women (Ignazzi, et al., 2023). The misogynistic mentality is intrinsically linked to the concept of masculinity. Some males, especially white men, regard their dominant societal status as being in peril, a phenomenon termed the "crisis of masculinity" (Kimmel, 2013 in Haase, 2021: 34). The phrase signifies the conviction that contemporary notions of masculinity are under assault. Their belief in the "inherent higher status of men," which posits male dominance as a rightful societal position, is deconstructed by the emergence of equality movements, especially feminism (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005 in Haase, 2021: 35). This disposition is termed toxic masculinity.

Following the advent of Web 2.0 and social media, a notably toxic kind of masculinity has become apparent across many online networks and platforms (Ging, 2017: 1; Haase, 2021: 2). In recent years, increasingly, men have congregated on these internet platforms, to create the manosphere, designed "to maintain a heterosexist environment and abuse women and others" (Haase 2021: 20). The manosphere seems an enclosed space for men to exchange experiences and views on women, revealing characteristics of toxic masculinity. While expressions of toxic masculinity have been seen across cultures for centuries, they have found a new fertile ground on online manosphere communities. Social



media sites, Facebook, X, Instagram and others have become sites, allowing expression and dispersion of not only misogynist and racist but even violent discourses (Hasse 2021: 16-17). Although misogyny appears to be a global phenomenon, the political and cultural contexts of each country influence the conditions that promote the development of misogyny and its expressions (Ozkazanc 2018: 4). This research elucidates how the AKP's policies on women have curtailed their liberties and rights while concurrently promoting the government's objective of Islamising society. The following analysis seeks to illustrate how these policies, in light of the reciprocal relationship between politics and media, have facilitated the proliferation of misogyny on online platforms.

2. Context

The AKP, which has governed Turkey since its election in 2002, has continued its reckoning with Kemalism throughout its 23 years in power. Kemalism refers to the modernisation processes in building a modern Western secular state and society led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923 (Kazancıgil and Özbudun, 1981). Secularism was one of the most radical Kemalist reforms, encompassing the abolition of the Caliphate (1924), the closure of religious orders and the introduction of compulsory secular education, the elimination of gender segregation in education, the adoption of a secular civic code, the dissolution of Sharia courts (1926) and the banning of religious attire (1925) (Çınar and Duran, 2008). Following 2011, the AKP seized a historic opportunity to avenge the political Islamists' long-standing resentment toward Kemalism. Having either completely dismantled or rendered ineffective the Kemalist bureaucracy, military and parliamentary system after seizing executive and presidential power. The AKP infiltrated the judiciary and bureaucracy by lowering the retirement age, which allowed the party to place its supporters in key positions in security, bureaucracy and other important institutions (Kaya, 2015: 51). The 2017 referendum legalised the presidential system and ended the parliamentary system established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1920. The AKP's political and economic policies with the creation of green capital, black money, and a shadow economy, led to the emergence of a new rich with close ties to Erdoğan (Kirişçi, 2011 in Kaya, 2015: 51). Now, power rests entirely with President Erdoğan.

Erdoğan's ultimate goal is the transformation of society and culture in accordance with Islamic teachings. Education is one of the most sensitive areas that the AKP and previous governments have used to influence the masses by employing specific narratives, rhetoric, and ideologies. Since 2011, the AKP's education policies have been aimed at strengthening Islamic lifestyle in Türkiye (Kaya 2015: 55). The headscarf ban in universities and public workplaces victimised dozens of women and became one of the most important political issues in the 1980s. Since then, the headscarf issue has become a political symbol used by the AKP to represent Islamists' grievances against Kemalism and secularism. The headscarf ban was lifted in 2013 (BBC, 2013), followed by a series of interventions in education system: the government increased the number of religious Imam Hatip high schools, Islamised the national curriculum by making religious courses compulsory electives at secondary schools and added religious culture and morality topics in school textbooks (Türkmen 2009 in Kaya 2015: 57). Education system was one of the main targets of the government's Islamisation policies in an effort "to raise religious generations" (Lüküslü, 2016; Gumuscu, 2024). The next phase of Islamization involved government intervention in social and cultural life, primarily targeting a secular lifestyle. While the



education system was one of the main targets of the government's Islamization policies aimed at "raising pious generations" (Diken, 2016), the next phase involved targeting women's secular lifestyles. In Türkiye, women's clothing styles and social status are among the most visible symbols of the Islamist lifestyle, while also being among the most prominent symbols of the secular lifestyle.

Under the new AKP regime, those in power want to decide how women should behave and what they should wear in public. This interventionist attitude is reflected in the AKP's gender discourse. For example, they accuse secular women of dressing immodestly, aiming to ostracize them for their clothing styles; the term "revealing clothing" is a negative concept in Turkish and is generally associated with value judgments. The 'mini-skirt' has indeed emerged as a symbolic representation of the cultural divide between Islamist and secular Turks; secular Turks are often labelled by Islamists as "Western imitators"

The AKP's Islamization goals included controlling more than 90% of the media by removing anti-government media outlets from the market using a variety of economic and political measures (Kaya 2015; Akser and Baybars 2023; Ünveren and Ünker 2025; Yilmaz 2023). Therefore, while the Erdoğan government spreads its Islamist ideology to the masses through state-funded pro-government media, it regularly makes working conditions more difficult for journalists at opposition media outlets by using a pro-government judicial system to fine them, suspend their broadcasts or publications and detain or arrest them. With more than 90% of conventional media under the control of the AKP government, Erdoğan has also effectively controlled social media by intervening through the judiciary, which includes detaining anti-government critics, censoring content, and blocking internet access. Therefore, while the space for expressing dissenting opinions is becoming increasingly restricted, publications and social media posts that are in alignment with Erdoğan's worldview are allowed to flourish and disseminate freely.

In the past two decades, lifestyle-related topics concerning women have become a dominant media agenda. Health Minister Mehmet Müezzinoğlu, during a visit to Meryem Azra, the first baby born in 2015, stated that women should not prioritize another career outside of motherhood (Diken 2015). Erdoğan defended this view and stated that 'A woman who says "I'm working" and therefore avoids motherhood is actually denying her womanhood. A woman who rejects motherhood and gives up managing her home, no matter how successful she is in the business world, is incomplete, she is only half a person' (BBC, 2016). This view is closely related to Erdoğan's Islamist view of the importance of the family: 'the family is our oldest and most rooted institutions' and targeted the LGBT as an unnatural movement for threatening the sanctity of the family institution' (Bianet, 2025) and he asserted that children must be protected from the 'deviant and harmful ideologies' (Medyascope, 2025). He also stated that birth control is a conspiracy to weaken Türkiye and that abortion amounts to murder. Atay argues that President Erdoğan's anti-gender rhetoric is a deliberate attempt to counteract the perceived spread of gender equality, which he condemns as LGBTQ propaganda that undermines Turkish sovereignty (Atay, 2024: 3).

These statements and interventions by AKP politicians illustrate what Coşar and Yeğenoğlu call 'the intertwining of neoliberal, nationalist, and religious policies' (Coşar & Yeğenoğlu, 2011: 557). This 'AKP version of patriarchy' encourages women to gradually withdraw from the economic sphere to protect their motherhood and domestic responsibilities, while simultaneously enabling their



participation in a flexible workforce, depriving them of many economic rights (Coşar & Yeğenoğlu, 2011: 561).

Erdoğan also targeted university students' shared accommodation, arguing that where 'boys and girls live together all sorts of chaotic things can happen, we have to take action' (T24, 2013). Moreover, Erdoğan banned music festivals, concerts and plays on the grounds that they could lead young people astray and corrupt morals. More recently, a famous all-female music group, *Manifest*, was targeted by Erdoğan. 'Oktay Saral, chief adviser to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, called the band members 'immoral, shameless, demonic creatures' in a post on X and demanded legal action to prevent them from alleged 'exhibitionist acts' (Topcu, 2025). Cindoglu and Ünal noted that women's bodies and sexuality were increasingly being discussed as a tool to support the consolidation of the conservative- gender regime of the AKP (Cindoglu & Ünal, 2017, p.39). The increasing prevalence of discourse surrounding women's bodies was indicative of the AKP's anti-secular agenda.

The AKP has made Islamic identity the criterion for marginalising 'them, the secular people' in order to consolidate 'us, the Muslims' (Koyuncu, 2014: 320), while Erdoğan consistently emphasized the clash of values between the Muslim majority and the Kemalist minority, portraying Kemalism as an ideology disrespectful and alien to societal (Islamic) values (Gülalp 2003). In this context, leading members of the party defined the boundaries for women in daily life. One of the founding members of the AKP, Bülent Arınç advised: "Women must be chaste. They shouldn't laugh loudly in front of everyone. They shouldn't be alluring in all their actions. Chastity means protecting your chastity" (Hacaloğlu, 2014). A theology professor Inançer, speaking on a Ramadan program broadcast on TRT 1 (Turkish Radio and Television), said: "It is shameful and indecent for pregnant women to walk around in the streets" (T24, 25 July 2013). Cindoglu and Ünal (2017: 40) contended that in the AKP's new Türkiye, the boundaries of the spiritual and moral spheres are drawn and maintained through the dualities applied to women's bodies and sexuality. Therefore, while AKP politicians frequently characterize veiled women as chaste women who embrace traditional (Islamist) moral norms, they do not hesitate to exclude women with secular clothing styles and accuse them of indecency.

One of the most striking examples of the AKP's anti-secular rhetoric is the claim that women who "dress revealingly" deserve the violence they are subjected to. AKP Youth Branch member Mehmet Acar, in a post he made about a woman who was attacked because of her clothing, justified the attack: 'Wearing shorts, miniskirts, tight-fitting leggings, and revealing tops in public spaces, on the streets, and on public transport should be a crime, and those who commit this crime should be prosecuted for child abuse' (Kısa Dalga, 2025). This incitement to violence provides insight into the reasons behind the prevalence of violence against women in Türkiye. Media monitoring reports by the independent media organization *Bianet* show that violence against women has increased in the last decade; in 2025 alone 'men killed at least 299 women and 64 children, raped 14 women, forced 1,168 women into sex work, harassed 201 women and abused 265 children. In addition, the deaths of at least 471 women, including trans women, were "suspicious" and could not be determined whether they were femicides' (Bianet, 22 January 2026). The figures clearly show that violence against women has become the norm in Türkiye.

In 2011 Türkiye signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as "the Istanbul Convention", however, it withdrew



from the agreement by a presidential decree in 2021 (BBC Turkish, 20 March 2021). Lawyer Nakipoglu stated that withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention gives "courage and approval" to men who commit violence. Moreover, she argued that although there are provisions in the Turkish Penal Code that protect women, those who enforce these rules interpret them in a way that benefits the offenders rather than women. She highlighted that the court system is dominated by a male-centric viewpoint because shorter penalties are imposed in femicide cases using defences like "unjust provocation" and "good conduct" (Ünker, 2025). Thus, the insufficiency of deterrent penalties plays a crucial role in the persistent pattern of violence against women. This unwillingness to combat violence against women is part of an ongoing "anti-gender opposition to gender equality, which is part of a larger attack against progressive policies and individual freedoms" (Atay, 2024: 2).

There is a reciprocal interaction between the AKP's political agenda and the media controlled by the AKP, both traditional and digital media influence the political agenda by disseminating news and opinions that denigrate secular lifestyles and secular women, while politics ensures these issues remain on the agenda by feeding them to the media. This scenario, by exacerbating political polarisation, enables the AKP to fortify its electoral base, while relegating economic and political issues such as poverty, inflation, high living costs, and corruption to the periphery, serving Erdoğan's political objectives.

2.1 Methodology

This study draws upon Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multi-modal Critical Discourse Studies (MCDS), which stem from Halliday's (1985) systemic functional grammar. According to MCDS and CDA, linguistic and visual preferences reveal larger discourses expressed in texts (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021). The purpose of the analysis is to reveal what kind of powers, inequalities, and interests are perpetuated, generated, or legitimised in texts, both explicitly and implicitly (van Dijk, 1993). Although MCDS necessitates close reading of texts, it takes into account social, cultural and historical contexts in order to understand the potential meaning of textual choices. This study, therefore examines the historical context in which secular women became the target of misogynistic discourses manifested in two X accounts heavily populated by Islamist men.

2.2 Sample

Social media platforms are important spaces for political, social, and cultural debates. However, these platforms are also utilized to spread users' prejudiced opinions and gather supporters (Dean 2010; Lindgren 201). These often try to justify their discriminatory rhetoric by claiming moral superiority or speaking on behalf of the people (majority) against "them," who are portrayed as morally inferior, marginal, or deviant (Chen and Flowerdew 2019). Despite these limitations, social media posts are used by a wide range of populations to communicate their thoughts on current issues. Therefore this study focuses on misogynistic social media posts in two male dominated X communities that target women. This study suggests that examining the posts in these virtual male communities would disclose the ways in which the posters articulate their misogynistic perspectives. Moreover, it focuses on recontextualisations, which involve transforming social practice, actors, events and issues into a



representation that ‘selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourses to constitute its own order, as such they affect power relations’ (Bernstein 1996: 47, 53).

The data was collected by executing an X search for communities, using the hashtags #sadece erkekler, #erkek adam and #erkeklik [Translated: #onlymen, #realmen, #masculinity]. These hashtags revealed more than ten communities, however only two, #Erkkod and #Yalnız Adam [Translated: #Powercode/Mancode and #Lonely Man], are selected for analysis due to their large followings. ‘Erk’ in Turkish means power and is also the first three letters of “erkek” (man), combined with “kod” (code), meaning “codes for power”/codes for men”. Erkkod consists 2387 posts and 2231 followers posted between July 23, 2023 and December 12, 2025. Yalnız Adam (Lonely Man) consists of 876 followers and 11.7K posts between July 2023 and January 2024. After carefully reading all the posts, three patterns are observed. The posts contained advice on how men can be strong, posts offering health tips and posts about women. The first two categories treat masculinity as the supreme virtue and a respected status. Posts shared among men aim to improve men’s physical, mental and social lives. Posts in the last category focus on threats to masculine values. The majority of these posts view women, feminism and LGBT rights as the greatest threat to men’s well-being and also as the sources of social and moral decay. These forces are presented as responsible for the crisis of masculinity. Moral stories, proverbs, and other pieces of advice are produced to remind men of their power and superiority and assist them to reclaim their privileged position. The visuals support this narrative. A total of 147 images can be categorised as follows: 111 images of men, including Hollywood actors and mythological male characters; 12 images depicting a mythological male hero fighting a mythological animal; 7 animal images; 2 Erkkod community symbols; 2 images of tea, coffee, and cigarettes; 10 images of couples; and 3 images of women in ‘revealing clothing’. While male images evoke heroism, strength, and even superiority, images of women in ‘revealing clothing’ were specifically chosen to symbolize the moral decay responsible for the crisis of masculinity.

The 78 images in the “yalnız adam” community can be categorized as follows: a poster reading “We want Sharia law”; 5 women wearing Islamic headscarves; 22 opposition politicians; 3 images depicting the Atatürk era; 2 images containing LGBT symbols and flags and captions accusing LGBT flags as symbols of immorality; 3 photographs of refugee children; a photograph of an Islamist group attacking the headquarters of a satirical magazine; 3 photographs of Gaza protests; 25 images of AKP politicians; 10 images of journalists known for their anti-secular views; and 3 images showing women in ‘revealing clothing’ with accompanying captions as signs of moral decay. This article illustrates how images and text on the “erkkod” and “yalnız adam” X accounts, concerning women, women's appearance and clothing styles, and women's bodies, communicate with the audience through misogynistic discourse. Posts on these two X accounts contain misogyny and hate speech directed at women's lifestyles, based on prevalent prejudices and stereotypes against women in society.

3. Analysis

A detailed analysis of posts in ‘Erkkod’ and ‘Lonely Man’ X accounts was carried out to determine how participants are named, the representation of their actions, and their classification as passive or active agents, individuals or collectives, as well as cultural or biological categorisations, which will illuminate discourses of power (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996; Wodak et al. 1999; Fairclough 2003).



This was complemented with visual analysis, where available. The analysis of visuals allows us to identify how viewers are symbolically situated in relation to participants in images, taking into account gaze, interaction angle, and distance. These selections have implications regarding the representation of power and communication with the audience (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996: 127–128). For analysis, 20 posts were selected from the ‘Erkkod’ and ‘Lonely Man’ accounts. The content of these posts, two of which included images, was based on the posters' observations and consisted of demeaning content about women based on their clothing and objectifying the female body.



Image 1. ‘The Streets have Turned into a Meat Market’

Comment:

‘The streets have turned into a meat market, everyone's just trying to expose their bodies. Even as a woman, it makes me sick. Damn you all!’

This image consists of two frames. At the top, there is a young man in the act of speaking ‘you know’ (‘biliyorsunuz’) and at the centre of the lower frame there is a woman and a reporter on her left, which seems to be a caption from a street interview as the man on the side is holding a small microphone. However, there is no context, there is no clue about the topic of the interview and about the woman who seems to be responding to the reporter. Or in what context the young man at the top of the image is talking to the audience, presumably commenting on the picture below.

This image is chosen by the poster to express her ‘disgust’, so it deserves a closer analysis. Splitting the caption into two highlights the contrast between the top and lower half of the frame. The young man in the top frame is ‘properly dressed’ and is talking to the audience. His face is lit so that his facial expression is clearly visible. He is in the act of speaking and he is directly looking at the camera as such he is engaging with the viewers in a demand image (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996:128). He seems to be commenting on the image below and he calls out to the audience, making a “stop” sign with his left hand, implying that he has the authority to do so.

What he wants to be “stopped” is in the lower half of the frame. Here, a medium-sized frame was chosen to make the woman's upper body, especially her breasts, the focal point of the image. Thus, the image acquired the quality of "evidence" that reinforced the poster's view; according to the commentator, the streets turned into a meat market because of the people dressed like the woman in the image. It is therefore a common example of misogynistic discourse that denigrates women and the female body.

In fact, these two X group pages contain a considerable amount of comments that degrade the female body and imply that women's non-Islamic clothing choices signify moral degradation and that they are the cause of a moral crisis. Even students have been attacked by this hateful discourse. The fact that the majority of these posts in these two X communities are related to women's clothing issues reflects the power structures and cultural beliefs of speakers by giving voices to those who confirm the political Islamist view of women and how they should dress (Caldas-Coulthard 1994; 304). Undoubtedly, these posts echo the political agenda of the AKP government, which, since coming to power in 2002, has been systematically pursuing its goal of imposing its own understanding of Islam on the entire society.

Another poster's comment read: ‘without virtues like morality, modesty, and honour, humans have fallen below the level of animals. The mindset that views nudity as civilisation and progress also regards people who wear headscarves as backward and intolerant. The true bigots are these perverts who move around like commodities’ (Inceefe, June 22, 2025). Here a number of strategies are adopted to negatively activate women in non-Islamic clothing. First, through modality ‘the mindset’ is given an agency position, though negatively, by collocating it with ‘nudity as civilisation’. This post echoes Erdoğan's political Islamist worldview, in which the Christian West or Western civilisation has traditionally represented moral depravity, in contrast to Islam. As a result, Turkish Islamist rhetoric is constantly characterised by rivalry and confrontation with the West.





Image 2. ‘Moral Decay in National Education’

Poster’s comment:

Where is the youth heading to? Is it so difficult to introduce dress codes in schools? Those who want to study will abide by this code. Ah! But those who want to walk around naked with their legs exposed can go to bars and nightclubs. If this continues, in a few years these girls will be coming to school in bras and panties. After all, nobody says anything to them. If the authorities (the AKP government) do not put an end to this moral erosion, the CHP mentality will prevail, as it has for the last 100 years, and the country will be surrendered to the enemy without a war. Because this will destroy the family; make the school students addicted to alcohol; turn them away from religion; make them forget their history; make them imitate the lifestyle shown in television series; destroy morality; bring gender equality; disrespect elders; glorify money and capitalism; empty mosques and fill cafés. There will be no need for invasion or war; it means turnkey, come and take over the country (KumandanRte, August 13, 2025).

This photograph and the girls' outfits are quite familiar to anyone living in Türkiye. The building in the background is a school, with a Turkish flag on its flagpole and posters hanging from the windows, and the students' clothing clearly indicates that this is a graduation ceremony. The girls' outfits are the common fashion choices for high school students' end-of-year graduation ceremonies. School uniforms are optional for students, but most students wear casual clothes on normal days.

However, in this X post (KumandanRte, August 13, 2025), the poster not only implies that these are the everyday outfits of the students but also he portrays the students' clothing as a symbol of moral decay. Note that the commenter's username is KumandanRte, which reads CommanderRte, RTE are the initials of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the president of Türkiye. It is a common practice among social media users who add the abbreviation "RTE" to their usernames when they want to show their loyalty and admiration for the president.

The post reveals a number of discursive strategies commonly used by pro-government people. The expression 'Where are the youth going?' is widely used in Türkiye, meaning that young people are out of control. The youth is activated with agency connoting (negative) power as they are heading in the 'wrong direction'. Another strategy used to negatively represent the students as representatives of a secular way of life, is through creating 'collocative patterns', the grouping of words which reveal common ideological schemes (Fairclough 2003: 131). 'The girls' and 'they' are collocated with 'alcohol addiction', 'destroying family and morality', 'forgetting religion', etc., which are also linked to the 'CHP mentality' as the historical enemy of the AKP. Although the CHP mentality is not spelled out, lexical choices such as 'enemy', 'immorality', 'alcohol addiction' are collocated with CHP contributing to the othering and the delegitimization of CHP.

In the accompanying image 2, students are facing the audience however their faces are fluent, denying any point of identification with the students. The camera looks up the students and the framing focus on the students legs. This serves the poster's aim to make 'a moral argument' based on the students clothing, which illustrates 'wronged youth' under the influence of the 'CHP mentality'. The impersonal naming, AKP government, is a functional naming, connoting power (Machin and van Leeuwen, 2005: 134), while naming CHP twice allows readers a negative point of identification (van Leeuwen 1996) a threat to the abstract 'national morality' and the Muslims who are depicted as the victims of the CHP for the last 100 years. The strategy of adding extra information (Machin and van Leeuwen, 2005: 134) by listing 'drug addiction', 'forgetting religion', 'handing the key to enemy' and so on adds a sense of urgency to the situation, thereby to call on the AKP to interfere in school dress code is justified.

It's necessary to examine aspects not mentioned in this text. The poster seems to imply that the CHP introduced freedom of dress in schools, however wearing school uniforms was compulsory until the AKP abolished it in 2012. The most striking part of the regulation was that it allowed female students to cover their heads. This was viewed as part of the AKP's Islamisation practices in education by the leftist trade unions (MEBPersonel, 2012). The free dress code in school is abolished by the AKP in 2024 (T24, 6 December 2024). What this discourse echoes is the association between secular dress code and 'moral crises' leaning on the AKP's hostility toward the 'other', CHP and secular people, more specifically secular women, who are viewed as a threat to the moral integrity of the country and



needs to be stopped. Furthermore, articulating the politics of fear legitimizes misogynistic discourse that dehumanizes women.

In response to the above poster, dozens of other posters brought up women's clothing, revealing different dimensions of misogynistic discourse. Read this:

Women who come to the school exams wearing only a bra. Women walking around in tight leggings. Women who go to work in miniskirts. Women who show off their body on social media. Women lying sprawled out on a public beach in a tiny piece of cloth. Women who expose their buttocks, clitoris, and belly buttons for everyone to see. And they accuse men of perversion (Mehmet Çakır, June 21, 2025).

Here women are activated though negatively, 'they will be coming to exams wearing only a bra' 'walking around in tight leggings', etc. imply a deep seated misogynistic conception of women in Turkish culture. Here we see, through substitutions and additions women's secular clothing (read as non-Islamic clothing) is recontextualised as nudity. Bernstein argues that recontextualizations transform social practices, actors, events and issues into a representation that 'selectively adopts, repositions, refocuses, and relates to other discourses to establish its own order' (Bernstein, 1996: 53)

Moreover, this sexist cultural approach implied that women lack the capacity to form moral views and must be constantly controlled by men. It holds that if you do not continually monitor your daughters, they are likely to commit a mistake, bringing shame on their father. As a result, girls' socializing is limited, and they are married off at an early age. So the responsibility for supervising the women is moved from the father to the husband. Women's attire and sexuality are coded as the most harmful to male honor, hence these are the areas where oppression is most intense. In fact, misogynistic proverbs such as 'A woman's hair is long, her mind is short'; 'He who does not beat his daughter, beats his knee'; 'A woman's evil is equal to that of the devil' and 'A woman is the dirt on a man's hand' are frequently quoted as a 'repository of truths', that reinforce gender attitudes (Genç, 2018: 15).

Another post echoes Erdoğan's view of the West as morally corrupt:

This year is called the Year of the Family, but if the flaws adopted from the West that destroy the family, allow adultery and illicit relationships are not corrected, this will remain nothing more than empty words and slogans. Issues such as indefinite alimony, the principle that a woman's statement is paramount, and the legalization of adultery must be urgently rectified (Mehmet boynukalın, September 6, 2025).

First of all, the agentless passives were employed to hide agency. The fact that it was Erdoğan who declared 2026 as a family year is likely to be known by the poster. So he deleted Erdoğan's name from the text in order not to collocate his name with 'illicit relationships' and 'adultery'. Although abstractions were used to attract the attention of 'authorities to 'adultery' and 'illicit relationships' that are perceived to be threatening the family. The second sentence directly targeted women's achievements and women's rights, which have been seen as Western imports by the political Islamists.

A final post from 'Yalnız Adam' account pushes the AKP's political agenda: 'Hey secular citizen! You want your daughter to go to school in a mini-skirt, but can't I want my daughter to attend a school exclusively for girls? Is there freedom for you but not for me? As a Muslim Turkish citizen, I want



schools exclusively for girls (Mehmet Çakır, May 21, 2025). Here the discursive strategy of ‘us’ and ‘them’ is used to claim a victim position. The secular citizen is activated positively for having rights, however this right is mitigated by collocating it with a mini-skirt, which is a cultural marker of the immoral other while ‘me’ who is Muslim Turkish citizen indicators of native-national identities which are denied to the secular citizen. Emphasising nativity and Muslimness suggests that he must be entitled to the right to educate his daughter in a school exclusively for girls.

‘Erkkod’ posts mostly involved dehumanising metaphors and pseudoscience to describe women. Here is an example: ‘Women say, ‘I want someone who understands me’ but what they really desire is someone who can manage their chaos. Being understood is friendship; being managed and protected is passion. If you can't captain your ship in its turbulent waters, you'll be thrown overboard’ (Erkkod, December 14, 2025). The post typically reproduces sexist prejudices: “what women say doesn’t always mean what they mean”. Women are depicted in chaos and needing a man to manage that chaos. This idea is further reinforced by portraying man with ‘wisdom’ in a relationship as a captain who must steer his ship (the woman) through turbulent waters (women in chaos).

Another poster’s misogynistic discourse on women is reinforced by quoting well-known philosophers:

What are philosophers' views on women? ‘It is enough to glance at their appearance to realise that women are not designed for great accomplishments, either mentally or physically’ Arthur Schopenhauer; ‘A woman is as free and equal human being as her spouse, despite the fact that she is biologically deficient, psychologically irrational and politically incompetent’ Aristotle; ‘Women misuse their independence once they obtain it. They were created to obey defective male creatures; they are often unethical. In their youth, they must learn to suffer injustice and accept their husband's insults’ Jean Jacques Rousseau; ‘Only women and non-virtuous individuals are hard to control. The closer you get, the more disrespectful they become; as you distance yourself, they whine and criticise you’ Confucius; ‘God designed women to be wives or prostitutes’ Martin Luther (Erkkod, February 26, 2024).

The discursive strategy employed is to utilise quotations from renowned thinkers to establish a narrative that demonstrates the inferiority of women compared to men. These comments, whose authenticity is highly doubtful, are selected to ensure that the commentator's misogynistic views are uncritically accepted by the audience.

This is followed by a series of posts objectifying women: ‘A man who has driven many cars is experienced, but cars that are driven by many men are wrecks. This article has nothing to do with cars’ (Erkekod, July 6, 2024); ‘Women are boring except when it comes to love and sex’ (Erkkod, August 17, 2024) and ‘Women are objects of SEX, men are objects of POWER. Sexuality always loses to power. Chase power, not sex. Go after power not sex’ (Erkekod, August 10, 2024). The overt articulation of these misogynistic assertions, which belittle women and depict them as existing primarily for sex, along with connoting certainty, constitutes a discursive tactic intended to foster the perception that such beliefs are universally accepted.



4. Conclusion

The ruling AKP party has interfered in all areas concerning women.; it restricted cesarean births, implemented an anti-abortion policy, and banned mixed-gender student dormitories. Two AKP ministers went even further, condemning women smiling in public as a sign of moral degeneration and criticizing a female television presenter's low-cut dress as unacceptable (Cindoglu & Ünal, 2017, pp. 45-48). Women who advocated for women's rights and feminist demands, as well as those who followed secular lifestyles, were targeted. All these political decisions are nothing more than attempts by the AKP to consolidate its conservative-Islamist and neoliberal regime. This all-out 'war' against the secular lifestyle, viewed as a remnant of the Kemalist regime, inevitably found new supporters and platforms. Male-dominated online advocacy communities created an ideal environment for the government and the government supporters to push their gender agenda more aggressively.

The analysis of two X accounts clearly demonstrates how women's identities are systematically marginalized discursively when they intersect with an ideology. For the AKP's policies of Islamizing society to be implemented and successful, the 'other' needs to be constructed in a way that threatens the family, the future of society, and morality. This article argues that the gender discourse circulating in male-dominated online communities essentially contributes to the restoration of the AKP's extremely conservative religious gender agenda. Moreover, these online male communities can exacerbate the already existing secular-Islamist polarization in Türkiye and deepen political fault lines between secular and Islamist groups. Finally, this research demonstrates that the political Islamist government's strategy of suppressing secular opposition and secular women is exploited by misogynist online platforms, which in turn amplifies the spread and influence of misogynistic discourse in digital environments. Consequently, our examination, which analyses the manifestations of misogyny in Türkiye within the framework of local political dynamics and power structures, can help us better understand misogyny as a global problem.

Declarations and Acknowledgement:

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author. This paper was first presented at the International Conference on Globalisation/Deglobalisation in Languages, Education, Culture and Communication (GLECC2025).

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