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The association of gender role attitudes and offense type with public punitiveness toward male and female offenders



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1. Introduction

In recent decades, the increase in the prison population around the world has brought a rise in punitiveness toward offenders into focus. With a six-fold increase since the 1970s, the United States has the highest incarceration rate with almost one out of every 100 inhabitants in prison (Walmsley, 2013). The inception of “tough on crime” policies in the United States influenced other Anglo-Saxon jurisdictions such as Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Similar developments can be observed in a number of Continental European countries (Roberts and Indermaur, 2007). For instance, according to the European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics (Aebi et al., 2014), the prison population in the Netherlands grew five-fold from the 1970s to 2011. During the same period, Spain has witnessed an almost quadrupled rate from 40 to 156 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants (Aebi et al., 2014).

Welch (2011) has reviewed several explanations for this increased punitiveness, such as increased crime rates, population growth and harsher criminal justice policies. Many scholars argue that an increasingly punitive public opinion is the most straightforward explanation for greater punitiveness in sentencing policies (Green, 2009; Kury and Ferdinand, 1999; Mandracchia et al., 2013; Welch, 2011), as well as judges' harsher sentencing decisions (Brace and Boyea, 2008; Roberts et al., 2011). According to Page and Shapiro (1983), the influence of public opinion on policies is greater than the effect of policies on public opinion. It has been argued that, if public punitiveness had not increased steadily since the mid-1970s, 20% fewer American citizens would have been in prison today (Enns, 2014).

In light of these trends, it can be argued that public opinion is a crucial factor in explaining the surge in punitiveness; therefore, it is important to understand the possible causes and determinants of public punitiveness. A wide array of public opinion studies has examined determinants of public punitiveness, such as participant characteristics (Applegate et al., 2002; Chiricos et al., 2004; Unnever and Cullen, 2009; Payne et al., 2004), victim characteristics (Saucier et al., 2006) and offense characteristics (Wermink et al., 2015). However, gender role attitudes have thus far received little empirical attention despite theoretical focus on its impact on public punitiveness (Herzog and Oreg, 2008). In an attempt to address this gap in the literature, our empirical study focuses on gender role attitudes as a possible determinant of public punitiveness toward male and female offenders who have committed similar offenses.

1.1. Public punitiveness

Although widely studied in criminology as one of the major determinants of punishment of offenders, the concept of punitiveness

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is still underdeveloped theoretically. A review of the literature reveals various definitions of punitiveness that refer to both public and government level punitiveness (Hamilton, 2014; Lappi-Seppälä, 2008; Matthews, 2005). The focus of the current study is exclusively on public punitiveness.

King and Maruna (2006) define punitiveness as the desire to see more people being imprisoned for longer durations and with increased severity (i.e., harsh conditions). Reed (2011) emphasizes severity and describes punitiveness as the harshness of punishment people want for offenders. Another definition conceptualizes punitiveness in terms of the rationale for punishment. Accordingly, punitiveness is “an attitude toward sanctioning and punishment that includes retribution, incapacitation, and a lack of concern for offender rehabilitation” (Mackey and Courtright, 2000, p. 430). Each definition of the construct requires the use of one or a combination of appropriate measures to explore how, how severely and why offenders should be punished (Payne et al., 2004).

The inconsistencies in its definition and variations in measurement make it difficult to compare research findings related to public punitiveness (Matthews, 2005). A common measure of how offenders should be punished consists of asking sentencing preferences from a list of alternatives, such as imprisonment, community service, probation and monetary fine. The choice for a number of years of imprisonment on a sliding scale has been used to measure how severely one prefers to see offenders punished. A preference for imprisonment rather than non-prison alternatives, and recommending longer sentences are considered more punitive (Durham et al., 1996; Kugler et al., 2013; Reed, 2011). Researchers have also attempted to gauge punitiveness by exploring why offenders should be punished. They have asked participants to choose from alternatives that represent punishment, deterrence, incapacitation or rehabilitation (Applegate et al., 2002; Spiranovic et al., 2011). Tajalli et al. (2013) consider rehabilitation and punishment as two ends of a spectrum rather than an “either/or” dichotomy and more support for rehabilitation indicates less support for punishment.

A number of studies have explored the determinants of public punitiveness toward offenders. Research on participants' age (Indermaur and Roberts, 2005; Kury and Ferdinand, 1999) and income (Kury and Ferdinand, 1999) has produced mixed results. Female participants are reported to be more lenient than males (Applegate et al., 2002; Kury and Ferdinand, 1999). Educational level is inversely related to punitiveness (Indermaur and Roberts, 2005; Kury and Ferdinand, 1999). Crime salience, economic insecurity (Costelloe et al., 2009) and fear of crime (Sprott and Doob, 1997) have been found to strongly predict punitiveness. While the belief that the crime rate is increasing is related to increased punitiveness (Indermaur and Roberts, 2005), Roberts and Indermaur (2007) suggested that increased knowledge about actual crime rates is negatively related to punitiveness among the public. Overall, research findings reveal the complex influence a number of factors—either individually or interactively—have on public punitiveness. This study aims to extend previous research by studying the impact of gender role attitudes on public punitiveness.

1.2. Gender role attitudes

Gender role attitudes are the beliefs about the typical role behaviors expected from men and women (King and King, 1997). The two ends of the gender role attitude spectrum are gender traditional and gender egalitarian perspectives (King and King, 1997). Gender traditional attitudes endorse men's use of power and aggression in order to sustain their dominance (Eaton and Rose, 2011). Gender egalitarianism is defined as freedom from gender bias, whether the object of the attitude is male or female (King et al., 1994). A gender egalitarian individual values gender role equality, as opposed to gender traditional individuals who expect men and women to perform stereotypical gender roles, such as earning the family income for men and homemaking and child rearing for women (Little and Panelli, 2003).

Gender egalitarianism has risen following a collective struggle by the Women's Liberation Movement or second wave feminism, which was most active in the 1960's and 1970's. While first wave feminism focused on basic legal rights (i.e., right to vote), second wave feminism was concerned with women's economic activities and their right to decide on reproduction, aiming to eliminate unequal sex roles from society (Burkett, 2016). In many countries, the movement was successful in passing laws to protect women's benefits such as maternity leave, anti-discrimination in the workplace based on women's marital status or pregnancy. However, current research shows that gender traditional attitudes still have an impact on how women are treated differentially in the work place (Aycan, 2004; Eagly and Karau, 2002). According to “The Gender Pay Gap” (2017) occupations dominated by women have lower status and pay, and only a fifth of senior executives in G7 countries are female. Gender traditional values are even more prominent in many Eastern countries including Turkey (World Economic Forum, 2017).

In the case of Turkey, only 4% of top management positions are occupied by women (Aycan, 2004). Although the country's 200-year-long modernization has considered gender as a central issue in the country's transformation (Kandiyoti, 1997), top-down efforts aiming at formal gender equality have had only mixed results in improving women's actual position in society. In terms of attitudes, support for gender equality has shown a steady 1% increase annually between 1981 and 2008 (Spierings, 2015). The country's EU membership candidacy has led to the revision of laws toward more gender equality, but Turkey is still a patriarchal society in which traditional gender roles are widely endorsed by the public as well as by Turkish law (Hortacsu et al., 2003).

The differential treatment toward women is not limited to social life and employment, but can also be observed in the criminal justice system (Daly and Bordt, 1995; Franklin, 2008; Koons-Witt, 2002; Mustard, 2001). Theoretical explanations related to the disparate views on male and female offenders within the criminal justice context have focused on two perspectives, both subsumed under a patriarchal or gender traditional model. According to the *chivalry perspective*, female offenders receive preferential treatment during the criminal justice process because they need protection as the weaker sex (Visher, 1983). However, this protection is dependent on a number of other factors related to the offense and the offender. Female offenders are granted leniency as long as the offense they have committed is non-violent (e.g., fraud) and they comply with traditional norms of femininity. In the case of a violent offense committed by a woman (e.g., murder, robbery), a complementary perspective, the *evil woman perspective* (Crew, 1991; Nagel and Hagan, 1983) is applied. The woman who commits a violent offense is considered to have violated traditional gender roles and

she is punished more harshly than a man who has committed the same offense (Koons-Witt et al., 2014).

Many studies have attempted to explain differential treatment of female offenders in the criminal justice system by the presence of chivalry (Embry and Lyons, 2012; Demuth and Steffensmeier, 2004). In a study that examined the impact of offender gender on the decision to incarcerate, Kruttschnitt and Savolainen (2009) have explained the absence of differential treatment by the absence of chivalry, a finding that would be expected in a society characterized by gender equality. On the other hand, some studies have not only failed to find leniency toward female offenders, but they have discovered that they are treated more harshly than male offenders (Daly and Tonry, 1997; Spohn and Beichner, 2000).

This selective treatment has theoretically been based on the evil woman Hypothesis. The evil woman hypothesis has been supported by findings showing that the motive for the offense (Kim et al., 2018) or criminal history (Tillyer et al., 2015), which deviates from traditional gender role norms result in more severe sentences for female offenders than for their male counterparts. However, studies that have addressed offense type as a factor have not been able to provide support for differential treatment (Mustard, 2001; Rodriguez et al., 2006).

1.3. Current study

The present study will examine if gender role attitudes impact individuals' punitiveness judgements. Specifically, we investigate how gender role attitudes moderate punitiveness toward male and female offenders, for violent and non-violent offenses. As such, our study belongs within the limited literature on the punitiveness of a “patriarchal society”, and the constructs of chivalry and evil woman.

This study is conducted in Turkey, which is an interesting context for several reasons. First, prisons in Turkey have witnessed a steady increase in incarceration rates in the last few decades, and in the post-2000 period, in particular. Today, Turkey has the second highest incarceration rate in Europe: 224 per 100,000 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2015). This rate is almost 40% higher than in 1970. Female offenders constitute 4% of the current Turkish prison population which is almost twice the rate of the 1970s (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2015). Although the absolute number of female offenders is still limited, there has been a relative increase in their imprisonment rate, compared to male offenders in the last 15 years (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2015). No study to date has examined the relationship between gender role attitudes and public punitiveness in Turkey.

In this study, punitiveness is defined as people's preferences regarding the type, severity and the aim of punishment toward offenders. We use separate instruments that measure *how*, *how severely* and *why* offenders should be punished. Choosing to support incarceration, longer recommended sentences, and less support for rehabilitation, will be considered as evidence for greater punitiveness.

We predict that while controlling for the effects of participant gender, the severity of punitiveness toward female offenders will depend on the violent or non-violent nature of their offenses which show a deviance or non-deviance from their traditional gender roles, respectively. Furthermore, we expect that differential treatment toward male and female offenders will be observed only in more gender traditional participants. Specifically, we formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a. Lower scores on gender egalitarianism will predict lower punitiveness toward female offenders than toward male offenders for non-violent offenses (conforming to the chivalry hypothesis).

Hypothesis 1b. Lower scores on egalitarianism will predict higher punitiveness toward female offenders than toward male offenders for violent offenses (conforming to the evil woman hypothesis).

Combined, this means that for all outcome variables we are hypothesizing a three-way Gender x Offense Type x Gender Roles interaction. In our Results section, we will start with explicitly evaluating the hypothesized three-way interaction for all outcome variables.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 400 adults who completed a survey in response to invitations via text messages and e-mailings. Snowball sampling was employed. The messages and mailings started with a short list of first and fourth authors' professional and social contacts (i.e., neighbors, bank clerks, car wash employees, etc.) and they were asked to pass the invitations on to their contacts. Open social media postings were not preferred because of possible comments or discussions on the vignettes that would impact potential participants' responses. Of the participants, 172 (43%) were male and 228 (57%) were female. The majority of the sample were university graduates (72%), which is a significantly higher rate than that of the Turkish population (11%). The demographic characteristics of the sample can be considered representative of the Turkish population such as marriage with 61% in the population and 57% in the sample. The average age of the sample was 37.32 years ($SD = 10.55$) with a range between 18 and 78 years which is comparable to the 29.6 of the Turkish population.

2.2. Procedure

The data were anonymously collected over the internet using Qualtrics software. Participants were provided with a hyperlink

directing them to the online survey. They were given detailed information about the study on the opening page. They were also informed that after completing the survey those who wished to enter a raffle had a chance of winning one of 20 gift vouchers of 50 Turkish Lira (then equivalent to 18 USD) from a Turkish department store. Subsequently, informed consent was obtained. The survey started with questions about demographic characteristics. Then, participants were asked to read three offense vignettes. After each vignette, participants answered four questions. The survey concluded with the Sex Roles Egalitarianism Scale (SRES-BB; King and King, 1990). Each participant spent around 15–20 min to complete the survey. After they submitted their responses, participants were asked if they wished to be redirected to another site where they could provide their names and postal addresses in order to participate in the drawing for a gift voucher.

Ethical approvals for this study were obtained from the Maastricht University Ethics Committee Psychology with protocol number ECP-158 01 11 2015 and the Koç University Ethics Committee for Social Sciences Research with protocol number 2015.194.IRB3.103.

2.3. Study design

The use of vignettes is preferable to simple, abstract questions that participants answer subjectively because vignettes produce more reliable and valid responses (Alexander and Becker, 1978). Numerous studies have employed vignettes to measure public punitiveness by systematically varying the variable to be tested in the scenarios, such as offense type (Michel, 2015), offender's ethnicity (Singh and Sprott, 2017) and offense characteristics (Applegate and Davis, 2006). In light of these studies, we prepared three vignettes that depicted three different offenses with male and female offender versions. The choice of offense types was made so that enough variance could be obtained in participants' punitiveness preferences. The vignettes depicted a violent offense with two murdered victims, a violent offense where no one was injured and a non-violent economic offense. More specifically, participants were asked to report their punishment preferences for:

- (1) An offender killing his/her spouse and his/her and spouse's lover (violent offense—murder);
- (2) An offender threatening a cashier with a gun and running away with all the money in the cashier's desk (violent offense—robbery);
- (3) An offender getting access to a person's credit card information under a pretext, thereby transferring the victim's money into his/her own bank account (non-violent offense—fraud) (see Appendix A for the crime scenarios).

The offenders in the vignettes were given names that clearly indicated their gender, because pronouns are gender-neutral in the Turkish language. Offenders' ages were given in parentheses as 30, 31 and 32 in order to avoid them being perceived as juveniles, which might affect level of punitiveness. Each participant was randomly assigned to either the male or the female version of the three vignettes, which were otherwise exactly the same. The appearance of the vignettes was randomized among participants to avoid order effects.

2.4. Variables

Dependent Variables. In light of variations in the measurement of punitiveness in previous studies, four different punitiveness instruments were employed. These intended to explore *how*, *how severely* and *why* the participants wanted to see the offenders punished.

The *how* question (INC) was: “How much do you agree that (offender's name) should be incarcerated?” It was intended to gauge the level of support on a 4-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly Agree*) with higher values indicating more support for incarceration, thus signifying more punitiveness. Preliminary analyses revealed that the distribution of the INC outcome variable per combination of offense type and offender gender was severely skewed. The vast majority of participants felt that the perpetrators in the vignettes should be incarcerated. Therefore, we dichotomized INC by taking the first three scale values (1–3) and the fourth scale value separately. The two categories were coded as 1 (strongly agree) and 0 (other).

How severely participants wanted to punish the offender (SEN) was measured by the question: “If you were the one to decide, how long a sentence in prison would you find appropriate for (offender's name)?” As our focus was on punitiveness rather than the specific sentences imposed, the responses were collected on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (*No imprisonment*) to 9 (*Life without parole*) which is the most severe sentence in Turkish criminal law. Higher scores were indicative for longer sentences and more punitiveness.

In order to examine what participants thought about *why* offenders should be punished (AIM) we first asked: “What do you think should be the most important aim of incarcerating (offender's name)?” The participant was asked to choose one of five propositions: “give them the punishment they deserve; teach them a lesson; make an example of them; rehabilitate them; keep them off the streets”. These propositions were used as nominal scale points to describe retribution, individual deterrence, general deterrence, rehabilitation, and incapacitation, respectively (Spiranovic et al., 2011). This variable was analyzed to understand how response categories were related to the underlying punitiveness construct. We used Bock (1972) nominal item response theory model again to examine the item characteristic curves for each severity level. For each item a distinct cluster in the negative continuum range (labeled by the authors as punitiveness) between deterrence and retribution (with retribution capturing the continuum below –1.5 and deterrence capturing the distribution between –1.5 and 0) was observed. The positive continuum range was dominated entirely by rehabilitation. This lends support to the categorization of punitiveness as either rehabilitative in nature or retributive/deterrent based (Vidmar and Miller, 1980). For subsequent analyses, a dichotomization of punitiveness into punishment type categories (general

deterrence, individual deterrence, incapacitation, and retribution) and rehabilitation was employed. As a result, any answer other than rehabilitation was coded as punitive, to create a binary variable.

The last question was also related to *why* offenders should be punished (REH). The participants had to provide a response on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*To a great extent*) on the question: “How much would you support the rehabilitation (for instance, by means of counseling or education) of (offender's name)?” Increased support for rehabilitation was indicative for less punitiveness. Preliminary analyses revealed that the distribution of the REH outcome variable per combination of offense type and offender gender was severely skewed. The vast majority of participants felt that the prime importance of punishment had to do with an effort to rehabilitate the offenders. Therefore, we dichotomized REH by coding the first four scale values (1–4) and the fifth scale value separately. Two categories were coded as 1 (strongly agree) and 0 (other).

Independent Variables. The three independent variables of this study were gender of the offender and offense type in the vignette, and self-reported gender role attitudes of the participant.

Sex Roles Egalitarianism Scale. Gender role attitudes were measured with the 25-item short-form of the Sex Roles Egalitarianism Scale (SRES-BB; King and King, 1990). The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*) with higher scores representing more gender egalitarian attitudes. There have been internal consistency coefficients reported as high as 0.94 for the total scale (Brutus et al., 1993).

For the present study, the original scale was translated into Turkish by the first author, then back translated to English by a bilingual translator. A final Turkish translation was reached by consensus between the translators. A pilot test with five subject matter experts was conducted with the translated scale. Participants were asked to rate the quality of the items. The items were rated as well-formulated and items that needed modifications were fixed before the actual study was conducted. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.90$) in our study sample.

2.5. Statistical analyses

Given the mixed findings in the literature on the structure of public punitiveness, a correlational analysis was first conducted to examine how the different forms of punitiveness were related. We checked the correlations between INC, SEN, AIM and REH for each offense type and offender gender combination, separately. Correlations ranged from 0.03 to 0.62, supporting our decision to consider these variables as separate outcome variables (Table 1). Thus, the variables were not combined to form a single outcome variable. Studying the bivariate correlations, we observed that the INC variable showed substantial correlations (Table 1) with the SEN variable. This, together with the fact that the distribution of INC was highly skewed, prompted us to omit the INC variable from the statistical analyses. The original idea to make use of a binary version of the INC variable (using ‘strongly agree’ against ‘other’ as alternatives) was discarded, because the conceptual idea of attaching importance to incarceration was also captured by the SEN variable: subjects who accorded zero or a very small number of years of imprisonment to the perpetrator, implicitly attached low

Table 1
Correlation matrix of study variables.

		1	2	3
FemFra	1.INC			
	2.SEN	.41		
	3.REH	.21	-.03	
	4.AIM	.05	.17	-.33
FemMur	1.INC			
	2.SEN	.59		
	3.REH	.10	.11	
	4.AIM	.19	.31	-.21
FemRob	1.INC			
	2.SEN	.43		
	3.REH	.21	-.12	
	4.AIM	.13	.32	-.18
MaleFra	1.INC			
	2.SEN	.38		
	3.REH	.06	-.03	
	4.AIM	.03	.18	-.37
MaleMur	1.INC			
	2.SEN	.62		
	3.REH	.04	-.08	
	4.AIM	.16	.31	-.39
MaleRob	1.INC			
	2.SEN	.38		
	3.REH	.10	-.15	
	4.AIM	.11	.18	.24

Note. FemFra = Female Fraud, FemMur = Female Murder, Fem Rob = Female Robbery, MaleFra = Male Fraud, MaleMur = Male Murder, MaleRob = Male Robbery, INC=Incarceration, SEN = Length of Sentence, REH = Rehabilitation, AIM = Aim of punishment.

importance to incarceration, as opposed to subjects who accorded longer prison sentences to the perpetrator. We used the three remaining punitiveness measures separately in the analyses. We controlled for participant gender and education.

To analyze our hypotheses for the SEN variable, we conducted a linear mixed model analysis while controlling for participant's gender and education. For the other dependent variables, AIM and REH, we performed Generalized Estimating Equations (GEE) analyses for the full model, after controlling for participant's gender and education, then sequentially removed non-significant higher- and lower-order terms for further analyses. Below we report the results for each Hypothesis per dependent variable separately.

3. Results

3.1. Length of sentence (SEN)

A linear mixed model analysis with an unstructured covariance matrix for the residuals was conducted to examine if the interaction of offender gender, offense type and gender egalitarianism was significant for recommended length of sentence while controlling for participant's gender and education. Gender egalitarianism was included as a between-subjects covariate in the model. The three-way interaction of offender gender, offense type and gender egalitarianism was significant, $F(2, 396) = 3.621, p = .028$. A subsequent simple slope analysis showed no significance for the offender gender and offense type interaction for participants with lower gender egalitarianism scores, $F(2, 396) = 1.289, p = .227$. Our predictions based on the chivalry and evil woman hypotheses were not confirmed. The findings revealed that participants with higher gender egalitarianism scores on average recommended equally long sentences for male and female offenders who committed either fraud or robbery, but recommended significantly longer sentences for male offenders who committed murder than for female offenders who committed murder, $F(2, 396) = 4.265, p = .015$.

3.2. Aim of incarceration (AIM)

A GEE analysis with higher order terms in the model revealed no significant three way interaction of offender gender, offense type and gender egalitarianism on participants' choice for incarceration while controlling for participant's gender and education, Wald $\chi^2(2) = 3.550, p = .169$. Our predictions based on the chivalry and evil woman hypotheses were not confirmed. The results of the sequential GEE analysis, removing the three way interaction and other non-significant higher- and lower order terms, revealed that the best description of our data contained gender egalitarianism, offense type and the interaction of offense type with gender egalitarianism. Parameter estimates for this model can be found in Table 2. For each unit increase in gender egalitarianism, the odds of aiming punishment for someone who committed murder to the odds that they aim punishment for someone who committed fraud increases by 1.77. Results reveal that for each unit increase in gender egalitarianism scores, the ratio of the odds that they choose incarceration rather than rehabilitation for someone who perpetrated robbery are 0.68 as large as the odds that they choose this punishment for someone who perpetrated fraud.

3.3. Support for rehabilitation (REH)

A GEE analysis with higher order terms in the model revealed no significant three way interaction of offender gender, offense type and gender egalitarianism on participants' support for rehabilitation while controlling for participant's gender and education, Wald $\chi^2(2) = 1.726, p = .422$. Our predictions based on the chivalry and evil woman hypotheses were not confirmed. Follow-up analyses in which non-significant higher- and lower order terms were removed sequentially, returned a model containing only gender egalitarianism as a significant predictor of REH, as there were no significant interactions or main effects for either offender gender and offense type. Parameter estimates for this model can be found in Table 2. Results reveal that one point increase in gender egalitarianism scores increases the odds of support for rehabilitation by 2.14 times.

Table 2

GEE estimates of study variables.

	REH			AIM		
	OR (95% CI)	SE	Sig.	OR (95% CI)	SE	Sig.
Male	.81 (–.55, .13)	.17	.218	1.27 (–.07, .54)	.15	.125
GE	2.13 (.41, 1.12)	.18	.000	.70 (–.72, .01)	.19	.056
Robbery	1.11 (.07, .26)	.09	.263	.68 (–.70, –.07)	.16	.018
Murder	1.19 (–.03, .37)	.10	.101	.75 (–.69, .11)	.23	.149
Robbery GE	–	–	–	.99 (–.38, .36)	.19	.946
Murder GE	–	–	–	1.77 (.07, 1.06)	.25	.026

Note. REH = rehabilitation (1 = rehabilitation support), AIM = aim of incarceration (1 = punishment), Male = 1, GE = Gender egalitarianism (centered plus 1*SD), Robbery (1 if robbery), Murder (1 if murder).

95% CI = 95% Confidence Interval.

Significant results are presented in **bold**.

4. Discussion

The present study tested two hypotheses derived from chivalry and evil woman perspectives. We operationalized public punitiveness using four distinct measures corresponding to conceptual models of *how*, *how severely* and *why* individuals want to see offenders punished. We predicted less gender traditional participants would be less punitive toward female compared to male offenders who committed non-violent offenses (fraud) and more punitive toward female than male offenders who committed violent offenses (murder and robbery). These hypotheses are in line with the chivalry and evil woman hypotheses, respectively.

We did not find support for the viability of the chivalry and evil woman hypotheses in our study. No significant differences in the recommended length of sentence, choice for aim of incarceration, or support for rehabilitation toward male and female offenders were observed among participants with less gender egalitarian attitudes for violent versus non-violent offenses.

Participants with higher gender egalitarianism scores recommended longer sentences for male than female offenders who committed murder, a finding we had not predicted. We believe this finding may be linked to the specific murder scenario we provided—a spouse killing his or her partner in a bout of jealousy. It is not very common, at least not in a more traditional society such as Turkey, to see males as victims in a jealousy scenario (Cetin, 2015). The scenario with the male offender/female victim is the one that has occupied a prominent place on the public agenda for the last few years in Turkey because of the exponential increase in femicide by intimate partners (Alat, 2006; Cetin, 2015). Considering research that indicates media coverage of crimes can result in more punitive responses (Staggs and Landreville, 2017), this may explain that participants showed more punitiveness toward male perpetrators than female perpetrators in our murder scenario. However, this difference was observed only in more gender egalitarian individuals, as consistent with other findings suggesting gender egalitarian individuals avoid minimizing the severity of male violence to a greater extent than gender traditional individuals (Ben-David and Schneider, 2005).

Further findings highlight the relevance of gender role attitudes for different aspects of punitiveness. On the aim of punishment measure, regardless of offender gender, lower gender egalitarian participants were more punitive toward fraud compared to robbery and equally punitive toward fraud and murder. As Herzog and Einat (2016) point out, participants' severity judgments may be influenced by their moral judgments regarding the particular criminal conduct. The denunciation of fraud in our sample may be linked to a collective sense of moral outrage which considers the violation of a person's lifelong material achievements and efforts (“labor”, the term used in Turkish is “emek”) a serious moral breach. In our fraud vignette, a large amount of money was stolen by manipulating people under the pretext of a helpful bank employee. This may have been perceived as serious wrongful intent and may have caused a moral outrage. Additionally, recent media coverage of fraud cases involving public figures in Turkey may have also contributed to this finding (Kulaksız, 2015).

In terms of support for rehabilitation, more gender egalitarian participants demonstrated more support for rehabilitation relative to less gender egalitarian participants, regardless of offense type and offender gender, and this is consistent with studies revealing the positive correlation between traditionalism and punitiveness (Ahlin et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2011).

4.1. Limitations

The results of this study should be considered in light of several limitations. The non-random snowball sampling technique may have resulted in an unrepresentative sample, an inherent limitation of this technique (Crabtree and Miller, 1999). There might also be a sampling bias that results in a sample that shares the same traits. Furthermore, the underrepresentation of individuals with no internet access that arises from online data collection may also have biased our sample (Couper, 2007). Our sample represents a highly educated part of the population and is not representative of Turkish society as a whole. Participants held predominantly gender egalitarian beliefs, consistent with the literature suggesting that a college education is positively correlated with gender egalitarianism (Campbell and Horowitz, 2016). Future research needs to assess the impact of gender egalitarianism on public punitiveness in a more diverse sample in order to increase variance and generalizability.

Second, our vignettes may not have been ideal. In particular, the relational nature of our murder scenario may have unintentionally impacted our findings regarding punitiveness. Future research with a non-relational (i.e., stranger) murder scenario may provide a more suitable test of gender role attitudes' influence on punitiveness toward offenses that do not align with social gender roles in participants' minds.

Although variables relevant to the chivalry and evil woman hypotheses—gender, offense type and gender role attitudes—were included in the study, we did not control for a number of other variables that have been shown to influence public punitiveness, such as participant's ideology, marital and parental status (Koons-Witt, 2002; Tajalli et al., 2013; Unnever and Cullen, 2009; Welch, 2011). In order to control for these factors in future research, larger samples are needed.

5. Conclusion

The present study provides an interesting contribution to our understanding of public punitiveness. It was conducted in a non-Western society. It points at the relevance of gender role attitudes as a determinant of public punitiveness, more so than offender gender per se. Our study needs to be replicated in different samples in order to explore further how gender role attitudes influence punitiveness. A relevant next step in this line of research will be to repeat this study with criminal justice actors such as judges, prison guards and probation officers, to understand the impact of gender role attitudes on their decision making and sentencing. Future studies could also examine punitiveness toward offenders who killed a stranger, for instance, in the context of a robbery.

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Appendix A

Murder (Male offender)

A and B have been married for four years. Recently, A has been suspicious about his wife's behaviors. Finding intimate messages from a man on her phone confirmed his suspicions. He made a plan. He said to his wife that he would be visiting his parents in the countryside and would not be back that night. In the evening, he started waiting around the house. His wife and the other man arrived together and went inside the apartment. When the husband opened the front door after five minutes, his unexpected arrival shocked both. Before they could say anything, he shot both of them with a handgun.

Robbery (Male offender)

C wanted money. The small grocery store on the corner was the perfect place for a theft. Just before they would be closing down, he went in as a customer noting there was only the cashier in the store. Threatening the cashier with a knife, C asked for all the money in the safe. The cashier was in shock and did what he said. John put all the money in a plastic bag and ran away. The cashier was unharmed.

Fraud (Male offender)

D was calling people and telling them he was a bank employee. He was calling under the pretext of informing that their credit card had been used by someone else in a faraway country. He said the person could be reimbursed for the loss, because the card was insured but that he needed the card number and the login data to do this. In this way, D gained access to many persons' credit card accounts and made payments with these cards for almost a million Turkish liras.

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