

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Attitudes Toward Violence Against Women and the Factors That Affect Them in Kutahya, Turkey

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## Abstract

This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted to determine the attitudes of women and men living in Kutahya, Turkey towards violence against women, and the factors that affect them. The data were collected using an Information Form for Women, an Information Form for Men, and the Attitude towards Violence Scale. The study was completed with 2959 participants; 1481 women and 1478 men. In the study, 41.3% of the women and 22.6% of the men reported being subject to violence. The mean score of the attitude towards violence scale was  $41.57 \pm 11.83$  for women and  $49.38 \pm 11.52$  for men ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean scores on the attitude towards violence scale were found to be statistically significantly related to gender, education status, occupation, income status, co-educational status, co-occupation, marital age, family type, and subjection to violence ( $p < 0.05$ ). Socio-demographic and socio-cultural factors were found to influence the attitudes of women and men towards violence against women. The attitudes towards violence against women were found to be more positive in women. The rate of accepting violence as natural (acceptable) phenomena was found to be higher among men. That is, the attitudes of men towards violence against women are closer to the traditional approach, away from the modern approach. (*Afr J Reprod Health 2019; 23[1]: 16-26*).

**Keywords:** Violence against women, attitude, factors affecting violence, Turkey

## Résumé

Cette étude descriptive transversale a été menée pour déterminer les attitudes des femmes et des hommes vivant à Kutahya, en Turquie, à l'égard de la violence contre les femmes, ainsi que des facteurs qui les affectent. Les données ont été recueillies à l'aide d'un formulaire d'information pour les femmes, d'un formulaire d'information pour les hommes et de l'échelle d'attitude à l'égard de la violence. L'étude a été accomplie avec 2959 participants; 1481 femmes et 1478 hommes. Dans l'étude, 41,3% des femmes et 22,6% des hommes ont déclaré avoir été victimes de violence. Le score moyen de l'échelle d'attitude à l'égard de la violence était de  $41,57 \pm 11,83$  pour les femmes et de  $49,38 \pm 11,52$  pour les hommes ( $p < 0,001$ ). Les scores moyens sur l'échelle des attitudes vis-à-vis de la violence se sont révélés être statistiquement et significativement liés au sexe, au statut scolaire, à la profession, au revenu, au statut mixte, au groupe mixte, à l'âge matrimonial, au type de famille et à la violence ( $p < 0,05$ ). Il a été constaté que des facteurs sociodémographiques et socioculturels influaient sur les attitudes des femmes et des hommes à l'égard de la violence contre les femmes. Les attitudes à l'égard de la violence contre les femmes se sont révélées plus positives chez les femmes. Le taux d'acceptation de la violence comme phénomène naturel (acceptable) s'est avéré plus élevé chez les hommes. Autrement dit, les attitudes des hommes à l'égard de la violence contre les femmes sont plus proches de l'approche traditionnelle que de l'approche moderne. (*Afr J Reprod Health 2019; 23[1]: 16-26*).

**Mots-clés:** violence contre les femmes, attitude, facteurs de violence, Turquie

## Introduction

Violence against women is a violation of human rights based on gender discrimination. Around the

world, violence against women is accepted as a social problem, the importance of which increases daily<sup>1,2</sup>. It can be seen in any segment of society and every individual regardless of culture,

education level, income, social class, ethnicity or age<sup>3</sup>. The main sources of violence against women is gender inequality, the asymmetric power relation between men and women resulting from patriarchal society, as well as many other factors affecting the emergence, repetition, type and severity of violence against women<sup>4</sup>.

A traditional attitude is more common in societies in which there are many large families, there is a higher level of inequality between men and women, and in which women are expected to be homemakers, and men are expected to be employed outside the home. On the other hand, a modern attitude, apart from traditionalism, reflects the attitude of equality between men and women. The values and cultural norms of a society constitute its structure. Similar to the transfer of culture, traditions and customs from one generation to another, violence also is transferred from generation to generation, and in this way continues to exist in a society<sup>5</sup>.

Societies have attributed several roles and responsibilities to certain individuals and groups. In most societies, these roles and responsibilities are attributed to males and females based on social gender roles<sup>5</sup>. This distinction plays an important role in the way that society views and deals with violence. The cultural structure of a society is an important factor that affects its attitudes towards violence against women. Violence is more widely accepted in societies that have a patriarchal family structure such as Turkey; as husbands are seen to have a duty to protect their wives and children, which allows them to exercise control over their wives<sup>6</sup>. In the context of patriarchal ideology, the male is the head of the household, and the female is the party who obeys his wishes and orders. It is the women's primary duty to prioritize the man's wishes and needs. The issues of having a lower status, in which women are considered to be second class citizens, are evident in a patriarchal society. The values attributed to women and the basic tasks that are assigned to women cause the identity of being a spouse and a mother to have priority. The fact that women's individual identities are secondary to their identities of being a spouse and a mother can cause women to be of secondary importance in society. The women can

accept, even internalize that she is trivialized and made invisible. Men can use violence to establish their sovereignty and control over women. In the traditional approach, violence is accepted as a natural phenomenon, that is to say, tolerance for violence increases in traditional societies<sup>7</sup>. A similar situation exists in many other societies where violence against women is perceived as an acceptable behavior<sup>8,9</sup>.

In addition to its effects on physical, social and emotional aspects, violence also impacts seriously on the reproductive life of woman. Violence is not only a health problem it must be also discussed as a risk factor in order to affecting health. The main impacts of violence in women's reproductive health are unwanted pregnancies, adolescent pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, chronic pelvic pain, premenstrual syndrome, and insufficient prenatal care<sup>10</sup>. Violence against women not only hurts women physically and mentally, but also prevents and limits their social development<sup>11</sup>.

It is important to investigate social and cultural norms and collective risk factors to eliminate negative attitudes and behaviors that create and reinforce violence against women. In order to take the necessary precautions to create a healthy environment for women, it is necessary to determine how the behavior of violence is primarily perceived in a particular society, as well as the attitude of that society towards violence.

This is the first study conducted in Kutahya, Turkey to determine the attitudes of society towards violence against women and the factors affecting the formation of these attitudes. There is limited data regarding the incidence of violence, and attitudes towards violence against women, because when violence occurs, it is kept a secret and considered to be confidential. Especially in developing countries with a patriarchal structure like that of Turkey, it is perceived that violence should be kept hidden. The women who was subjected to violence tends to conceal it, which in turn prevents them from seeking help. Therefore, it is thought that this study will contribute to the literature by determining the rates of the incidence of violence, the attitudes towards violence against women, and the factors affecting the formation of

these attitudes. Specifically, the article explores the following questions:

1. What is the prevalence of women/men subjected to violence in Kutahya, Turkey?
2. What is the attitude to towards violence against women in Kutahya, Turkey?
3. What are the factors that influence the attitudes to towards violence against women in Kutahya, Turkey?

## Methods

### *Study design and population*

This study used a cross-sectional design. The population of this study consisted of individuals older than 18 years of age in Kutahya city center and central towns (Kutahya central district N=174,333 according to the Turkish Statistical Institute Address Based Population Registration System, 2013). The sample size was calculated as 602 for both genders using the number of individuals per house and the known sample spread formula (confidence interval: 95%, margin of error: 5%, sample size: 602<sup>12</sup>). However, considering that a high sample number is likely to increase the reliability of study findings or results, the study was completed with 2959 participants: 1481 women and 1478 men. After the calculation of sample size, stratified sampling was used to generalize the study result to Kutahya as a whole. Based on the city where the study was conducted, the population of women and men older than 18 years registered at all family health centers was determined. There are 24 family health centers in Kutahya. Each Family Health Center was regarded as one of 24 strata. The formula,  $a_i = (N_i/N) \times n$ , was used to determine the number of individuals from each stratum to be included in the sample. The number of individuals in each stratum ( $N_i$ ) was divided into the number of individuals in the population ( $N$ ) and the size of each stratum ( $a_i$ ) was calculated<sup>12</sup>. Posterior power analysis was performed using the data obtained as a result of the study. The comparison of the data obtained from 611 women and 334 men exposed to violence, 870 women and 1144 men who were not exposed showed 100% power. The sample was found to be

adequate to exhibit the difference. The power analysis was performed using **Power Analysis and Sample Size (PASS) 11** software. Moreover, including 602 individuals in the sample was adequate, but a total of 2959 individuals were included in the sample for reliability.

### *Measures*

The “Information Form for Women” and the “Information Form for Men” consist of questions concerning the socio-demographic and marital characteristics of the participants. Also the form contains questions about the occurrence of and type of violence to which the participants were subjected.

### *Attitude towards violence scale (AVS)*

The scale was used to determine the attitudes of individuals towards violence against women. This scale was chosen because it was developed specifically for Turkish society. This scale consists of 19 statements concerning the attitude towards violence that husbands use against their wives. These statements include myths about physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic violence and violence against women. The minimum and maximum scores on the scale are 19 and 95, respectively. The scale has no cut-off point and is comprised of four subscales including seven statements on economic violence (items 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19), six statements on emotional, psychological and sexual violence (items 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13), three statements on legitimizing myths (items 1, 2, 3) and three statements on explanatory myths (items 4, 5, 6). Participants rated each statement as (1) definitely disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, (4) completely agree. The statements 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 are coded reversely. High scores from the subscales reflect an increase in traditional attitudes towards violence, while the low scores reflect a departure from tradition and a more contemporary perspective. This index was tested for validity and reliability by Gombul *et al.*, and its Cronbach's alpha was found to be .82<sup>13</sup>. This study found the Cronbach's alpha of the scale to be .83. The Cronbach's alpha values for the subscales of “attitude towards economic violence”, “attitude

towards emotional, psychological and sexual violence”, attitude towards legitimating myths”, and “attitude towards explanatory myths” were calculated as 0.74, 0.72, 0.55, and 0.56, respectively.

### **Data collection**

Distribution and collection of the paper questionnaire was conducted from April 2015 to April 2016. The women and men who were registered at family health centers were included in the study. The women and men were reached by going to their homes. The researchers visited the addresses specified in the sample. The women and men were informed about the study, and data were collected from those who agreed to participate in the study. Alternative addresses were determined for those who did not want to participate in the study or were not reached at their addresses, and a total of 2,959 individuals were interviewed.

### **Statistical analysis**

Analyses were performed using SPSS Statistics Version 22.0 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Descriptive data were presented in numbers, percentages and means. The data collected from the groups were compared using a Chi-square test, a t-test and a One-Way ANOVA test; and a p value of <0.05 and <0.001 were considered to be significant.

### **Results**

The average age of the participants was  $39.42 \pm 12.13$  for women and  $39.77 \pm 13.74$  for men. All of the women and 79.7% of the men were married. Of the women, 49.5% graduated from primary school and 20.3% graduated from high school; and of the men, 23% graduated from primary school and 33.2% graduated from high school. Of the women and men, 28% and 84% were employed, respectively. The women's education levels and employment rates were lower than that of the men (Table 1).

Among the participants, 41.3% of the women and 22.6% of the men had been subjected and mostly had not responded to violence (women:

67.9%; men: 64.2%). The types of violence most frequently used against women were verbal (74.3%) and emotional (67.7%) violence, and against the men were verbal (69.5%) and physical (68%) violence. It was determined that women had mostly been subjected to violence from their husbands, whereas men had mostly been subjected to violence from their parents (Table 1).

The mean score for the attitude towards violence scale was  $41.57 \pm 11.83$  for women and  $49.38 \pm 11.52$  for men. Regarding attitude towards violence scale; when the distribution of the average scores of the subscales was examined, the average score of economic violence was  $15.14 \pm 5.80$  for women and  $18.31 \pm 5.83$  for men. The mean score of emotional, psychological and sexual violence was  $12.74 \pm 4.92$  for women and  $15.95 \pm 5.07$  for men. The mean score of legitimating myths was  $6.59 \pm 2.87$  for women and  $7.33 \pm 2.84$  for men. The mean score of explanatory myths was determined as  $7.09 \pm 3.02$  for women and  $7.74 \pm 3.04$  for men. The men's total and subscale scores on the attitude towards violence scale was higher than those of the women ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 2).

Analysis of the attitudes of women and men towards violence against women indicated that:

In the subscale of attitudes towards economic violence, 37.8% of women and 56.1% of men agreed with the statement “It is normal that the husband does not to allow his wife to work if the income is sufficient”, while 27% of women and 50.2% of men agreed with the statement “The women's ideas about the costs of the house is also important, but the husband should always have the final word”. The rate of agreement to the statement “A husband who says ‘you will not go to work after tomorrow’ surely knows something.” was 25.3% among the women, and 46.4% among the men.

In the subscale of attitude towards emotional, psychological and sexual violence, 83.7% of women and 69.9% of men agreed with the statement “nothing should be a reason for a husband to beat his wife”; 72.5% of the women and 55.5% of the men agreed with the statement “It is an insulting behavior when a wife asks a question and her husband does not reply”; and

**Table 1:** Sociodemographic characteristics and violence subjection situations of women and men in Kutahya, Turkey

|   |                                      | Women       |       | Men         |       |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
|   |                                      | N           | %     | N           | %     |
| <b>Sociodemographic characteristics</b>             |                                      |             |       |             |       |
| <b>The average age of the participants</b>          |                                      |             |       |             |       |
| M ±SD   |                                      | 39.42±12.13 |       | 39.77±13.74 |       |
| Minimum/Maximum                                     |                                      | (18/ 78)    |       | (18/ 82)    |       |
| <b>Marriage status</b>                              | Single                               | -           | -     | 300         | 20.3  |
|   | Married                              | 1481        | 100   | 1178        | 79.7  |
| <b>Education status</b>                             | Primary school                       | 733         | 49.5  | 340         | 23    |
|   | Secondary school                     | 184         | 12.4  | 191         | 12.9  |
|   | High school                          | 300         | 20.3  | 491         | 33.2  |
|   | College and higher education         | 264         | 17.8  | 456         | 30.9  |
| <b>Profession</b>                                   | Employed                             | 414         | 28    | 1241        | 84    |
|   | Unemployed                           | 1067        | 72    | 237         | 16    |
| <b>Variables of violence</b>                        |                                      |             |       |             |       |
| <b>Domestic violence cases</b>                      | Yes                                  | 611         | 41.3  | 334         | 22.6  |
|   | No                                   | 870         | 58.7  | 1144        | 77.4  |
| <b>Types of violence</b>                            |                                      |             |       |             |       |
| Women (n=611)                                       |                                      |             |       |             |       |
| Man (n=334)   |                                      |             |       |             |       |
| <b>Physical violence</b>                            | Yes                                  | 274         | 44.8  | 227         | 68    |
|   | No                                   | 337         | 55.2  | 107         | 32    |
| <b>Emotional violence</b>                           | Yes                                  | 417         | 68.2  | 170         | 50.9  |
|   | No                                   | 194         | 31.8  | 164         | 49.1  |
| <b>Sexual violence</b>                              | Yes                                  | 82          | 13.4  | 4           | 1.2   |
|   | No                                   | 529         | 86.6  | 330         | 98.8  |
| <b>Verbal violence</b>                              | Yes                                  | 457         | 74.8  | 232         | 69.5  |
|   | No                                   | 154         | 25.2  | 102         | 30.5  |
| <b>Economic violence</b>                            | Yes                                  | 113         | 18.5  | 29          | 8.7   |
|   | No                                   | 498         | 81.5  | 305         | 91.3  |
| <b>Other violence</b>                               | Yes                                  | 6           | 1.0   | 4           | 1.2   |
|   | No                                   | 605         | 99.0  | 330         | 98.8  |
| <b>The person subjected to violence</b>             | Spouse                               | 545         | 89.2  | 27          | 8.1   |
|   | Mother-Father                        | 43          | 7.0   | 185         | 55.4  |
| Women (n=611)                                       | Sibling                              | 2           | 0.3   | 14          | 4.2   |
| Man (n=334)   | Mother-in-law/ Father-in-law         | 12          | 2.0   | 1           | 0.3   |
|   | Friend-Colleague                     | 9           | 1.5   | 106         | 32.0  |
| <b>The frequency of being subjected to violence</b> | Always                               | 158         | 25.8  | 85          | 25.4  |
|   | Sometimes                            | 364         | 59.6  | 181         | 54.2  |
| Women (n=611)                                       | Rarely                               | 89          | 14.6  | 68          | 20.4  |
| Man (n=334)   |                                      |             |       |             |       |
| <b>The reaction when subjected to violence*</b>     | I stay silent                        | 415         | 67.9  | 215         | 64.4  |
|   | I received an apology and made peace | 208         | 34.0  | 54          | 16.2  |
| Women (n=611)                                       | I went to the police station         | 68          | 11.1  | 24          | 7.2   |
| Man (n=334)   | I left the house                     | 75          | 12.3  | 25          | 7.5   |
|   | I responded                          | 69          | 11.3  | 82          | 24.5  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |                                      | 1481        | 100.0 | 1478        | 100.0 |

\*More than one choice were marked

**Table 2:** Attitude towards Violence Scale (AVS) scores averages of women and men in Kutahya, Turkey

| Sub Groups   | Number of items | Women (M ± SD) | Men (M ± SD) | T      | p      |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|--------|--------|
| Attitude towards economic violence                               | 7               | 15.14± 5.80    | 18.31± 5.83  | -14.81 | <0.001 |
| Attitude related to emotional, psychological and sexual violence | 6               | 12.74± 4.92    | 15.95± 5.07  | -17.47 | <0.001 |
| Attitude regarding legitimizing myths                            | 3               | 6.59± 2.87     | 7.33± 2.84   | -7.31  | <0.001 |
| Attitude related to explanatory myths                            | 3               | 7.09± 3.02     | 7.74± 3.04   | -5.87  | <0.001 |
| Total Scale  | 19              | 41.57± 11.83   | 49.38± 11.52 | -18.18 | <0.001 |

74.5% of the women and 59.3% of the men agreed with the statement “Damaging the households (plate, glass, etc.) is also a kind of violence against women”.

In the subscale of attitude towards legitimating myths, 15.2% of the women and 21.2% of the men agreed with the statement “Husbands beat their wives due to jealousy”, while 40.2% of women and 56.6% of the men agreed with the statement “If the women behaves a little docile, she does not receive violence”. In the subscale of attitude towards explanatory myths, 25.7% of the women and 33.6% of the men agreed with the statement “It is natural for a woman to receive violence if she does not obey his husband”. The rate of agreement to the statement “Women are not subjected to violence in willing marriages” was 27.9% in women and 33.8% in men (Table 3).

### **Violence against women**

The mean scores on the attitude towards violence scale were found to be statistically significantly related to gender, education status, occupation, income status, co-educational status, co-occupation, marital age, family type, and subjection to violence ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 4).

### **Discussion**

Around the world, 35% of women are subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by their partner (spouse or cohabitant) during their lifetime<sup>14</sup>.

Surveys in some countries have shown that 70% of women experience physical and/or sexual violence from their partners at some point in their lives<sup>15</sup>. It has been reported that of the married women in Turkey, 36% have suffered from physical, 12% sexual, 44% psychological and 30% economic violence at some point in their life<sup>16</sup>.

In this study, 41.3% of women and 22.6% of men had been subjected to violence at some point in their lives. Other studies in the literature also showed high rates of violence to men and women<sup>2,17</sup>. The present study indicated that of the women, 74.3% and 67.7% had been subjected to verbal and emotional violence, respectively. On the other hand, 69.5% and 68% of the men had been subjected to verbal and physical violence, respectively. Women had mostly been subjected to violence by their husband (89.2%), whereas men had mostly been subjected to violence by their parents (55.4%). It can be concluded that women had been exposed to violence most frequently from men. A study by Keeling and Van Wormer supports this conclusion. However, men’s subjection to violence by their parents suggests that they had been exposed to violence during their childhood<sup>18</sup>. The fact that males have more negative attitudes towards violence and are more supportive of violence may be due to the fact that they were subjected to violence during their childhood. The majority of the participants stated that they had stayed silent to violence (Women: 67.9%; Men: 64.2%) (Table 1).

**Table 3:** Attitudes of women and men regarding violence against women in Kutahya, Turkey

| Attitude Statements  | Women     |             | Men              |           | Undecided % | I do not agree % | p      | X <sup>2</sup> |
|--|-----------|-------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|--------|----------------|
|  | I agree % | Undecided % | I do not agree % | I agree % |             |                  |        |                |
| <b>Attitude towards economic violence</b>  |           |             |                  |           |             |                  |        |                |
| It is natural that the responsibility of housework is expected from the women in the family where the women also work. | 24        | 6.5         | 69.5             | 33.4      | 12.3        | 54.3             | <0.001 | 77.17          |
| It is the husband's right to demand tubal ligation, saying, "Women should take responsibility for birth control."      | 12.9      | 6.1         | 81               | 14.1      | 15.3        | 70.6             | <0.001 | 68.92          |
| It is natural that your husband insists that the goods taken in marriage should be on his own.                         | 9.3       | 5.1         | 85.6             | 16.9      | 9.7         | 73.4             | <0.001 | 66.90          |
| I think it is normal that the husband does not allow his wife to work if the income is sufficient.                     | 37.8      | 8.8         | 53.4             | 56.1      | 10.4        | 33.5             | <0.001 | 122.25         |
| It is natural for the husband to claim all the money the women earn.   | 13.9      | 4.2         | 81.9             | 16.4      | 8.3         | 75.3             | <0.001 | 27.30          |
| A husband who says 'you will not go to work after tomorrow' surely knows something.                                    | 25.3      | 11.7        | 63               | 46.4      | 12.9        | 40.7             | <0.001 | 164.47         |
| The women's ideas about the costs of the house are also important, but the husband should always have the final word.  | 27        | 6.8         | 66.2             | 50.2      | 8.1         | 41.7             | <0.001 | 186.98         |
| <b>Attitude related to emotional, psychological and sexual violence</b>  |           |             |                  |           |             |                  |        |                |
| Nothing should be a reason for a husband to beat his wife.   | 83.7      | 2.8         | 13.5             | 69.9      | 7.8         | 22.5             | <0.001 | 87.28          |
| It is an insulting behavior when a wife asks a question and her husband does not reply.                                | 72.5      | 6.6         | 20.9             | 55.5      | 6.9         | 37.6             | <0.001 | 102.99         |
| The husband who says to his wife, "If you leave me, I will commit suicide." is exploiting his wife.                    | 65.8      | 12.3        | 21.9             | 54        | 15          | 31               | <0.001 | 44.58          |
| Damaging the households (plate, glass, etc.) is also a kind of violence against women.                                 | 74.5      | 6.9         | 18.6             | 59.3      | 9           | 31.7             | <0.001 | 80.12          |
| The fact that the husband does not allow birth control is a form of sexual harassment.                                 | 72.1      | 10.6        | 17.3             | 49.3      | 18.7        | 32               | <0.001 | 162.13         |
| I believe that the husband, who criticized his wife by saying she was not attractive, harasses his wife sexually.      | 67.8      | 11.8        | 20.4             | 46.8      | 16          | 37.2             | <0.001 | 139.31         |
| <b>Attitude regarding legitimizing myths</b>   |           |             |                  |           |             |                  |        |                |
| Husbands beat their wives due to jealousy.   | 15.5      | 4.1         | 80.5             | 21.2      | 7.9         | 70.8             | <0.001 | 41.04          |
| In the families whose livelihoods are suffering, it is natural for the husbands to show violence to his wife.          | 16.5      | 3.8         | 79.6             | 15.5      | 5.6         | 78.9             | 0.06   | 5.43           |
| If the women behave a little docile, she does not receive violence.  | 40.2      | 9.2         | 50.6             | 56.6      | 11.2        | 32.2             | <0.001 | 104.80         |
| <b>Attitude related to explanatory myths</b>   |           |             |                  |           |             |                  |        |                |
| Women are not subjected to violence in willing marriages.  | 27.9      | 10.1        | 62.0             | 33.8      | 11.0        | 55.2             | <0.001 | 14.64          |
| I think educated men do not show violence against their wives.   | 24.3      | 8.9         | 66.8             | 31.8      | 8.5         | 59.7             | <0.001 | 20.83          |
| It is natural for a woman to receive violence if she does not obey his husband.  | 25.7      | 6.7         | 67.6             | 33.6      | 11.5        | 54.9             | <0.001 | 53.51          |

**Table 4:** Factors that affect the attitudes of women and men regarding violence against women in Kutahya, Turkey

| Factor                                |                              | Women<br>M ± SD | Men<br>M ± SD | F/t        | p      |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------|--------|
| <b>Education status</b>               | Elementary school            | 45.59±11.45     | 55.07±10.15   | F = 50.95  | <0.001 |
|                                       | Secondary school             | 43.52±11.03     | 50.65±11.19   | F = 100.90 | <0.001 |
|                                       | High school                  | 38.01±9.80      | 48.52±10.52   |            |        |
|                                       | College and higher education | 33.10±9.71      | 45.53±11.91   |            |        |
| <b>Profession</b>                     | Employed                     | 35.37±10.60     | 48.96±11.61   | t = -3.17  | <0.001 |
|                                       | Unemployed                   | 43.88±11.43     | 51.55±10.77   | t = -12.98 | <0.001 |
| <b>Income status</b>                  | Low                          | 43.79±12.31     | 53.21±11.26   | F = 5.38   | <0.001 |
|                                       | Middle                       | 41.65±11.50     | 49.58±11.39   | F = 9.36   | <0.001 |
|                                       | High                         | 38.47±12.71     | 45.68±11.32   |            |        |
| <b>Education status of the spouse</b> | Elementary school            | 46.39±11.46     | 51.91±10.60   | F = 33.02  | <0.001 |
|                                       | Secondary school             | 43.83±11.84     | 49.48±11.13   | F = 73.41  | <0.001 |
|                                       | High school                  | 40.86±10.72     | 49.10±12.28   |            |        |
| <b>Spouse's profession</b>            | College and higher education | 34.96±10.32     | 42.49±10.90   |            |        |
|                                       | Employed                     | 40.47±11.54     | 44.25±11.44   | t = 8.23   | <0.001 |
|                                       | Unemployed                   | 46.58±11.64     | 50.87±11.20   | t = -7.87  | <0.001 |
| <b>Marriage age</b>                   | Between 11 and 20            | 43.89±11.75     | 53.62±10.06   | F = 26.96  | <0.001 |
|                                       | Between 21 and 23            | 39.05±10.88     | 50.97±12.19   | F = 33.47  | <0.001 |
|                                       | Between 24 and 26            | 36.98±11.26     | 47.54±11.30   |            |        |
|                                       | 27 and over                  | 36.52±10.59     | 45.63±10.68   |            |        |
| <b>Family type</b>                    | Core family                  | 41.44±11.65     | 49.26±11.47   | F = 1.34   | 0.26   |
|                                       | Large family                 | 43.96±12.68     | 51.39±12.43   | F = 10.09  | <0.001 |
|                                       | Scattered family             | 34.84±10.83     | 49.29±11.04   |            |        |
| <b>Subjection to violence</b>         | Yes                          | 42.08±12.37     | 50.87±12.96   | t = 2.46   | <0.05  |
|                                       | No                           | 41.21±11.42     | 48.94±11.03   | t = 1.37   | 0.17   |

The values of F, t, and p in the upper cells are valid for men.

The values of F, t, and p in the lower cells are valid for women.

In our study, the mean AVS score of the males (49.38±11.52) was found to be higher than that of the females (41.57±11.83). Accordingly, it can be concluded that men's attitudes towards violence against women are traditional, away from modern opinion. In other words, it can be asserted that men regard violence as "natural and acceptable phenomena" (Table 2).

When the attitude statements of women and men concerning violence against women are examined, it is also clear that the attitudes of society towards violence conform to the patriarchal society structure, away from modern opinion (Table 3). It was observed that men's attitudes towards violence were more negative than women's attitudes towards violence, and that men

become accustomed to violence. This is thought to be because of the male dominated patriarchal social structure in Turkey. Sakalli-Ugurlu and Ulu conducted a study in Ankara, Turkey, and found that men displayed more tolerant attitudes towards violence against women<sup>19</sup>. Sabanciogulları *et al.* determined that women had more contemporary attitudes towards violence against women<sup>20</sup>. Saeed Ali *et al.* conducted a study on gender roles and attitudes towards violence against women in Pakistan and found that men were more likely to have patriarchal attitudes than women<sup>21</sup>. According to feminist theorists, the acceptability of male violence against women varies by the level of patriarchal values among cultures<sup>22</sup>. Literature also shows similar results<sup>23, 24</sup>. In conclusion, the

literature is parallel to our study, and women have negative attitudes towards violence against women (physical, sexual, economic, and verbal) and that men have more traditional attitudes. Other studies in the literature support the findings that men have more traditional attitudes towards violence than women<sup>5, 25, 26</sup>. In the present study, gender, educational status, occupation, income status, co-educational status, co-occupation, marriage age, family type, and violence subjection were found to affect women's and men's attitudes towards violence (Table 4). Socio-demographic and socio-cultural variables (gender-discriminatory approach and patriarchal system) were found to influence the attitudes of women and men towards violence against women. Studies found that socio-demographic and cultural characteristics of society are influential on individuals' attitudes towards violence<sup>27, 28, 29</sup>. Gender is an important factor affecting the attitudes of society towards violence against women. There are differences between men and women in terms of their attitudes towards violence. In our study, men were found to regard violence as natural and acceptable phenomena. Rodriguez-Martinez and Khalil also reported that men were more likely to justify domestic violence against women<sup>30</sup>.

In addition, the present study found that those who were exposed to violence obtained a higher mean score on the scale of attitudes toward violence (Table 4). Studies on violence report that witnessing or experiencing violence can be influential on individuals' attitudes towards violence. The reason for this may be that violence is a learned behavior and is transferred to future generations in this way<sup>31</sup>. The present study determined that individuals who witnessed violence against women in their workplace or residence tend to have a more traditional approach to violence.

Individuals exposed to violence at a young age normalize violence and display a more negative attitude. Unfortunately, this shows that personal experience negatively affects attitudes towards violence, as well as attempts to prevent violence against women. The literature shows that people who are or have been subjected to violence have more negative attitudes towards violence<sup>32,33</sup>.

## Limitations

The results of this study cover only one province and cannot be generalized to Turkey. Future studies should address these issues by including samples in more places. Qualitative in-depth studies should be conducted.

## Conclusion

In this study, the rates of the incidence of violence were found to be higher against women. Socio-demographic and socio-cultural variables (gender-discriminatory approach and patriarchal system) were found to influence the attitudes of women and men towards violence against women. The attitudes towards violence against women were found to be more positive in women. The rate of accepting violence as natural (acceptable) phenomena was found to be higher among men. That is, the attitudes of men towards violence against women are closer to the traditional approach, away from the modern approach. In addition, it is concluded that the state of being subjected to violence in men negatively affects their attitudes towards violence against women. As a result, violence against women still continues in Turkey even in the 21st century.

It is necessary to raise social awareness on the issues of gender equality and violence against women to eliminate the negative attitudes and behaviors that create and reinforce violence against women. In this regard significant duties rest with primarily men, the government, non-governmental organizations, high-ranking officials who make legal arrangements, legislators, health institutions and all individuals. Also, efforts should be made to improve women's social status. Furthermore, educating women and their spouses can be useful in preventing violence.

## Ethical Considerations

A written permission was obtained from the institution where the study was conducted; the ethical approval was obtained from the Clinical Research Ethics Committee of Afyon Kocatepe University. Oral consent was obtained from the

participants who were informed about the objective of this study.

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## Contributions

Study design: FB, ND; data collection: FB, SC, HYS; article drafting: FB; data interpretation: FB; revision final approval of the article: FB.

## Conflict of Interest

All authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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