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## Gendered Reflections in Turkish Proverbs: Parental Roles and Child-Rearing

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**Annotation** *This article explores the representation of gendered parental roles in Turkish proverbs, focusing on the ways in which these cultural expressions reflect and perpetuate societal expectations regarding motherhood and fatherhood. Proverbs are examined as cultural artifacts that both mirror and construct traditional norms within Turkish society, particularly concerning child-rearing practices. The analysis reveals a binary division of parental responsibilities: mothers are typically depicted as nurturing, self-sacrificing caregivers, responsible for transmitting moral and emotional values to their children, while fathers are represented as providers, authority figures, and protectors of the family. These gendered portrayals reinforce patriarchal frameworks that place disproportionate emotional labor on mothers and economic responsibilities on fathers. At the same time, the article highlights emerging shifts in Turkish society, where modern dynamics increasingly challenge and renegotiate traditional parental roles. By examining specific proverbs and their cultural implications, the study demonstrates how linguistic traditions not only preserve historical gender stereotypes but also interact with ongoing debates on equality, parenting, and social change. In this way, Turkish proverbs serve as both historical mirrors and active agents of cultural continuity and transformation in family life, providing a fertile ground for linguistic, sociological, and gender-focused inquiry.*

**Keywords** *Turkish proverbs, gender stereotypes, parental roles, motherhood, fatherhood, cultural norms, social change*

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## Гендерные отражения в турецких пословицах: родительские роли и воспитание детей

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**Аннотация** *В статье исследуются гендерные родительские роли в турецких пословицах, с акцентом на то, каким образом данные культурные выражения отражают и закрепляют социальные ожидания в отношении материнства и отцовства. Пословицы рассматриваются как культурные артефакты, которые не только отражают, но и формируют традиционные нормы турецкого общества, особенно в области воспитания детей. Анализ выявляет бинарное распределение обязанностей: матери изображаются как заботливые, жертвенные воспитательницы, ответственные за передачу моральных и эмоциональных ценностей детям, в то время как отцы представлены в роли кормильцев, авторитетных фигур и защитников семьи. Эти гендерные представления укрепляют патриархальные модели, возлагая чрезмерную эмоциональную нагрузку на*

*матерей и экономические обязанности на отцов. В то же время подчёркиваются современные изменения в турецком обществе, где всё чаще пересматриваются и трансформируются традиционные родительские роли. Анализ конкретных пословиц и их культурных импликаций показывает, что языковые традиции не только сохраняют исторические стереотипы, но и участвуют в современных дебатах о равенстве, воспитании и социальных изменениях.*

**Ключевые слова** *Турецкие пословицы, гендерные стереотипы, родительские роли, материнство, отцовство, культурные нормы, социальные изменения*

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## **Turk maqollarida genderli akslar: ota-onalik rollari va bolalar tarbiyasi**

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**Annotatsiya** *Maqolada turk maqollarida jinsiy farqlarga asoslangan ota-onalik rollari tahlil qilinadi hamda ushbu madaniy ifodalar onalik va otalik haqidagi ijtimoiy kutishlarni qanday aks ettirishi va mustahkamlashi ko'rsatiladi. Maqollar turk jamiyatidagi an'anaviy me'yorlarni, ayniqsa bolalarni tarbiyalash borasida, nafaqat aks ettiruvchi, balki ularni shakllantiruvchi madaniy artefakt sifatida talqin qilinadi. Tahlil ota-onalik majburiyatlarining binar taqsimotini ochib beradi: onalar odatda mehribon, fidokor va bolalarga axloqiy hamda hissiy qadriyatlarini yetkazuvchi sifatida tasvirlanadi, otalar esa oilaning boqimandasi, avtoriteti va himoyachisi sifatida ko'rsatiladi. Bunday gender tasvirlari patriarxal tuzilmalarni mustahkamlaydi, onalarga ortiqcha hissiy yuk, otalarga esa iqtisodiy mas'uliyat yuklaydi. Shu bilan birga, zamonaviy turk jamiyatida an'anaviy ota-onalik rollarini qayta ko'rib chiqish va o'zgartirish jarayoni kuchayib bormoqda. Maqolada ayrim maqollar va ularning madaniy mazmuni tahlili orqali til an'analari tarixiy stereotiplarni saqlab qolish bilan birga, tenglik, tarbiya va ijtimoiy o'zgarishlarga oid zamonaviy bahslar jarayonida faol ishtirok etishi ko'rsatiladi.*

**Kalit so'zlar** *Turk maqollari, gender stereotiplari, ota-onalik rollari, onalik, otalik, madaniy me'yorlar, ijtimoiy o'zgarishlar*

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Proverbs are a very important part of Turkish culture and are the products of common sense and the customs of the society. They capture cultural norms and beliefs regarding how life should be lived, including in relation to raising children. Turkish proverbs express strong beliefs regarding the responsibility of mothers and fathers in their

children's education and underline the existence of biologically driven gender differences.

Regarding these latter proverbs, it can be seen from the proverbs how social values affect the responsibilities given to the parents, approximately showing a broader picture in terms of gender roles in Turkish community life.

Translated into the Turkish social context, the proverbs express the belief that a mother should be, primarily, a loving, nourishing, and caring individual, together with being the moral guardian for her children. This explanation is well-grounded in the historic patriarchal system of Turkish culture, which conceives of maternity as disinterested sacrifice. As Delaney (2013) noted, the mother is a symbol of softness and courage to children, the primary emotional anchor point.

Proverbs focusing on this motivational aspect frequently praise the mother as the one responsible for transmitting virtues and values to her children, indicating a social preference for maternal advice in education. Generalizing sentences like *“the first teacher of a child is its mother”* reinforces such attitudes, emphasizing the role expected to be played by mothers as the primary sites of socialization.

On the other hand, the picture of fathers in Turkish proverbs revolves around breadwinner and authority issues. Fathers are typically depicted as a source of family support and a strong guide, which are roles traditionally fitting a male in the family. Öztop et al. (2021) extend upon this dynamic; proverbs associate fathers with the role as the breadwinner, highlighting a sex-specific boundary in responsibilities. Sentences like *“the father is the head of the home”* resonate with this vision of the world that also casts fathers as figureheads, central peacekeepers from a distance whose primary concern is domiciliary revenues, not emotional investment in the education of a child.

This binary gender role portrayal in proverbs mirrors larger cultural narratives about what is expected from a mother and father in the context of Turkish culture. Given strong reminders to like-age fathers, paternal provision clearly contrasts with motherly education, implying that the norm prescribes quite different channels of commitment in access to education across gender. This traditional binary, especially, contributes to the rigidity of a system that puts

the brakes on the fungibility of parental roles – for which these norms can be a ground for disciplinary discourse and societal interrogation.

Moreover, proverbs are of the essence in the socialization of new men, and they transfer the stereotypes, expectations, and roles from one generation to another. They are not just a mirror of attitudes but are actually active agents in the construction/advancement of particular forms of gendered roles. Turkish proverbs thus represent a precious locus through which we are able to investigate the implications of sex-specific parenting moralities in the given era, presenting reflections on the ongoing negotiation between traditional expectations and modern parental behaviors.

Issues related to how gendered expectations still play and act upon the dynamics of family life in Türkiye are further outlined and reflected upon by those characters on the basis of the proverbs about ways of self-fulfillment. A significant impact by proverbs that circulate around the expectation and the responsibility given to the role of mothers in the Turkish culture is identified. These proverbs carry social role-related knowledge about mothers, focusing on nurturing, self-sacrifice, and emotional support. For instance, the Turkish proverb *Çocuk, Ana Karnında Büyür* tells us of the indissoluble bond between mother and child and the essentiality of the love and care of the mother right from the early ages. This expression implies more than the physical nourishment to which I, as a mother, refer, as it emphasizes the emotional investment that is involved, hence reinforcing the belief that a mother’s role extends beyond the mere caring and is also based on deep emotional bonds and sacrifices. In support of this, another popular short proverb, *Anne Sütünün Hakkı Ödenmez* (it is impossible to repay a debt of mother’s milk), helps to convey gratefulness for a lifetime to a mother, indicating the idea of motherhood as a never-equalled commitment.

The proverb gives us the idea of sacrosanct maternity by portraying maternal abnegation at the core of bringing up the children. This definition that calls attention to the duty owed to one's mother also contributes to the construction of a social image as defining for early Turkish society, where mothers primarily occupied the role of caregiver (Gözpınar 2013). The pressure placed on mothers to fulfill roles that require a considerable amount of emotional labor reflects the broader socio-cultural context, which prioritizes the maternal role in shaping and influencing the child's development. Moreover, proverbs such as *Evlad, Ana Babanın Aynasıdır* (the child is a mirror reflecting the parent) further emphasize the fact that mothers are expected to shape the desirable morals and attitudes of their children. The reflection contains the unsaid message that the child's personality and future success are the result of a mother's shaping, which adds new pressure on mothers to fulfill the duties expected of them. These depictions may add to the considerable burden faced by mothers who feel that they should strive to be virtuous, patient, and selfless in their mothering.

Mothers are often situated to navigate through the knots of children's learning, between individual, equal aspirations and social expectations, and these knots might have the effect of constructing conflicts in the meanings they offer in order to maintain a possible coherent self around normative standards inscribed by cultural narratives. In terms of what the proverbs may entail for the identity of the mother, Yılmaz & Yakar (2016) suggest that these cultural sayings may sustain regulatory notions of femininity and maternity responsibilities. These proverbs can also create an oppressive standard for motherhood, where mothers who do not fit this ideal role of helping and self-sacrifice are frequently condemned. This situation can expose mothers to the community's judgments and demands, adding

difficulty to the experiences with family dynamics.

Proverbs are not only indicative of the conceptualizations of motherhood but also a goal through which the broader gender dynamic of the culture can be interrogated, demonstrating how cultural narratives contribute to shaping the motherhood identity and the practice of parenting in the Turkish context. In conclusion, these proverbs have important consequences well beyond the expressions themselves; they construct the identities and roles of mothers.

There is also a related proverb: *Evlad, Babaya Benzer* translates to "a child is like the father". This proverb clearly represents the patriarchal view that the parentage and characteristics of the father are essential for the building of a child's identity. According to Metindogan (2015), such proverbs reinforce the notion that fathers are predominantly responsible for the values, behaviors, and social status imbibed by children. This view naturally makes the father the authority figure and corresponds to the long-standing socially constructed gender roles of increased male dominance and leadership in decision-making in the family.

Proverbs, including *Baba Evin Direğidir*, translated as "the father is the pillar of the home (family)," and *Babasız Ev, Çölde Kulübedir*, meaning "a home without a father is like a shack in a desert," demonstrate a deep idea that fathers are the essence of family, which is the nucleus unit of societies. These foundations are, of course, an important part of the nation. This symbolic depiction emphasizes the social norm of a father being a protector and a provider, reinforcing the idea that he is primarily responsible for ensuring that the family's needs, both material and emotional, are met. These aphorisms reflect the enduring stereotype of "father as head of the head" in the Turkish community, which places fathers at the core of a family as the economic and moral backbone (Yalçınöz, 2011).

Although modern Turkish society is changing, these sayings contend with the pull of the rising call for equality in parental roles. The studies by Kisbu et al. (2023) note a shift in paternal participation, in that more and more fathers are being active in terms of caring for their children and the running of the household, which in turn questions the traditional patriarchal demarcation of paid work and domestic work. This development indicates a possible change in the kind of authorship the company wishes to promote in order to drift from the rigidly authoritative and single-focused model of the supplier celebrated by traditional proverbs.

However, the crystallization of the proverb serves as a cultural touchstone, and we are also invited to compare the attitudes set out in it and to challenge how much of this authoritative wisdom is still imbibed by society's conscience. For instance, proverbs focused on discipline, such as *Kız Babası, Kızını Döver; Oğul Babası, Oğlunu Sever* (a father of a daughter beats her; a father of a son loves him), may even sustain the harmful perceptions about affection, love, and disciplinary attitudes of the father. These stories run the risk of perpetuating a corrosive ideal that warmth is a kind of bonus given for raising sons and denied to daughters, solidifying stereotyped gender biases in parenting.

The consequence of these proverbs pulls at simple linguistic phrases and tells about the social life of Turkish society. By identifying and examining the continued salience of these sayings, we are provided with insight into the normative structure that controls the paternity and appropriate conduct of males as fathers. And inasmuch as sensitivities toward gender equality reshape the features of family interactions, traditional wisdom, in this case, proverbs and contemporary child-rearing practices, create interesting fields for further studies on the modernity of family roles in Türkiye. The point of intersection between tradition and modernity as regards their father role in parenting is a critical space that should

be the focus of sociological research on one side and cultural criticism on the other. Be gendered as a result of language and newly evolved gender norms. The children nurture recent changes in parents prior to the start of the process and the situation of a new era of Türkiye in both the evolution of the era regarding gender and the evolution of gender roles, which are mobile proverbs. This modification points to a society that battles tradition and bows to modern influence. The Turkish folklore common proverbs more comprised the idea that the creation of the children was the work of the maternal line, soothing medicine, and emphasis on the mother's milk's characteristics. Nonetheless, as noted by Corapci et al. (2025), perceiving paternity is changing, and this stems from the idea in which parents are perceived as participating in a more active paternity.

This process of evolution is illustrated through proverbs and proverbs that consider the father as something more than just a breadwinner. The increasing recognition of the biological father's role is also relevant because paternity activation is a work in progress. Kuscul & Adamsons' (2022) findings, though, imply that such paternal involvement can enhance children's emotional and social development. They maintain that when parents are involved with the care, this not only strengthens the father-child bond but also the caring image, which is often associated with the mother role. Old aphorisms not to get involved in nourishing activities as a parent are gradually being replaced/modulated in more modern talk.

But these shifts are not without their problems. The experiences of the single mother: traditionally, the experiences of single women with children are under-referred to in proverbs but increasingly registered in modern discourse. Kavas and Gündüz-Hoşgör's (2013) body of work presents the various challenges that single mothers are confronted with in the Turkish socio-economic context, such as social exclusion and economic deprivation. Old

proverbs do not suffice to convey the experiences of these women, representing an incongruence between folk wisdom and the realities of contemporary parenting.

One further ramification: meanwhile, single mothers navigate the muddy waters of birthing and raising children with no partner by their side, and the cultural discourse about motherhood is in need of an overhaul. Roles of parents: the impact of socioeconomic status on parents' functions is also profound, and various economic conditions result in different conducts of parents in families. Erdem et al. (2022) claim that economic stability has a remarkable effect on the extent to which mothers/parents are able to do paternity. In families with financial problems, for example, pressure may be exerted on parents to work more and children less, and the weight of caring for children is traditionally the responsibility of the mother. This indeed conforms with the standard proverbs, which regard the mother as the principal caregiver. However, it reflects an evolutionary discourse on *co-mattaita* in difficult times.

Moreover, the study of Gözmen Elmas et al. (2025) suggests that, with improved socioeconomic status, there is a shift toward more equalizing divisions of parents' roles. Their results indicate that parents are less likely to identify collaborative papers for parents whenever economic security is present, which generationoplasty and eating together are assumed from social authorization, without gender assumption. This trend is indicative of a cultural shift that may be able to change the face of ancient proverbs, or their meanings, and bring further social acceptance of diverse family and parental dynamics.

Having flexed and stretched the frame, we see now that as much as Turkish proverbs have been steeped in traditional notions, so Turkish proverbs can change to express changes that are taking place in Western conceptions of gender and parenting. The reflection of the modern view on paternity and models of the family as attacked in proverbs

reminds us of the old cultural proverbs, epitomizing changed expectations that society expects from child-raising patterns. Further, social expectations and/or tasks attributed to the mothers and the fathers are explained through the Turkish proverbs exhibiting the gender differences in paternity. It is these proverbs – as brief and as powerful statements of communal wisdom – that would stand as cultural products that would represent the core values, beliefs, and norms of Turkish culture.

The use of these proverbs revealed the fact that traditional male and female sex roles are still very much woven into the fabric of paternity in Türkiye, where mothers and fathers are expected and held accountable for different and not infrequently opposing roles. Examined proverbs demonstrate a central ideal that mothers are nurturant, sacrificing, and devoted carers, frequently expressed in terms of sacrificial love and emotional labor. These norms fit into a broader view in society that women are educators and moral instructors of their children, replicating a mother stereotype that emphasizes motherhood with a focus on domesticity and emotional availability. Whereas, parents around parents tend to value authority, discipline, and financial stability. This binary not only defines the anticipated competencies of the respective modes of parenting but also indicates a larger discourse in which paternal involvement is a matter of economics, not emotion.

Moreover, tensions of traditional and modern gender norms in Turkish fatherhood become more significant in the context of ongoing social transformation. (2019) observe that shifts in economic structures, rising participation in the female labor market, and radical social movements are transforming the familial scenario, resulting in new parenting models that call into question definitive standards. For instance, proverbs of the form that are being interpreted today (after which the current and lethal stereotype holds that the flexibility of gender roles usually and necessarily decreases after initially

augmenting) may instead be evaluated for their potential flexibility elsewhere, where rather than the classic fixed role of the father, collaboration in paternity is all the rage.

Sieben and Gürcüoğlu (2020) also point out the necessity of analyzing the role of popular media and culture in the changing contemporary perspectives related to gender paternity. Paternity Proverbs and Primate Paternalism: This evolutionary story about paternity is one source of evidence for the slow reframing of paternity proverbs, indicating that proverbs are not merely passive reflections of stationary cultural beliefs but are an arena in which negotiation and change can take place.

The implications for research are numerous. A consideration of how proverbs related to family forms and social expectations can illuminate the interplay between change and tradition in determining the practices of parents in the modern age. The extent to which the relevance and resonance of traditional proverbs change with new generations of parents can still be explored in relation to the parental styles among the various Turkish communities – be

they rural versus urban Türkiye. Moreover, the encoding of culture and the widespread use of social media in the modern Turkish community create an exceptional opportunity for mapping and tracking the extension of paternity-related proverbs. Looking at social media discussions on paternity on forums like Instagram or Twitter can show how proverbs are called on, adapted, or challenged in public conversation — and ultimately point to wider social changes.

In short, they are a mirror of history regarding gender paternity and a possible prism through which the latter can be viewed descriptively. In a developing country like Türkiye, where attitudes towards gender and parenting roles have been changing rapidly, the lasting veracity of these proverbs demands a more nuanced exploration of what these societal expectations mean for parents and, in turn, a child to whom these ideas are directed. An analysis of these cultural artifacts can inform the debate around the social practices of Turkish children but is likely to provide insights into wider debates around gender equality and social change in the arenas of family life.

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