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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND FAMILY LIFE AS EXPERIENCED BY TURKISH IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN GERMANY

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Aim and scope of the research study

The aim of this research study was to collect empirical information on the family life of Turkish immigrant women living in Berlin, as well as on their experiences of domestic violence and their strategies against it. In Germany, as in most of Western Europe, there is a stereotype of Moslem women as having very low decision-making power in the family and being exposed to more violence than their Western counterparts at home. This paper argues that women from Moslem or Eastern societies develop and apply various strategies of decision making power at home and stand up to the violence in their daily lives, just as much as other women despite the drawbacks which result from their immigrant status. Our findings support these hypotheses showing that a high percentage of women perceive themselves as having equal or more power in decision making at home. Nevertheless, nearly half of the women report experiencing physical, psychological, financial or sexual violence from their husbands. One of the most interesting findings of the study is that a high percentage of women have utilized several strategies to stop the violence or to escape the context of violence despite several drawbacks that result from their immigrant status.

Domestic violence: prevalence and dynamics

The violence women have had to endure in the family has been one of the taboos hardest to break throughout the centuries. Beginning in the 1970's in the USA and Northern European countries, the women's movement adopted violence against women as one of its main issues, and thus became an effective force in the breakdown of this taboo. As the number of shelters increased in various countries and as the taboos were broken down, the domestic violence that women were subjected to became increasingly more obvious. Studies conducted in various countries worldwide provide examples regarding the prevalence of domestic violence. Just to cite a few examples, in the USA 3 to 4 million women are beaten by their husbands every year. In France, 95% of violence victims are women, and 55% of these women are victims of their own husbands. In Denmark, 25% of women state physical violence to be a major cause of divorce. The situation is similar for countries of the South. In a family research study in Kenya, of the 733 participating women, 42% stated that their husbands periodically beat them. In Bangladesh, women killed by their husbands constitute 50% of all homicides in the country (Heise, 1992). According to the statistics of the Bucharest Legal Medicine Hospital in Rumania, between March 1993 and March 1994, 29 % of women referred to the hospital needed treatment due to beatings by their husbands or boyfriends (The Domestic Violence in Eastern Europe Project, 1995). In Russia, a formal declaration by the government stated that in 1994, 15,000 women died as a result of their spouses' violent behavior (Clarke, 1995).

The number of such studies conducted in Turkey with Turkish women remains very limited. A 1988 study conducted by PIAR is the first study on this issue in Turkey.¹ According to this work,

¹ PIAR is one of the main public survey and polling research groups in Turkey.

75% of all married women in Turkey are beaten by their husbands. Another PIAR study conducted with 1181 women over the age of 30 from 20 different provinces in 1992, shows the following results: 22% of women are exposed to physical violence by their husbands; 45% of these women feel helpless in the face of this situation; only 25% of these battered women could develop a strategy to defend themselves from the beatings.² Esmer (1993), who did a study on 116 couples from Istanbul, finds that 44% of the women included in the study had been beaten by their husbands at least once. 55% of all the women agreed that there “could be” situations where women actually should be beaten by their husbands. 46% of husbands who were interviewed said they never beat their wives, while 44% indirectly confessed to beating their wives. For husbands who beat their wives, the major reason seems to be that the wives “do not do as they are told”.

Domestic violence against women rests on the foundations of male dominant society. Male dominance in political, societal, economical structures and in the family plays an important role in contributing to domestic violence against women and hinders women in finding ways to escape from violence. Therefore, the dynamics producing domestic violence are not only due to the dynamics within the family, but also to the social, legal, economical, traditional, political and educational structures in society, which discriminate against women and make them dependent on men. Superiority of men's status as compared to women resulting from the legal structure and the male dominant traditions of society such as deeming it “natural” that women should serve men and that men should have more of a say in domestic decisions, are all factors which further enforce violence against women.

Beyond its physical aspect, domestic violence has various other dimensions that feed into one another. The main ones may be listed as follows (Pence, 1985):

- *Emotional violence*: Treating the woman in a condescending manner, speaking to her in a derogatory manner, getting the woman to see herself as a “psychological case”, leading to her loss of self confidence, blaming her for the violence she has to suffer through, or denying the violent acts she is subjected to.
- *Economic violence*: Not allowing the woman to work, not giving her an allowance or limiting that allowance, taking away her money, or not giving her information about the family's income.
- *Sexual violence*: Forcing the woman into sexual conduct against her wishes, rape, and sexual abuse of children.
- *Threatening the woman*: Threatening to beat or kill the woman, to leave her, to commit suicide or to force the woman to do illegal things.
- *Using the children against the woman*: Threatening the woman by telling her she will never see the children again if she leaves, to make the woman feel guilty in relation to her children, to use the children as messengers of threats.
- *Intimidation*: To throw food onto the floor, to break things, to deliberately hurt household pets in front of the woman, to keep weapons at home, and so on.
- *Isolation of the woman from her environment*: To limit the behavioral freedom of the woman, to prevent her from seeing her family or friends, to start arguments due to jealousy fits, and so on.

² PIAR 1992 was conducted under commission by the General Directorate on Women's Status and Problems.

Immigrant Turkish women living in Germany

Despite the fact that Turkish women constitute the largest group of immigrant women living in Germany, and although they have been the topic of much public discussion and media coverage, very few empirical studies exist on Turkish immigrant women in Germany, and none of them are about domestic violence. Since much of the research regarding the Turkish women living in Germany is conducted by German researchers, study results often reflect, support and even strengthen the existing prejudiced views. Furthermore, given the very limited number of studies on this topic, the observations and interpretations based usually on a small number of women are then generalized to immigrant Turkish women as a whole (Nauck, 1992).

In a study investigating the place of foreign women in German Literature, Hebestreit (1984) states that the picture drawn of foreign women in the German public and media can be summarized as "backward", "isolated" and "in need of help". Akkent (1993) posits that, the view of immigrants themselves as "the problem", and their culture as the largest obstacle to integration, constitute the hypotheses of most studies:

"The common characteristic of all these studies is that they do not reflect the real status of Turkish immigrant women. In other words, they are merely an expression of the image of the Orient that prevails in Western Europe. Answering all questions in terms of characteristics of Islam is accepted as a major principle, and this principle in turn enforces the standard hypothesis: Namely, that Moslem women are subject to a much more specific form of oppression by men in the family than do Western Women." (1993:9)

Lutz (1991) points to the fact that studies done on women who have migrated to Germany from Turkey, North Africa or Pakistan mainly focus on the fact that these women are "immigrants", or that "they are from an Islamic country". According to Lutz, these researchers work in a paradigm where immigrant women are defined as victims, and consequently present the data collected from the Moslem immigrant women within the same framework. As immigrant women's comments about themselves are presented in a distorted manner, they are doomed to their roles as "victims".

The identity and needs of "foreign" women have been one of the main issues of the German Women's movement in recent times. The immigrant women who have participated in the movement were able to verbalize their own experiences and needs for themselves. As such they were effective in destroying the image of the "immigrant woman" held by German feminists, an image that was not all that different from the one portrayed in the media and in public discussions. They also reminded everyone that they were not "objects" in need of help, but rather "subjects" fighting for their rights. This struggle by immigrant women has in fact helped the staggering German women's movement to gain some momentum by confronting them with the dominant and racist male discourse that they have internalized.

Immigrant women and domestic violence

Morokvasic (1983) points out that until the mid 1970's, women remained an "invisible" mass in studies related to immigrants, and in cases where they were mentioned; it was only in relation to men. While there are a very few studies which take immigrant women to be their "subject", studies about the domestic violence experienced by these women are almost non-existent.

Van Stolk and Wouters (1987), in a broad study on 250 women violence victims at a mother-child center in the Netherlands, make no effort to discuss problems specific to immigrant women who constitute one sixth of the sample group. In the short section devoted to immigrant women

(1987: 59-56), what the authors choose to report are the observations of the Dutch women and the research team about the immigrant women at the center than these women's own accounts of their experiences.

The violence experienced by immigrant men and women in the host country, and their coping strategies are of a different nature. Whereas men may become targets of racial attacks, they are rarely attacked by women. One of the major difficulties facing immigrant women is their inability to identify any viable alternatives to their family and close social network, given a myriad of intertwined factors that work to their disadvantage: such as legal status, lack of education, unemployment, financial dependency, the lack of familiar social support systems and traditional gender roles, and so on.

In her work on Palestinian migrant women in Berlin, Abdulrahim (1993) has come to the conclusion that the Palestinian women living in West Berlin have no real alternatives other than their family and fellow citizens. According to Abdulrahim:

"On one hand, their Palestinian network favors gender discrimination and isolation of women from social activities, while on the other hand, the socio-economic and political structure in West Berlin does not permit the integration of these women into society. Moreover, the pressure that the women feel in their status as an immigrant, a member of foreign minority group in Berlin is much stronger than the gender discrimination they experience in their homes and social networks. It is impossible to consider the improvement of the status of migrant woman in her family and her gain of social power, independent of the lack of power she experiences in the German Society". (1993:79).

Obviously one major drawback immigrant women experience much more than their Western counterparts in the face of violence is the lack of support they have due to their legal status, language problems, difficulties in setting up a new social network, being unable to reach institutions dealing with domestic violence, or the lack of work being done with such women in these institutions. The Moslem, Turkish culture, which supposedly makes immigrant women "obedient, weak, and even accepting of violence" has been pointed out as the main reason that immigrant women subjected to domestic violence cannot get out of their violent relationships. Such a view undermines the numerous other factors that face these women in real life. Furthermore, an underlying assumption of this hypothesis is a view of culture as a static phenomenon. Culture, however, is a conglomeration of various categories, which constantly evolves through time. Moreover, it is impossible to prevent dialectical interactions between the culture of the minority group and the culture of the dominant society, no matter how "closed" the group can be.

The recently fashionable concept of a "cultural diversity" dictates that because different groups have different cultural structures, each group should live in accordance with their own "culture", their own religions and traditional values. While this is considered a "progressive" view, it can at times support the discrimination and the social pressure that women face. Such models that are proposed to counter racism need also to be scrutinized carefully from a gender perspective.

Our experience has been that when provided with sufficient support and direction, these women do end their violent relationships. Although there are instances when women return to their husbands once, or even a few times, due to various reasons -- to give it another chance, or because they are afraid of living as a single woman, or also due to threats from their husbands -- most of them end the relationship if the violence continues.

While women show individual differences in terms of why they do not or cannot leave their husbands, problems originating in societal structure are similar for almost all women. Some of the factors which make it difficult for immigrant women to leave relationships where they are subjected to violence, may be listed as follows:

- **Threats by the husband and continuation of violent behaviors after separation:** Many women suffer from their husbands' verbal threats, threatening telephone calls, or even physical attacks (when they accidentally see one another), after they have taken refuge at the Women's Shelter. There is no protective legislation in the German laws for women facing such threats. The police only intervene after an outright attack, and that only when the woman requests to press charges. Yet, the substantial number of women killed by their ex-husbands after separation is not a number to be dismissed off-handedly.
- **The children:** It is a very difficult task for many women to pull the children out of a familiar context, such as separating them from their schools. In some cases, the children resist such a change; in others, the internalized sex roles of the women present an impediment. In male dominant cultures, biologically based myths suggest a "protective" role for men, and a "home-making" and "nurturing" role for women. Because of these internalized roles, some women are afraid of not being able to provide for, and prepare a good future for their children without the support of a man, even if they have actually been doing so for years.
Some older children who have internalized similar social roles and dynamics may blame the mother for the break-up of the family. Fathers can also use the children in order to mount psychological pressure on the mother or to continue violent behavior. The legal structure can in fact help the man apply such pressure, if it ignores the domestic violence experienced by the woman, and not granting the custody of the children to the woman. Many men pressurize women with threats to harm, even kill the children, or to abduct them and send them out of the country. Moreover, immigrant women whose legal status is dependent on their husband's, have to return to their original country upon divorce, and if they cannot obtain the custodial rights of their children, they are faced with the threat of total separation from their children and run the risk of perhaps never seeing them again.
- **Economic factors:** Divorce often means becoming poorer for women, regardless of their married socio-economic status. This is particularly so in the case of women with children. Women who have endured violence, quickly give up on legal procedures involving alimony claims, in order to be free of other threats and pressures. In some cases, men have been known to quit their jobs so as to not pay alimony, or to increase the dosage of violence when the woman requests her share of income payments. Due to these reasons, the German law on the right to "share the wealth earned during the marriage" may provide no benefit for a woman in a violent relationship. Moreover, most women who want to (or are forced to) get divorced due to domestic violence, end up leaving their house and property which might have been obtained through her own labor. In the case of immigrant women, language barriers or ignorance about their legal rights in Germany causes additional problems.
- **Problems of housing:** Despite on-going campaigns by Women's Shelters informing the public about the local housing problems of battered women, no solutions have been found so far. Because women with children have priority for placement in state housing programs, it may

take those without children as long as two years to find a flat. Racist attitudes put immigrant women at an even a more disadvantageous position than German women. Women with many children have especially difficult time in finding new homes due to the less availability and higher prices of larger houses.

- **Unresponsive and racist attitude of the police:** The police are generally unresponsive to cases of domestic violence and due to internalized cultural norms, they side with the man who is acting violently rather than with the woman suffering from violence. The German police also have racist excuses for not lending assistance to Turkish immigrant women facing violence in the home: Turkish immigrant women often state that when they require police assistance during a violent attack, the police justify inaction by saying that this type of violent behavior is “*normal*” and “*traditional*” in Turkish families, or that in Turkish families “men have the right to beat women anyway”.
- **Legal unawareness and problems with the legislation:** Many immigrant women are not aware of the rights granted to them by the legal system of the country they live in. Furthermore, one of the first things violence “teaches” women is not to seek their rights and total obedience. Immigrant women face many more problems than do German women regarding this issue due to the foreign legislative system of the country they reside in, language barriers, and also due to difficulties in interacting with the larger society, which degrades and scorns them. Even if they try to stop the violent behavior of their husbands by making use of legislation possibilities, the legal system has to offer in this respect. German laws still do not protect a woman victim of domestic violence unless she has filed a complaint and proven that her husband has behaved violently toward her. Moreover, Paragraph 19 of the Legislation for Foreigners states that an immigrant (male) worker's wife becomes eligible for a residence permit only when she has lived ‘under the same roof’ with her husband for four years. This is a major obstacle for those women who have been married for less than four years but faced with violence, to seek the help of legal procedures. Thus, many women state that they are both afraid of leaving their husbands and jumping into an unknown outside world and of remaining in the context of violence; and hence they feel themselves on a dead-end street.
- **Problems related to women's shelters:** Lack of sufficient space for battered women in Women’s Shelters is a serious problem. Compounding this problem for immigrant women is their lack of access to information about Women's Shelters. Most Women’s Shelters in Germany do not have orientation activities directed specifically at immigrant women (in terms of appropriate use of language or communication strategies). For most part, immigrant women are informed about these Shelters by word-of-mouth, or sometimes through a social worker with they might be in contact for counseling. Immigrant women who have jumped this hurdle and come to the Women’s Shelter may directly or indirectly, not be accepted if her residence permit is dependent on her husband, because this causes extra work for those working at these homes. Moreover, due to the work principles of the Women’s Shelters, an immigrant woman is often first met by women who have also taken refuge at the shelter, or counseled by shelter workers who do not speak her language. These procedures can result in a very negative effect on the woman who is still in shock due to her experience of violence. When the above stated factors are added to the racist attacks and the isolation immigrant women may experience

(especially in shelters with a small number of immigrant women), the shelters may become "hostile" environments that are "difficult to get used to." For some immigrant women hearsay about "residence permits" problems, communication barriers and fear of racism in shelters all form a serious impediment to their decisions to leave their husbands.

- **General effects of immigration:** The effects of immigration and of being minorities in a new country show similarities all over the world regardless of the religion, culture and social structure of the immigrant group. One of the leading effects is for minority groups is an over-emphasis of cultural norms and values in order to protect their identity, and their tendency to become closed groups. In closed groups, group norms and solidarity take precedence over the need for individuality. Those who do not fit these norms, or decide to move outside the boundaries of these norms, are perceived as a threat to group solidarity by other group members. Therefore, the pressure, isolation and even violence shown to those who do not adhere to group norms is much more than that experienced in the dominant culture. If the dominant society has a tendency to reject minority groups, or to racist and hostile behaviors, the group becomes even more "closed". This, in turn, increases both the fear of leaving the group, and also the tendency to adhere to the cultural norms and traditions of the group at whatever cost. For women experiencing violence in their relationships, the above stated issues make it very difficult to leave the violent situation.

METHODOLOGY

1. Sample

The sample of this study consists of 114 Turkish women between the ages of 17 and 61, living in Berlin, Germany. In drawing the sample, we cooperated with various autonomous projects from four different districts of Berlin, where the immigrant population is concentrated, as well as one governmental organization, the District Office for Foreigners in Charlottenburg. The projects and foundations cooperating in the research study provide miscellaneous services such as bureaucratic help, legal aid, language courses, adult education, child care, vocational counseling, community services for immigrants and so on.³ The sole selection criteria were whether the woman had ever had a spouse at some point in her life and if she was willing to cooperate in the research. Women who were divorced, separated or widowed were asked to answer the questions with respect to their most recent marriage or relationship.

2. Data Collection

Data was collected through questionnaires filled out by women with the researcher present or through face-to-face interviews. Eleven counselors (one from each one of the projects and organizations who participated in the study), plus four social workers experienced in working with battered women were trained by the researcher, in survey and interviewing techniques. The training process was crucial in ensuring both the reliability of the results, and also a sensitive approach of the research team to battered women.

³ The project and foundations cooperating in the research study were Workers' Association (Arbeiterwohlfahrt) Wedding, District Office for Foreigners (Auslaenderbeauftragte) Charlottenburg, Islamic Women's Association, Youth and Women's Center Charlottenburg, Center for Vocation (Meslek Evi), German and Immigrant Women's Center Kreuzberg (Schokoladen), TIO e.v., Community Service Center Kreuzberg (Wohnen und Leben e.v.), Counseling Service for Immigrant Women (Ugrak).

Face-to-face interviews lasted anywhere from 40 minutes to an hour, while the survey entailed a 10-15 minute preliminary discussion followed by a 20 to 40 minute completion time. Data collection took place in May, June and July of 1994.

3. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 96 multiple-choice type questions, including 20 questions of the Trait Anxiety Inventory translated and adapted to Turkish by Necla Öner and Ayhan LeCompte (Öner, 1985). Apart from the demographic information items, the questionnaire includes questions about the division of labor in the home, the distribution of authority between the spouses, decision-making about the family budget, woman's experience of physical, psychological, economic and sexual violence at home, her strategies against it -- all to be answered from the Women's point of view.

RESULTS

1. Respondents' and their partners' profile

Except for the two women who were born in Berlin, the remaining participants of the study were found to be divided almost equally among 38 provinces spread across all the regions of Turkey. Their husband's birthplaces were found to follow a similar pattern. Four of the husbands were from Germany, four were born to Turkish families in Germany, and the rest came from 36 provinces across Turkey.

The largest age group of the women included in the study was the 20-39 range (69.3 %, n=114).

A similar situation holds for the husbands. Most husbands (64.8 %) are in the 20-39 range. The average age of women included in the study is 34, while that of their husbands is 38.

Table 1 reflects the education level of the women and their partners participating in our study. It can be seen that primary school (30.4 %), secondary school (26.8 %), vocational school and high school (total of 29.4 %) graduates are dispersed almost equally. Those without any kind of diploma are by no means a small group (11.6%), while university graduates make up the smallest group (1.8 %). The largest group for the husbands is the vocational school and high school graduates (total of 35.7 %), and the rate of university graduates (11.6 %) is higher than that of women; conversely, the number of men without a diploma (5.4 %) is lower than that for women.

TABLE I

RESPONDENTS and THEIR PARTNERS BY EDUCATION

<i>Education Level</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Partners</i>
No diploma	11.6	5.4
Primary school	30.4	22.3
Secondary school	26.8	25.0
Vocational school	11.6	19.6
High School	17.8	16.1
University	1.8	11.6

In Table 2 it is seen that slightly over half the women participating in the study work outside the home and earn an income. Still, this rate is lower than the rate of male earners of income (68.2 %).

TABLE II
RESPONDENTS AND THEIR PARTNERS by EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

	<u>SAMPLE</u>		<u>BERLIN</u>	
	<i>Women (%)</i>	<i>Partners (%)</i>	<i>Women (%)</i>	<i>Partners (%)</i>
<i>Rate of Income Earners</i>	51.8	68.2	54.7	41.0
<i>Average monthly income</i>	<i>Women (%)</i>	<i>Partners (%)</i>		
100 to 700 DM	14.5	2.9		
701 to 1400 DM	36.4	4.3		
1401 to 2100 DM	30.9	16.0		
2101 to 2800 DM	16.4	37.7		
2801 and 3500 DM	1.8	18.8		
Over 3500 DM	-	20.3		
<i>Average monthly income</i>	1,490 DM	2,799 DM		
<i>Average monthly income from sources other than work</i> (e.g. social welfare, child aid, unemployment grants)	651 DM	965 DM		

The rate of workingwomen participating in the study is approximately the same for Turkish women living in Berlin (54.7 %), while the percentage of men working (68.2 %) is quite higher than the overall rate for Berlin (41.0 %). The monthly average income for workingwomen is 1,490 DM, and this is roughly one half of the amount earned by their husbands (2,799 DM). The same inequality is evident in the incomes obtained through social welfare, child aid and unemployment grants. The average income of women from such means (651 DM) is two thirds of the average income of their husbands (965 DM).

TABLE III
RESPONDENTS by CIVIL STATUS AND MARRIAGE INDICATORS

<u>Civil Status</u>	<u>Percentage (%)</u>
Married	71.9
Marriage-like relationship	0.9
Divorced	17.5
Separated	7.9
Widowed	1.8
<i>Age at First Marriage</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
13 - 17	43.4
18 - 27	53.8
28 and above	2.8
<i>Average age at first marriage</i>	19.2

<i>Type of Marriage</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Only civil marriage	22.0
Both civil and religious marriage	74.0
Only religious marriage	3.0
None	1.0

<i>Realization of Marriage</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Agreed to it herself	48.6
An arranged marriage	45.7
Other	5.7

<i>Arranged Marriages (n=48)</i>	<i>Percentage(%)</i>
Didn't meet husband before marriage	38.3
Opinion not asked when getting married	29.8
Married against her will	38.3

Table 3 shows indicators on the civil status and marriages of the women in the sample. 71.9 % of the respondents are married, and a total of 25.4 % are either divorced or separated. Almost half the women were married before the age of 18 (43.4 %). The average age of first marriage is quite low (19). Three fourths of the women have had both a civil and a religious marriage. However, the rate of those who only have a religious marriage (3%) is lower than the average rate for Turkey (8.3%) (DIE, 1994). This may be explained by the necessity of a civil marriage for the legal immigration procedures in Germany (for women whose husbands already have immigrant status in Germany). It is striking here that almost half of the women (45.7 %) state that they had arranged marriages. 38.3 % these women did not have the chance to meet their husbands before the marriage. Roughly one-third (29.8 %) was not even asked if they wanted this marriage. The rate of those who were married against their will (38.3 %) is also quite high.

TABLE IV

INDICATORS ON FAMILY STRUCTURE

<i>Number of children</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
None	5.7
1 - 2	65.7
3 - 4	23.8
5 - 6	4.8
<i>Average no. of children</i>	2.1

<i>Family members living in the home other than husband and children</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
None	67.3
1	15.9
2	2.8
More than 2 people	14.0

Table 4 depicts that 5.7 % of the women included in the sample have no children, and that the majority (65.7 %) have 1 or 2 children. The average number of children per woman is 2. Most women live with their husbands and/or their children (67.3 %). A substantial one third of the whole sample (32.7 %) live in households that include other family members in addition to the husband and children.

TABLE V

DIVISION OF POWER IN THE FAMILY

<i>Who has more of a say in the home?</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
The woman	20.6
The man	25.2
Both equal	49.5
Someone else	3.7
Other	0.9

<i>Who manages the family budget?</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
The woman	38.9
The man	16.8
Together	38.9
Someone else	4.4
Other	0.9

Looking at the division of power in the family (Table 5), we see that approximately one half of the sample (49.5 %) perceive themselves as having an equal say with their husbands. The rate of those stating that their husbands have more of a say (25.2 %) is slightly higher than those stating that they have more of a say (20.6 %). The dispersion is slightly different when we look at who manages the family budget. Women stating that they manage it together with their husbands is a little over one third (38.9 %), whereas the rate of women stating they manage it on their own (38.9 %) is more than twice the rate of those stating that the men manage the budget (16.8 %).

TABLE VI

DECISION-MAKING POWER IN THE FAMILY

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Usually woman decides</i>	<i>Usually man decides</i>	<i>They decide together</i>	<i>Usually children decide</i>	<i>Usually other(s) decide</i>
Where the family will live	19.3	19.3	55.0	-	6.4
Kitchen budget	51.3	8.8	33.6	0.9	5.3
How much to spend on household items	36.6	10.7	47.3	0.9	4.5
Which household items to buy	48.2	9.6	36.0	1.8	4.4
Choice of family friends	22.3	13.4	61.6	-	2.7
When to visit friends	31.0	9.7	56.6	-	2.7
Where to go for vacation	25.9	40.2	53.6	3.6	2.7
Type of contraception	59.8	1.0	39.2	-	-
Education of girl children	22.4	6.6	55.3	14.5	1.3
Education of boy children	23.5	11.1	50.6	14.8	-
The choice of the woman's clothes	68.4	6.1	22.8	0.9	1.8
How much to spend for the woman's clothing	67.3	9.7	21.2	-	1.8
How the woman spends her own income	47.2	9.4	41.5	-	1.9

Table 6 depicts the division of power regarding decisions about family life and the Woman's life. Issues relevant to family life entail decisions location of family residence, choice of family friends and when to visit them, decisions about family vacations, and so on. In most cases, almost half of the women state that these decisions are made together with their husbands. Men seem to have the least amount of say (1.0 %) compared to women (59.8 %) in deciding the type of contraceptive method to be used (most probably due to their lack of interest).

Table 7 reflects information regarding the various types of violence the woman experiences or has experienced from her husband. Almost half of the women report to have experienced physical and psychological violence at various times. Those reporting "frequent" physical and psychological abuse (apart from "indirect" uses of violence such as throwing food on the floor or breaking things in the house) varies from 14.7 % to 32.5 % and constitutes approximately one fifth of the sample.

**TABLE VII
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

<i>Type of violence</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Frequently</i>	<i>Total (those who experienced it)</i>
Yelled at her	15.8	26.3	25.4	32.5	84.2
Insulted her	39.3	17.8	13.1	29.9	60.7
Threw food onto the floor	73.4	9.2	8.3	9.2	26.6
Broke things	39.3	18.8	8.9	11.6	60.7
Abused her emotionally	56.1	10.3	14.0	19.6	43.9
Cursed at her	51.8	12.7	12.7	22.7	48.2
Humiliated her	53.2	9.9	16.2	20.7	46.8
Pushed / shoved her	56.0	13.8	11.0	19.3	44.0
Kicked her	63.9	9.3	11.1	15.7	36.1
Slapped her	53.6	16.4	12.7	17.3	46.4
Punched her	68.8	6.4	10.1	14.7	31.2
Beat her	62.0	12.0	9.3	16.7	38.0
Threatened her with knife/gun	85.3	4.6	3.7	6.4	14.7
Threatened to kill her	81.5	3.7	5.6	9.3	18.5
Assaulted her with knife/gun	85.3	4.6	3.7	6.4	14.7
Locked her in the house	94.5	-	0.9	4.6	5.5
Threatened her via the children	78.6	2.9	7.8	10.7	21.4
Limited the money	79.1	9.1	4.5	7.3	20.9
Forced her to have sex	75.0	7.4	7.4	10.2	25.0

Those threatened with a gun, knife (14.7 %) or death (18.5 %) at various intervals are also quite high in number. Women stating having been raped by their husbands at varying intervals total one fourth of the sample (25 %). A total of 20.9 % of the women report that they were subjected to economic violence, i.e., their husbands limited their access to financial resources. When asked about other types of violent behaviors experienced (not included in the table), women gave answers such as: "He *never* gave me money for living costs", "He didn't allow me to have a house-key of my own", "He would yell at me all night long while circling my bed", "He would cut-up my dresses with a knife", "He would try to throw me out of the house in my nightgown", "He threatened to cut-up my face", "He broke my hand and didn't allow me to see a doctor", "He forced me to use dope", "He didn't allow me to see my children after we separated", "He would start arguments frequently due to jealousy fits", "He limited my freedom of movement, prevented me from seeing my family", "Everything about the way he behaved, his life style was totally

opposite my own", "He valued his own family more than he valued us", "He frequently left home, abandoning me and the children", "He never accepted my existence."

In Table 8, 15.4 % of the women report daily arguments with their husbands and 25 % frequent arguments. About three fourths of the women (73.8 %) never perceive their husband's violent behavior as "just". Women who consider the violent behavior of their husbands to be frequently or always "just" is a total of 6.6 %. 12% of the women in the sample answered "Yes" to a question about whether arguments related to religious beliefs lead to fights with their husbands.

**TABLE VIII
FREQUENCY OF ARGUMENTS BETWEEN SPOUSES AND WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF VIOLENCE**

<i>Frequency of domestic arguments</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Never argue	12.5
Rarely argue	47.1
Frequently argue	25.0
Argue almost every day	15.4
<i>Whether the woman perceives her husband's violent behavior as "just"</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Never	73.8
Sometimes	19.6
Frequently	4.7
Always	1.9

When the women were asked about how they deal with violence in the home, the most frequently given answer was "to leave home temporarily" (34.2 %). 31.3 % of the women have attempted to divorce their husbands at least once, and 20.5 % have either left home permanently and/or got a divorce. Use of legal and social alternatives such as calling the police, filing a complaint and applying to a battered women's shelter make up almost one fifth of the sample.

TABLE IX

RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE	
<i>Behavior</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Left home temporarily	34.2
Left home permanently or get a divorce	20.5
Requested help from friends, relatives or neighbors	16.4
Called the police	20.5
Filed a complaint	15.1
Went to a women's shelter	16.4
Applied to a social service worker or institution	11.0
Went to a hospital or private doctor	9.5
Attempted to get a divorce at least once	31.3
Other	27.0

One of the least popular methods is applying to a social service worker or institution. Other methods that women use in order to deal with the violence, included throwing the man out of the home, running away to her family, running away to another country, locking herself into a room, not speaking to her husband, going on vacation, running away to her husband's family, threatening the husband by telling him she will leave him, defending herself, attacking him and

not talking to him until he apologizes. One woman said she "couldn't think of anything else but staying at home", another said she "waited patiently."

Discussion of Research Findings

Although the sample of the study is not representative of all Turkish immigrant women living in Berlin or in Germany, the study itself is the only work to date investigating their experiences with domestic violence, and strategies against it.

Studies conducted in regard to Turkish women who have migrated to Germany since the 1960's, usually tend to portray them as "victims from an underdeveloped Moslem country and in need of help", instead of treating them like real "subjects" and presenting their real lives, problems and needs. The standard "European" explanation for domestic violence experienced by immigrant women from Moslem societies is that "the status of women in Moslem families is much lower and more pitiful than that of Western women." Another widespread view is that these women are first of all subject to more violence, and second, more "passive, weak and accepting" of it than their Western counterparts.

The study results show that despite relatively small differences in education and labor force participation of women in the sample and their spouses, women are at a much more disadvantageous position compared to their husbands in terms of income levels and the division of labor in the home. Even in the face of such inequality, most of the women perceive having at least equal say with their husbands, if not more, in decision-making about family life or family budget. Women who stated that their husbands had more of a say were less than one fourth of the sample. Nevertheless, nearly half of the women report experiencing physical, psychological, financial or sexual violence from their husbands. A high percentage of women (about one fourth) reported being threatened with extreme violence, such as threats by the man to use a gun or knife. Contrary to widespread stereotypes, three fourths of these immigrant women stated that they "never" considered the violent behavior of their husband to be "just."

One of the most interesting findings of the study is that a high percentage of women have tried several different ways to stop the violence they were experiencing or to escape the context of violence despite a myriad of problems that faced them. These problems include being an immigrant in a foreign country, language barriers, threats by their husbands, responsibility for the children, financial dependence on their husbands, difficulties in finding a house to live in, racial and gender discrimination they had to face with the police and other legal institutions. This proves the fallacy of the widespread view of Turkish immigrant women in Germany who supposedly consider violence to be "natural", and are "passive and accepting" of it.

When the reactions of Turkish immigrant women in Berlin to domestic violence were compared to the reactions of women living in Ankara (Gülçür, 1995), striking differences became evident. While women in Ankara rarely called the police (1 %) or filed a complaint (0 %), these were much more common responses by the immigrant women living in Berlin (20.5 % and 15.1 % respectively). As the experiences of women's organizations in Turkey indicate, women have no faith in formal institutions in Turkey and believe that these institutions will support their violent husbands, rather than themselves. Unfortunately, real cases show this not to be a false belief; many women are scorned instead of helped when they go to the police or legal institutions, and their cases are not made public. Therefore while women in Berlin choose equally between various options of applying to a legal institution, leaving home for a while or requesting help from family or friends, women in Ankara do not resort to any other solution but to leave home either temporarily or permanently, or to ask for help from family and friends.

When women are placed in an environment where domestic violence is acknowledged as a social problem at least to a certain degree, and where institutionalized support networks exist, as in Berlin, they do not hesitate to use these means even when they have the extra complications of being a foreigner.

Other problems that women face such as pressures from their social network or the negative attitudes of the police and legal institutions when dealing with violence have not been included in the study. These factors are very influential in shaping how women stand up to violence, and hence their implications also need to be investigated. My primary aim, as stated in the beginning, was to provide some preliminary information on the basis of which further studies can be constructed, and also to present a more objective and realistic perspective on "the identity of the Moslem woman", which has been substantially misconstrued by both the public and the media.

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