



Training on Violence Against Women

Feedback Report

Gaziosmanpaşa Mahallesi,
Beyaz Zambaklar Sk. No:29/1,
06680 - Çankaya/Ankara

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This report has been prepared to evaluate the training on violence against women provided to law students from ten different cities, as well as the subsequent peer-to-peer evaluation draws on surveys completed by participants, online in-depth interviews conducted during the week of 2 March, and feedback shared during the face-to-face meeting held on 6 March. The activities aimed to assess students' knowledge on the subject and examine how issues such as violence against women and gender are addressed within undergraduate education in Türkiye.

The final interviews focused on evaluating the training and drawing lessons for future implementations. Questions addressed both the content and methodology of the training, while particular attention was given to students' views on the relationship between law and gender. The interviews also sought to determine whether the training contributed to an increase in students' awareness of these issues. Overall, the report is intended to provide guidance for the development of future training programmes.

With this aim a preliminary evaluation form was distributed to the students prior to the commencement of the training. The questions in this form were as follows:

- a. Name and Surname
- b. University
- c. Grade/Year (or Class)
- d. What is your reason for attending this training?
- e. Do you have any knowledge about combating violence against women and gender equality? If so, please elaborate.
- f. Did you have any courses in your law school education that addressed violence against women or gender equality issues? Please explain.
- g. What problems do you think women and girls face in accessing justice?
- h. How do you think the training you wish to participate in will contribute to your profession?

The participant group mainly consists of 2nd-year (45.07%) and 4th-year (32.39%) law students, confirming that the audience is comprised of active students at the intermediate and advanced stages of their legal education. For question d the students stated that this training would contribute to their professional lives and that it is important to receive education on this topic as a jurist. Many people also indicated that violence against women is a significant problem and that they want to raise awareness about it. Out of the 71 students who filled out the form, 13 stated that they had no knowledge on this subject. Many of the remaining students indicated that they possessed basic information. Some students stated that they had gained knowledge by attending the in-person trainings held at their universities last year as part of these same training programs.

For question f, 11 students said that they had received no training on this subject or that it had not been mentioned in courses during their undergraduate education. Half of the remaining students stated that issues of gender equality or combating violence against women were addressed in courses such as criminal law and civil law. The other half indicated that they had chosen elective courses such as legal clinics, gender and law. The students stated that cultural norms and judicial and administrative authorities constitute barriers to women and girls' access to justice, and they believe that they have an important role to play as future legal professionals in combating these issues.

Upon the conclusion of the online training, a final evaluation survey was conducted online to gather students' opinions about the training. In this survey, students were asked questions about the effectiveness of the training and whether they acquired new knowledge. The questions were as follows:

- Full Name
- University – Class
- Do you think your purpose for attending the event was achieved? Please explain.
- Which topics covered in the training were new to you?
- After the training, do you feel you have sufficient knowledge about these concepts?
- Do you think the training will contribute to your professional life? Please explain.

Almost all of the students stated that the training was very successful and that they had acquired knowledge that would contribute to their professional lives. Specifically, they noted that they heard about topics such as CEDAW, Law No. 6284, the principle of due diligence, and strategic litigation for the first time. Additionally, there were students who stated that they became more aware of their rights as women.

In addition to the survey method, an online meeting was held on 7 March to allow students to express themselves more openly and to collect their candid evaluations and opinions. Students from different cities participated in the meeting. During the meeting held on 7 March, students were asked the following questions:

- Which topic or session in the training program captured your attention the most? Would you have preferred additional court cases, practical exercises, or interactive activities?
- What gaps in your legal education did this training help you identify?
- Has this training influenced your perspective on law? If yes, in what way?

- Following this training, what are your views on the notion that law is impartial?
- Do you think legal rules can perpetuate gender inequalities in society?
- Has your approach to reading court decisions or legislation changed as a result of this training?
- After completing this program, have you started to view your role as a lawyer differently?

The students' responses to these questions were both insightful and useful for the project implementers.

Content of the Trainings

One of the primary learning outcomes valued by the students was mastering the concepts correctly. They expressed that they were sensitive to this issue beforehand but they were lacking the correct information, for that reason learning these concepts was the most important gain for them in terms of combating violence against women. They also noted that concepts serve as an important tool for understanding and interpreting the law.

The students stated that they were able to identify and name situations they encounter in daily life but had not been able to define before. For example, one student mentioned intersectionality, noting that they often come across examples of intersectional discrimination in everyday life but are now able to name and recognize them. Their familiarity with the concepts now encourages them to engage more in discussions on these topics. Gender equality also has been shared as an important concept.

The Opuz Case was very significant for students. The students expressed their surprise that the case had to be taken to the European Court of Human Rights because domestic legal systems were unable to deliver rulings that adequately protected women. Students suggested also that not only the Opuz Case but more court decisions could have been discussed during the trainings to provide a broader understanding of legal precedents.

The inclusion of commonly used sexist expressions and proverbs in Turkey in the section on basic concepts and gender biases was found to be beneficial by the students. They noted that in their daily lives, they had not reflected on these issues in such detail and had not paid much attention to this topic.

During the face-to-face meeting held on 6 March, participants also shared their opinions about the content of the trainings. It was stated that the Opuz Case is an encouraging example for women, as it demonstrates the importance of promoting and protecting women's rights.

It was also emphasized that after the trainings, participants gained greater confidence regarding women's rights and the fight against gender inequalities in society. Students stated that the trainings helped them develop a stronger sense of responsibility and awareness regarding these issues. Additionally, meeting with others who are committed to addressing these issues gave them a sense of hope.

One of the participants stated that the most impressive sentence in the training for her was: "Women's rights are human rights." She noted that it is regrettable that women still have to struggle to secure their human rights. For this reason, she expressed that the trainings helped her develop the perspective that protecting women's rights should be the responsibility of the entire society.

Students also stated that the training not only helped them develop a stronger sense of responsibility, but was also valuable for defending rights in their future careers as lawyers. They emphasized that the training made them feel more empowered to defend both women's rights and their own rights. For this reason, they stated that it is important for every law student to receive training on this issue. They also underlined that learning about Law No. 6284 is crucial for the protection of rights.

Evaluation on Method of Training and Educational Tools

In terms of the teaching techniques used in education, it has been observed that presenting visual materials before theoretical information makes learning more lasting. Participants found it far more effective for trainers to involve them in the process through interactive activities, particularly to alleviate the fatigue caused by spending long periods on online platforms. Students suggested that theoretical information be provided to participants in advance in the form of lecture notes, allowing more time during the training to be devoted to practical exercises such as case studies, discussions of court rulings and drafting petitions.

Regarding petition writing exercises, it was noted that rather than simply using examples, it would be more beneficial for the trainer to demonstrate the petition writing process themselves and then have the students proceed to the petition writing stage. They also indicated that dedicating a specific training day to petition writing would be beneficial.

During the face-to-face meeting held on 6 March, students raised some concerns about the challenges of online trainings. They stated that the 12-day training programme would have been more effective if it had been conducted face-to-face. It was also noted that the effects of the pandemic on gender equality and digital violence could have been included as topics in the trainings. Students also stated that having the training sessions for 12 consecutive days was tiring for them. They suggested that the training would be more effective if it were planned over a longer period of time and held a few days per week instead.

One of the challenges mentioned during the face-to-face meeting was the lower participation of men in the trainings compared to women. To address this issue, it was suggested that the trainings should emphasize that men can also be negatively affected by gender inequality. Another suggestion was that the trainings should be included in the social transcript.

Evaluation of the Law Curriculum from the Perspective of Gender Equality

The information gathered at the meeting reveals that the theoretical education provided in law faculties is out of touch with social realities and current international standards. Participants noted that, even when practical cases are analysed in lectures, insufficient attention is paid to the social dimension of the subject and to significant past rulings. This situation results in students learning the law in a manner detached from its social context.

Another significant finding is that fundamental international treaties such as CEDAW and numerous protocols relating to women's rights are never mentioned during undergraduate studies. Students stated that these treaties are not even addressed in international law courses. Furthermore, they indicated that the current content of human rights courses is conceptually inadequate; they stated that they were learning many important concepts for the first time during this education.

Also the students emphasised that it would be far better for their professional development if faculties included more courses focused on practical skills and writing petitions.

Reflections on the Objectivity of the Law and the Bias of the Legislator

Students have stated that, following the training, they began to question their previously held assumptions regarding the impartiality and objectivity of the law. One participant noted that, when viewed through this new perspective, issues such as a child's lineage are revealed to be deeply gendered, and that more time should be devoted to these topics in lessons. Another student stated that whilst they had previously felt uncomfortable with issues such as a woman's surname and lineage, they had been unable to ground this in a legal framework; however, through this training, they clearly understood that the legislator had in fact acted in a biased manner and that this needed to be addressed.

Students emphasised that lecturers who addressed the injustices against women in the Civil Code were the exception, and that other courses should also be taught with a similar critical approach. Participants also noted that the teaching style in faculties made it difficult to grasp the essence of the provisions and that their existing views on the shortcomings in the laws were reinforced by this training. In particular, regulations such as lineage, family registers and a woman's inability to use her own surname independently were cited by students as concrete examples of this biased structure within the system.

The Reproduction of Gender Inequality by Practitioners

The students pointed out that although the text of the laws does not appear to directly produce gender inequality, these norms are reinforced and gender is reproduced through those who enforce them (police, judges). One participant highlighted the problems in practice by sharing an example where women who approached the police were told, "What happens in the family stays in the family", and consequently received no assistance.

Students argued that, to address inequality, there must be an increase in the presence of women in the workplace, particularly within the judiciary and law enforcement. It was argued that an increase in the number of female prosecutors, judges and police officers could alter this male-dominated perspective within legal processes. Finally, the participants emphasised access to justice, stressing the need to enhance the deterrent effect of legal sanctions and highlighting that 'justice delayed is justice denied'. In this regard, they noted that expediting judicial proceedings is critical for the protection of women's rights.

One of the students participating in the face-to-face meeting stated that Law No. 6284 is often misunderstood and misinterpreted even by lawyers. One participant shared the following experience:

"Right after the training, I went to a police station. One of the police officers told me that Law No. 6284 breaks apart families. I tried to explain the correct information about the law. I have also experienced that one of our family acquaintances told me that I should not become a lawyer because it is not considered a suitable profession for a woman."

The Impact of Gender Perspective on the Analysis of Legal Texts

The students said they had realised that they had internalised gender norms as well. They therefore noted that, in the past, they had read text through this internalised lens. However now, they stated that they are more aware of this, they are approaching texts, decisions and norms with a more critical eye.

The students also stated that this perspective had changed their approach, especially to the Civil Code and Labour Code. They emphasised that this perspective is critical for these two areas.

Transformation in the Professional Identity and Vision for the Future

It is evident that this training has fundamentally transformed the students' perspectives on the law faculty and their sense of professional belonging. Some students have stated that, although they had initially applied to the law faculty without any real desire to do so, following this training they developed a belief that they could achieve significant things with their faculty and consequently became committed to their department. The training has shaped students' future plans, particularly towards specialising in the fields of human rights and gender equality. Students emphasised that, through this process, they not only became more aware but also gained a sense of responsibility to expand their sphere of influence by spreading this awareness to those around them.



