



# **The Impact of Social Values and Culture on Discrimination against Women**

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**Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Discrimination and violence against women have a universal character in all societies across the world. The reason why this cannot be prevented completely so far is the insistence on inaccurate policies against women. This study aims to reveal that violence against women stems from centuries-old patriarchal culture and to offer solutions for it. The study is based on the written sources of ancient civilizations throughout the historical process, statistical data of international non-governmental organizations and institutions, and the review of extensive literatures mentioned in the reference list on the subject. Patriarchal discrimination and violence against women are seen almost every society, albeit at different levels. A cultural domination that imposes women's submissive acceptance of men's absolute superiority has been continuing for centuries. Masculine resistance to accepting that women are individuals with equal rights stems from cultural values subsequently learned. These widespread social values are the main reason for discrimination and hostility towards women. Violation or rejection of the behavioral norms determined for women results in punishment and sanctions based on religion, morality, customs and traditions. It has

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shown that providing better education and job opportunities for women or enforcing more severe penal laws on crimes against women is not enough to achieve the desired results. For success, something different needs to be done. The existence of centuries-old patriarchal cultural values does not only stem from the men who are the perpetrators of violence and discrimination against women. Women who internalize this unfair behavior and accept it silently also have responsibilities in the continuation of these wrong values. Although it is too difficult to change centuries-old prejudices and cultural values against women, it is not impossible. Adopting the right cultural values in society is requiring persistent struggle that includes family, school, religious institutions and social media.

*Keywords: Cultural values; gender discrimination; discrimination against women; violence against women.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Although there are different definitions of sexual identity, all societies consist of men and women. Discrimination against women and a particular type of violence against women continues to exist throughout the world, albeit to varying degrees. Discrimination and humiliation against women have existed to varying extents in many civilizations throughout human history. The violence and discrimination against women we encounter today is the continuation of a universal culture that is thousands of years old. National and international institutions and NGOs continue to exert efforts to prevent this violence, which occurs at different levels in different geographies and different cultures. Although most of the efforts to solve discrimination against women focus on increasing women's education and job opportunities, it is tough to achieve the desired result. That is because the problem is not limited to women's education opportunities and economic independence [1,2]. Moreover, the realization of these mentioned solution options is closely related to whether the states have sufficient economic resources. It is unrealistic to expect that these proposed solutions will be met in the underdeveloped countries of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, where poverty and hunger are at great levels. Considering that this problem still continues in social environment and developed countries where women's education and employment opportunities are high, we see that the dominant factor underlying violence stems from our thousands of years of cultural history.

Women have been enslaved under male domination throughout history. The male yoke on women continues in a humiliating way, especially in underdeveloped societies. Customs, religious rules and laws regulating social life generally subordinate women to men and define them in an inferior position. Today, except for Northern

European countries, the understanding of gender in most states is against women [3].

Unfortunately, violence against women and girls remains one of the least prosecuted and punished crimes in the world. 89.000 women were deliberately killed by intimate partners in 2022 (Gender-Related Killings). That is why it is a very concerning figure. The root causes of discrimination and violence against women are related to the general position of women in the society, gender roles, unequal distribution of power between men and women. This is definitely a learned cultural phenomenon in every society across the world drawn from the human history. Patriarchal culture not only makes men perpetrators of violence against women, but also makes women silent and voluntary victims who internalized these cultural norms that justify abuse. To deal with the problem, it is not enough to persuade men that what they do against women is wrong and bad. At the same time, women need to be convinced that this cultural acceptance they have internalized is wrong as well.

Approximately 10,000 years have passed since Homo Sapiens transitioned from hunting and gathering to a settled social order, and from villages and urbanization to the present day. In fact, in the hunter and gatherer society, having more than one wife while being fed meant hunting more and collecting more vegetables and fruits. Probably for these reasons, it was unthinkable for a man to have more than one spouse and children [4]. The first prehistoric human societies are defined as hunter and gatherer cultures. In primitive societies, successful hunters were more likely to be men than women. Because physical strength, courage, agility and aggression instincts are more dominant in men. It was more difficult for women to participate in the hunt because they were pregnant or breastfeeding. In such cases,

women could not be expected to leave their children unprotected and go hunting. Until the men returned from their long hunt, women were collecting edible herbs, vegetables and fruits in their surroundings. However, in some hunter-gatherer communities, childless and non-pregnant women also participated in hunting with men [4]. Women were primarily responsible for collecting herbal products. Most likely, women were the first to plant seeds in the field. Thus, food gatherers now understood the importance of agriculture, planting seeds in the fields around them, and began to plant and produce. Chasing the prey, monitoring it, and catching it before it could escape was a dangerous job with a low chance of success. Often the hunter became the hunted, or attacks and accidents could lead to fatal injuries. Small garden farming, which started with women, and the domestication of animals enabled human communities to settle more securely and permanently in a region. Women no longer had to haul their young children around with them at all times, and farming and especially milled grain provided nutrients that were soft and strong enough for babies to eat.

Women in Africa and South America grew bulb-root plants and began processing them while women of North and Central America grew corn, beans, and squash [5]. However, with the development of agricultural societies and the invention of the plow, women's role in agriculture was gradually replaced by men. Because plowing the land with the help of animals and the plow required male power. With the transition to settled life and the spread of private ownership, patriarchal life models began to come to the fore [6]. Friedrich Engels supported this idea in his book entitled *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Engels argued that while women initially controlled the common property of the community, in the transition to agriculture, men together owned the agricultural tools, thus making men the first sex to own private property. This development led to the economic and legal superiority of men over women and children in the patriarchal family. As a result, private property and patriarchal social structure reduced women to an economically and socially inferior position to men [7].

In the agricultural society, jobs requiring physical strength such as animal husbandry and plowing emerged, whereby the matriarchal society characteristic changed and turned to the patriarchal type. Family property gained value within the working force, and a strong father was needed for the production and control of goods.

In terms of increasing wealth and contributing to the family labor force, women's status was relegated to child-bearing instrument.

It is understood that men and women alike shared labor with the transition to settled life. The woman cared for the kids, cleaned and tanned animal skins to make clothes, looked after the house or hut, and tended the fire [6]. The fact that the man dominated the 'surplus value' that emerged as a result of all the joint efforts within the family made what the woman did less valuable. Settled agriculture brought with it some rules regarding ownership. Property could be owned by individual families or wealthy householders, or collectively by a village. With the concept of ownership, the importance of the father at home increased. Men's responsibility to toil the land with plows paved the way for them to become the heirs of the family and to retain the right to farm on lands considered the common property of the community. In this new system, ownership and control of property was completely in the hands of men.

Ownership also gave rise to a class society. Large landowners, merchants, priests, officials became much richer than ordinary peasants. Men of this socio-economically superior class were able to marry at a younger age and with more wives. The patriarchal system is a social order in which women's labor, as well as their body and fertility, are controlled. Primitive laws and religious rules in agricultural societies ordered women the complete submission and fidelity to their husbands. The chastity of the spouse became extremely important in order to transfer the father's inheritance to his children. In order to ensure that the children were from their own lineage, great pressure was exerted on spouses, and very severe penalties were prescribed for adultery [8]. The transition to a settled system and agricultural society enabled the emergence of private property as well as urbanization. This also led to the dominance of patriarchal culture throughout the world and to a lower status of women in society.

There is no doubt that much progress has been made in terms of gender equality in modern states. The feminist movement, cultural changes and legal reforms have a great effect in this progress. The gains made by women and girls in education are impressive. However, misogyny is still with us [9]. To increase the women's education opportunities has a very important impact on preventing discrimination against them. Girls' and women's education also have

also multiplier effects to reduce poverty, and social injustice across the world. However according to UNESCO report, globally 122 million girls are out of school. Women still account for almost two-thirds of all adults unable to read (Gender Equality). Poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the status and role of women and men, are still among the obstacles that prevent women and girls benefit from education.

There is nothing natural or inevitable about men's violence toward women. Because these have completely been learned cultural values coming from history of humanity. These cultural values have facilitated the acceptance of the lower status given to women in society and made many evil or improper behaviors against women normalized for centuries. Therefore, the solution to the problem lies in a cultural change that emphasizes respect for women and gives them the values they deserve. Discrimination and violence against women can and must be stopped all around the world. Only with cultural change in society, men and women can be convinced that violence and inequality cannot be considered as acceptable human values.

In order to understand and solve the problems that women face today, it is necessary to follow the traces of civilization in the past and to reveal the cultural source where the problem started. This study aims to identify the source of the problem by examining the historical background of violence and discrimination against women and subsequently offering solutions for it.

## 2. WOMEN THROUGHOUT HISTORY

According to Nietzsche, there is no absolute justice and equality in the world [10]. It is known that there is a close relationship between justice and fairness and right and rightness. While in modern societies, right is defined as a legally protected legitimate interest, in primitive communities, power has been the most fundamental factor determining the right. In today's societies, attempts are made to prohibit the injustice caused by the unfair use of power by the rules of law. In our behavior, we try to determine right and wrong, beneficial and detrimental, with the cultural values and prejudices we learn later in society. This is an issue related to the world of values that people internalize, apart from the orders of powerful kings and the laws of modern societies. As the

focus of education turns to the development of the empathy ability in human nature, the feeling of being fair and compassionate will become dominant in these cultural values and violence, whereas humiliation against women in society will end.

Today, it is seen that most of the problems related to women's inequality and discrimination are gathered under the following headings. Throughout history, women around the world have had fewer educational opportunities than men. In addition to women having fewer employment opportunities, their wages have always been less than men. Because women spend more time on tasks such as housework and child care, they cannot benefit from education and employment opportunities sufficiently. Women have less access to health and social support services than men around the world. Most importantly, women are more likely to experience sexual harassment and violence. Modern states, national and international non-governmental organizations have directed all their efforts to the solution of these issues. However, all of the issues mentioned are the consequences, not the cause, of discrimination against women and violence against women. In fact, the source of violence and discrimination against women stems from a deep cultural process and social values shaped by human history. It is not possible to solve the problem of discrimination against women without comprehending this universal cultural dimension.

In order to evaluate women's current problems more accurately, it is essential to review the standpoint of some ancient civilizations towards women and the social value they gave to them, in other words, the cultural formation of patriarchal values throughout human history has to be understood. Undoubtedly, much older and much larger ancient civilizations existed in the world. However, in order to make a concrete evaluation, it would be useful to examine the civilizations' views on women in the written sources that have survived to this day.

Ancient Egypt was a kingdom that ruled for nearly 3000 years, starting from approximately 3100 B.C. Although it is said in Egyptian inscriptions that women were generally respected and that there was no misogyny in Egyptian culture, the patriarchal social structure was dominant. It seems that most of the findings regarding the equality of men and women in the inscriptions relate to upper-class noble women who took part in the Egyptian aristocracy and

palaces. Inscriptions in Egyptian pyramids showed that Pharaohs were buried with their favorite wives alive. Considering that Egypt was a slave society, it is difficult to claim the existence of equality between men and women.

During the same period, great kingdoms also ruled in Mesopotamia, which is located in the geography adjacent to Egypt. Established in Mesopotamia around 2000 B.C., the Assyrian Kingdom had a more rigid patriarchal social structure. In Assyrian laws, women's rights as a mother were abolished and it was up to the man to decide whether to give any property to his divorced wife or not. In the Mesopotamian city states, the source of power and authority was father and husband. Women and children had to submit to this absolute authority. An inscription from that period stated that if a woman quarreled with her husband, he could break her teeth with a burnt brick. As the ruler of the region after the Assyrians, the King of Babylonia, Hammurabi ordered the cutting off of the hand of the son who raised his hand against his father in the law he enacted for the protection of the patriarchal structure. Moreover, the husband could bond his wife and children against debt. If the debt was not paid off, they became slaves [8].

With its rich, vast geography, India has made great contributions to the history of civilization in terms of philosophy, religion and art. In these rich, fertile lands, property-based classification has rendered a very rigid and insurmountable caste system in society. In this social structure, the value given to women decreases disproportionately from upper caste to lower caste [5]. In Brahmanism, obedience and service to the husband has a very special importance for women within the cultural values. The woman is commanded to obey and serve her husband as if he were a god [11]. Lower-class women of the caste had to do domestic and immediate work such as cooking, weaving, child care, and caring for the elderly and animals. According to the *manu* law compiled between 200-400 A.D. "a woman should be subject to her father when she is a child, to her husband when she gets married, and to her sons when her husband died". A woman should never be independent [12]. Starting from 1000 A.D., the *Sati* tradition, which glorified a woman's chastity and loyalty to her husband, began to be commonplace amongst some lower castes in certain regions of India. In *Sati* ceremonies, the widow of a deceased man was encouraged to be burnt alive along with her husband's body. Often this sacrificial ceremony was performed without the woman's consent.

The widow was tied to her husband's corpse on the pyre and then the pile was set alight [12].

As can be seen, ancient civilizations were built on a patriarchal social order. In these civilizations, the dominant culture reduces women to a second-class and oppressed position, while giving men a privileged and superior status. Discrimination against women is a continuation of this cultural integrity, whose roots go back thousands of years.

### 3. RELIGIONS' PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN

There is a close relationship between religion and culture. On the one hand, while religion shapes the culture of the society in which it is accepted, on the other hand it also finds a life and application area for itself with the values and possibilities of the culture [13]. That's because religions have been effective in shaping the cultural field with the rules they set regarding social and moral values. The emergence of religions also did not bring about a remarkable improvement in the status of women. Judaism, Christianity and Islam glorified the dominant patriarchal institutions and values of the period in which they emerged. Religious rules order the wife to unconditionally obey and respect her husband.

In the holy book of Judaism, the Torah, God blamed women the most when punishing, and found men at fault for listening to women. This being the case, women have been relegated to the position of a guilty, second-class person in worldly life. The rule that women should be subject to men and that men should have absolute dominion over women and everything they own was reflected in the life of Hebrew societies [14]. According to laws and traditions, women were primarily obliged to obey their husbands after matrimony. In terms of her duty to ensure the continuation of the family, women could only gain respect in society after giving birth to a son. The Torah forbids women from dressing like men. Women were required to cover their heads outside the home, and walking around with their heads uncovered in public was considered a humiliating behavior. According to the holy book Talmud, a man had the authority to divorce his wife if she bares her head. The most striking example that summarizes the Jewish belief perspective vis-à-vis women is found in the following phrase menfolk recite as part of their morning prayer: "My god, thank you for not making me a woman" [8].

The Christian religion essentially emerged from Judaism in that the Prophet Jesus was actually a Palestinian Jew. Initially, the orations of Jesus were of a social nature rather than a religious one, and included positive messages, especially for the poor. Jesus' sermons spread especially among slaves and women. Women were most affected by the teachings of the Prophet Jesus, who preached that everyone is precious, regardless of whether they are men or women. In Jewish society, where the touch of women and the infirm was considered polluting, Jesus' valuing of women as human beings led to the majority of women being among his first followers. However, after Christ, the church's statements about women carry hostility and severe insults towards the female gender. St. Augustine portrays women as evil, jealous, indecisive and inconsistent, and the source of all quarrels and injustice. According to St. Paul, man was not created for woman, but woman was created for man. Therefore, women should be devoted to their husbands as well as to God. Paul stated that the salvation of women would only be possible if they obeyed their husbands and raised their children as good Christians, in addition to their duties as wives and mothers. A woman should try to be worthy of her husband by fulfilling what is expected of her by working at home, taking care of children, and growing the products in her garden and field. If the woman could not do these things, her husband was allowed to beat his wife with a thin stick [15]. Killing a woman who betrays her husband is a tradition that has been going on since the Middle Ages. A man killing his wife for this purpose was morally and socially excused, and it was accepted as a behavior of saving the man's honor. In Western societies, honor killings of men were tolerated until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Christian societies, silence and acceptance mostly prevail in the face of family violence against women [16].

The religion of Islam emerged on the Arabian Peninsula. It is said that before Islam, there were small kingdoms in the north of the Arabian Peninsula where various tribes lived. The fact there were female rulers at the head of these kingdoms shows that women played important roles in society in the pre-Islamic period [3].

During the period of ignorance, Bedouinism dominated the Arab lifestyle. People who had to move frequently in the desert and who were occasionally attacked by other tribes had to live in strict loyalty to each other and obey the rules. In nomadic groups, it was the warrior men who

protected the tribe. While this status elevated men to a dominant position over women, it deemed women less important [17]. Furthermore, girls were killed by their own families or tribe members to prevent them from being kidnapped and sexually abused and to avoid the shame this would cause. Although urban living conditions were safer and more civilized than in Bedouin society, the status of women in the family depended on the man heading the family.

With the birth of Islam, the traditions of ignorance in the Arab society began to be abandoned. The Prophet Mohammed not only established a new religion but also a state order. Islam is a religion that regulates and controls people's way of life. In the early periods of Islam, just like in Christianity, many women became Moslems and worked to spread Islam. Some radical changes were made in Islamic rules regarding women during the reign of Prophet Omar, who became caliph after the death of Prophet Muhammad. These include the restriction of women's attendance at mosques and the punishment of stoning to death for the crime of adultery. This practice was a method of punishment taken from Judaism [18]. It cannot be said that practices in Islamic communities are based on equality between men and women. Some disasters that occurred from time to time in the history of Islam were attributed to the bad fortune of women, which led to an oppressive attitude towards them. Fatimid Caliph Hakim Biemrillah attributed the drought and epidemics in the year 1001 to women going freely out of their homes and prohibited this. A similar ban was imposed by the Mameluke Sultan Barsbay, again due to famine and epidemics [17].

As can be seen, governments tried to equip men divine power and authority by making changes in sacred texts and religions [19]. In all religious systems, there have been efforts to accept the usurpation of dominance by men, ignoring the power of women to give birth and sustain life. Another point that should be underlined is that throughout history, many famous male philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle, glorified the patriarchal system by belittling women rather than speaking in favor of women [3].

Devaluing women and seeing them as property normalizes men's claims of all kinds of rights over women. This also includes violence against women. According to statistics, more than 55% of women are being killed by their husbands,

intimate partners or a male family member, which is the clearest proof that this is a cultural behavior rather than an individual crime (Facts and Figures).

The emergence of monotheistic religions did not bring the equality and dignity to women they deserved as human beings. The common discourse of religions about women is that their low status in patriarchal society is also based on God's will so they have to internalize and accept the oppression and cruelty of men with submission. From a religious point of view, a good religious woman is one who completely submits and accepts her husband's orders and wishes. In addition, religious rules stipulate heavy sanctions and punishment for women who refuse to comply with them. In other words, men's right to be privileged and superior to women was also based on a divine will and was legitimized.

#### **4. SOCIAL PROCESSES OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

Regardless of the level of development, discrimination against women continues to exist in almost every country in different forms and degrees. While this discrimination can be seen openly as a structural hostility mechanism in underdeveloped countries, it also exists as covert humiliation caused by individual actions in developed modern societies. Providing some successful examples of women in every society doesn't result in ignoring the general reality of discrimination against women in the world. Although legal and social regulations in democratic societies attempt to define the level of equality that white women should have, prejudice and cultural values make it difficult to realize this. There is widespread resistance from men, especially regarding the equality that is tried to be brought to women through legal regulations that are further than the social adoption process.

With the transition from hunting and gathering to a settled life in human history, the patriarchal social structure was reinforced and the means of production and property became a male monopoly. This situation trivialized women and pushed them into a lower position than men, causing them to become victims of inequality and humiliation. Constituting the most primitive form of social division of labor, the preoccupation of women with household chores has also caused them to assume a role serving men in matters of nutrition, child care, sexual and emotional

support. This auxiliary position of women eventually created a reason that weakened their claim to naturally acquired material wealth. Family education, exemplary models, moral and religious social norms do not leave women with the option of behaving differently, and make them obliged to provide the services expected from them to men. Thus, a great economic power imbalance emerged between men and women, whereby women became dependent upon men.

The Industrial Revolution transformed the feudal agricultural system and forced peasants to migrate to cities and work in factories and mines. Cities were full of slums where crowds of poor people tried to seek shelter. The bourgeois class became increasingly stronger and richer and capitalism initiated total labor exploitation through the working class [20]. This change led to a worsening of the situation of female workers who had to work in factories and mines. Women were especially preferred in some fields of work. These were generally dirty, wretched environments, and women had to work for very low wages in these less skilled jobs. In England, although women were not employed underground in mines, they were employed outdoors, loading coal, pulling panniers onto wagons, sorting and similar jobs. In coal mines, women could only receive half the wages men were paid [21].

Although women began to react adversely against these unfair and degrading conditions, these were generally limited to individual actions. Especially with the Industrial Revolution, the gathering of many women together enabled social and political movements to seek their rights in the face of increasing oppression and inequality. Encompassing inequality between men and women, the struggle evolved into a strong feminist movement that continues to this day. Feminism is the doctrine of the liberation movement of women, a group that constitutes half of humanity and a gender that has always had to settle for a secondary position throughout the history of civilization [22]. More briefly, Feminism can be defined as a movement that strives to glorify women while ensuring that women have equal rights with men. According to Friedrich Engels, the first-class conflict that manifested itself in history occurred when the irreconcilable opposition between men and women developed within the marriage of husband and wife. The first-class oppression begins with the oppression of the female gender by the male gender [7].

In her work entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Englishwoman Mary Wollstonecraft suggested equal education and economic independence for women. As a writer and philosopher, Wollstonecraft is also considered one of the founders of the Feminist philosophy. The first women's rights organization in Europe was founded in Denmark in 1871. This was followed by Norway and Finland in 1884, and Iceland in 1894 [22]. Known as the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, women's organizations signed a joint declaration at the Berlin Conference of 1904: "Since men and women, as members of the human race, have equal freedoms, women should demand equal rights in all areas. Natural cooperation between the two sexes had to be achieved on the basis of social equality. Women should not be subject to men because all practices aimed at oppressing women in national laws, beliefs, customs and traditions are based on wrong rules. All government styles that do not accept women as individuals create social, legal and economic injustices. All countries in the world should immediately put this problem on the agenda and find an expedient solution" [23]. Feminism has made great contributions to the betterment of women regarding inequality and discrimination. Nonetheless, despite Feminism's struggle for more than two centuries, it's difficult to state that the desired result has been achieved. That's because it's not possible to solve the problem without changing thousands of years of patriarchal cultural values and prejudices which are at the basis of inequality and violence against women.

It appears that, from the agricultural society and the industrial revolution to the present day, the privileges provided to men with the help of male-dominated private property have been institutionalized in many areas of social life. For this reason, women's claims to be equal with men in terms of education, work, wages and social status are considered strange and unacceptable by most of the society, including some women. Because these thought patterns are based on thousands of years of cultural values that shape our behavior.

## **5. THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL FACTORS UPON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

As explained in the previous sections, the basis of discrimination and violence against women is the effect of cultural residues that have long roots in human history. As the product of social consciousness, culture has only existed through

behavior determined by individual consciousness. That's because the individual creates cultural values as a result of interaction with a cultural environment. Culture also changes as a result of this interaction and is passed from generation to generation. In other words, the individual must be evaluated together when acquiring culture, and culture must be evaluated together when dealing with the individual.

One of the most contentious topics is the human tendency to resort to violence in general, and the relationship between culture and this violent behavior towards women in particular. The complexity of the subject lies in the question, "*Does the individual create the society or does the society create the individual?*", which is addressed in the science of sociology [24]. In other words, the reply we give to the question of whether behavior creates culture or the culture we live in directs our behavior plays a key role in preventing violence against women. It seems that the regulations made in individual education and criminal legislation are not sufficient to eliminate this social problem. In Einstein once put it, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Until now, it has been claimed that this problem of violence and discrimination against women would be solved mainly by improving women's employment and education opportunities. Nevertheless, while women's employment and education opportunities have increased tremendously during the past century, the problem has yet to be solved. Victims of violence are not only uneducated and unemployed women; sometimes they can be a rich businesswoman and sometimes a very famous actress. There is a mutual interaction between education and culture. While education affects the culture of society, it is also affected by culture. What is meant by education here is not only formal school education, but also the whole of social education, including family education, religious education and moral values. Since the problem is culture-based, cultural change should be emphasized with insistence. In this regard, it's necessary to examine how culture and the cultural change process works.

Culture is defined as "The totality of knowledge, belief, art, law, customs, traditions, habits and abilities that a person acquires as a member of society" [25]. On the other hand, Malinowski defines culture in more general terms, in that it is accepted as a helpful tool in meeting needs and solving concrete problems. Culture is a system of objects, actions and mentalities and is organized



in the form of institutions such as family, religion, education, economy and politics [26].

As can be grasped from the aforementioned definitions, 'culture' is a continual learning process which shapes the individual in society from birth and directs his behavior and habits. 'Behavior,' on the other hand, is the externally observed actions and activities of a person and his style of self-expression. What shapes our behavior are our internalized cultural values. In other words, there is a close relationship between our behavior and cultural values. The individual learns culture by growing up in it and being deeply influenced by it thus becomes a member of society, which is called "assimilation". The importance of assimilation lies in teaching the individual how to meet his needs in society. Therefore, it is a necessity for a person to learn how to meet one's needs determined by the culture. Culture is the product of a chain of interaction that is transmitted from generation to generation and creates new behavior in each generation. Culture is shared by all members of society. However, this sharing is not the same for every individual and exhibits some differences, the most glaring of these is seen in the roles of men and women. With this gender-based sharing in culture, differences are considered natural and culture forces individuals to accept this discrimination [27].

A study demonstrated the remarkable degree to which women in some settings have internalized cultural norms that justify abuse [28]. Over 50% of women participated in this study agreed that it is acceptable for a man to beat to beat his wife under one or more of the following circumstances: if she disobeys her husband, refuses him sex, does not complete the housework on time, is unfaithful, is suspected or infidelity. This rate was higher among women who had experienced abuse than among those who had not. This indicates that women experiencing violence learn from their cultural values to accept or rationalize or condone these kinds of abuses [29].

Culture is not a frozen, stationary structure, but rather, has the ability to change and transform. Cultural change is the change that occurs in the cultural structure under the influence of internal and external factors that alter the hegemonic or dominant culture itself. According to Malinowski, cultural change is the process of transforming the existing social, material and spiritual structure of a society from one form to another. Cultural change is a functional situation that is not limited

to abstract or spiritual cultural elements. As a result of cultural change, visible changes occur in the political, economic and social structure of a society. Cultural change means that the cultural characteristics of the society in general or some of its institutions undergo permanent changes. However, "cultural change" never means "cultural transformation" *per se*. With cultural change, the main elements of culture are preserved, while in "cultural metamorphosis", the main elements of culture disappear and another cultural structure emerges. Technological and economic factors, physical environment, education and contact with other cultures are amongst the factors that affect cultural changes. The contact of societies with each other, in other words, the contact of cultures with each other, is rapidly increasing in the current period called the Information or Communications Age. During this era, cultural interaction has accelerated incomparably to previous periods. When a culture comes into contact with another culture, the particularly rigid or dominant culture influences the relatively weaker culture; but it is also affected by it to a certain extent. This lies at the basis of the dominant and oppressive behavior towards women in the patriarchal structure being more dominant in rural areas. Individuals migrating from rural to urban areas carry their cultural identities with them and are concerned about preserving their values. This concern does not allow any change in the traditional patriarchal culture. At this stage, proper education and the reassuring positive approach of the new environment to people will help eliminate these concerns and initiate the cultural change process [30,31].

Culture is the main factor in an individual's acquisition of personality as a social being. According to the science of psychology, culture is a learned behavior. Culture also forms a model that directs human behavior. As a product of what people do, culture also constitutes a pattern for how people act. Therefore, only a change in culture, which is a learned behavior, will cause the violent, humiliating behavior of men towards women to disappear [32,33].

## 6. CONCLUSION

Depending on the development level of the states, discrimination, inequality and violence against women continues to exist in all countries at different levels. Although the struggle has made progress in women's rights since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the problems against women continue to persist. Therefore, it would be beneficial to

review the effectiveness and accuracy of the methods followed in the struggle so far. To summarize the consequences of inequality and discrimination against women resulting from the patriarchal culture in society: Having fewer job opportunities than men, women's career and advancement opportunities in the workplace are lower than men. Women are paid lower wages even though they do the same job. Men are given priority in benefiting from educational opportunities. Not only is it not appreciated that women work unpaid in housework all day long, they are devalued and humiliated because of this position. To date, all efforts of women's organizations, official institutions and non-governmental organizations have focused on balancing and correcting aforementioned results. Beside the problems continuing, most importantly, women are still largely exposed to male violence, both physically and psychologically. Because the main cause of the problem, the change of patriarchal cultural values has been avoided.

This unfair behavior towards women is the remnants of a centuries-old general patriarchal culture. Though not impossible, it's a known fact that changing these cultural values will be a difficult process which requires effort and time. Efforts to prevent discrimination and violence against women should focus on this.

Education is generally defined as the process of providing, training and developing the individual with knowledge and skills for the social duties he/she will undertake in the future. Educating women and girls is undoubtedly very crucial. Education will increase their employment opportunities by improving their knowledge and skills, and shall reinforce their will to exercise their rights against violence and discrimination. However, it's not possible for education in the customary content to solve the problem of discrimination against women. The content of the education should aim to promote the adoption of values aimed at eliminating discrimination against women and patriarchal violence against women.

Furthermore, taking into account that women are victims of violence, not perpetrators, it should be ensured that the target audience of such training is men. It's men who commit violence and discrimination that need to be educated. Considering the continuity of education, it shouldn't be limited only to school education, but rather should be integrated with family education, religious education and moral values in society.

Furthermore, the problem requires coordinated actions that engages communities and many different sector, including family, education, justice, ethic values, religious advice and persuasion, press and social media. In turn, these steps would also initiate social consciousness and long-term cultural change. Such change in patriarchal culture is the only way to end discrimination and violence against women in society.

## **DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)**

Author hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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