THE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE HIZMET MOVEMENT ON WOMEN’S EDUCATION

BY

ZEYNEP ATAY

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
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THESIS

BY

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ENTITLED

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was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Political Science in International Relations

August 19, 2017

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ABSTRACT

Improving and maintaining the opportunities to provide an appropriate education for its citizens are a duty of every state. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26, paragraph 1 clearly states, “Everyone has the right to education.” And “everyone” means without discrimination based on gender, religion, race, or ethnic group because “Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups …” (Article 26, paragraph 2). Therefore, as education is considered a crucial element for the development of states, we are still witnessing the lack of support for women’s education and as a result women have been displaced in society.

This paper examines the role and the contribution of the Hizmet Movement on improving the status of women and supporting higher education for women. The Hizmet Movement, which is a faith-inspired civic movement rooted in Turkey has attracted numerous people for its universal educational achievements firstly in Turkey and later in 160 countries by efficiently expanding its educational institutions. Methodology for this research included in-depth interviews with women from various countries who were supported by the movement to study their further
degrees in universities around the world. As a result of my interviews, I have analyzed the research findings that the Hizmet movement effectively elevates the status of women and gives importance and priority to promoting higher education for women. I see in practice that those women have been encouraged a lot and have had a great impact to work for peace and harmony as they are considered being a part of the development of the societies for better.

Keywords: Hizmet, Movement, Education, Women
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank my advisor Prof. Dr. Jaran Maluleem from Thammasat University for guiding me, as well as for his ultimate concern for my research. Further, I would like to thank Dr. Srawut Aree and Dr. Wasan Luangprapat for their very useful suggestions and recommendations. And I would also like to thank all my interviewees for being patient by spending their valuable time on answering my long questions and also sharing their life worth experiences in The Hizmet Movement. Last but not least, this thesis research would not be completed without my husband; I thank to my dear husband for always being supportive and for his continuous encouragement.

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THE ROLE AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE HIZMET MOVEMENT ON WOMEN’S EDUCATION

1.1 Introduction

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
Nelson Mandela

“A person is truly a human if he or she learns, and teaches, and inspire others.”
M. Fethullah Gulen

“If you educate a man, you educate one person; if you educate a woman, you educate an entire family.”
African Proverb

Education is a vital factor in the development of a nation to achieve its goals. No country will be able to achieve its economic, political, technological and social development without providing enough investment in education for its citizens. As education is the door to the “globalized world”, it will help people to increase creativeness, and productiveness by promoting entrepreneurship. Education also makes one aware of the importance of diversity in terms of recognizing diverse cultures and religions. As a result of much better educated, the person will contribute willingly in finding solutions to global issues. It is the responsibility of each man and woman to participate equally in society. Here, education as a tool, which is used for progress of development respectively of human, society and nation, does clearly imply that education should be for all, men and women. It should not be assumed that education is only for men (or prioritize one to another).

I would like to consider the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 1948 which states that:

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and the rights…”
and in Article 26 (1); Everyone has the right to education.” (2) “Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to
strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance peace.¹

Both clearly shows and put emphasize that no matter what circumstances the person is in, he or she has a right to be free and get educated (in the following at least elementary level shall be compulsory). No one should be left behind in order to get involved the society.

Those are clear directions for improving society from the perspectives of educational field, but when we look at the today’s global situation, there are still some places left where those women’s issues mainly in education field are partly solved or even not yet solved. It may not be that easy to handle the matters but I am keeping my hope.

In my thesis, I will focus on the status of women in some countries where women are considered as second class citizens comes after men or even “not considered” enough in society and point out some current issues concerning women’s accessibility to education. By analyzing those challenging issues about women’s status and women’s education, I will open a window by introducing a large and progressive faith-inspired social movement called the Hizmet Movement and its educational perspectives for improving the status and women’s education especially in higher education with effective and motivational global activities related to women’s status, and women’s education.

1.2 Background and Issues

Women’s issues are still the priority since back in history and received attention from academicians, politicians, religious leaders and scholars around the globe. Women around the globe have been working together for their rights since the first-wave of feminism. In the early 20th century, women came together for social and

political rights to create more peaceful societies. Later on, they grouped themselves by focusing on and emphasizing the specific issues related to their current need within the national borders or political and economic zones in their countries. This model of activity of prioritizing women’s issues specifically helped them to see clearly, act quickly and try to cure “sick” areas in women’s issues. Shortly, women’s issues in International relations from the perspective of feminism are focused on making women “equal” and “seen,” while postcolonial feminist international relations focuses more on the contemporary discrimination as a result of imperial and colonial activities. In the late 20th century, “International feminism” took its place in the globalized world. Like for example under the light of studying “women’s rights as human rights”, while Third or Second World areas/regions like South East Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe are focusing on the mistreatment, legal status or abuse of women, other countries like USA and Canada and Western Europe focused more on the protection, economic issues, and the rights of women.

When international feminism was taken into account, developed and women from developing countries came together to participate in solving problems related to economic issues and human rights for women in general. In the 1990s, with new technologies women were able to coordinate activities and were able to disseminate information quickly. The advantages of technology created a place for women of the world to agree on the issues of gender equality, social and environmental issues that had been supported by the United Nations in Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, and Copenhagen respectively between 1990 and 1995. As a result of these continuous efforts and strong networks, in 1995 Beijing’s Declaration and Platform for Action was held to create a common agenda for women’s issues. Then, new frame that included gender equality, ending poverty, ending the violence against women-culturally or religiously-, social rights for women and the right to have education issues had been drawn. In the following years, many conferences, activities, events

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and campaigns were held to observe progress on women’s issues and identify the measures of stated goals and objectives needed for forward looking strategies. One of the main goals of UN activities for women was to create global awareness of the issues by providing relevant and clear information to governments, educational institutions, non-government organizations, civil society organizations, community leaders, and individuals. As a result, government, other public and private sectors would be analyzing and implementing the new task to take action in their policy making process.

Implementing and applying new policies of government on women’s issues are of course not easy and quick. The gap between “theories” and “realities” are significant enough. Although some progress was seen at the root level, the success of policy or action implementation in women’s lives were seen as invisible. As many scholars agreed that when we look back, the effects of colonization, the era of globalization and also the end of the Cold War brought many challenges to women and added some more to women’s issues therefore there have been created many obstacles around to deal with. Poverty, ignorance, violence on women, terrorism, challenges for minority populations in the political field, less participating in social and global activities, economic status of women, traditional and cultural based attitudes of women’s status are some obstacles that keep women back and those can only be eliminated through good quality of education.

Very well known organization throughout the world, which puts gender equality as a global priority, is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO was established on November 16, 1945 by the UN General Assembly. And it promotes the right to education and supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) through the education 2030 Framework for Action. Irina Bokova, The Director-General of UNESCO emphasizes the importance of women’s education:
…Young girls and women are changing the world. We must support them. We must give them the tools they need to shape the world for better.4

In the UNESCO’s report although a number of girls’ enrollment in primary education shows a fairly large increase, less than half of countries achieved gender equality at both primary and secondary levels.5 Although girls comprise the majority of out-of-school children and young people – 15 million school-age girls worldwide will never set foot in a classroom.6 Why the number of women who are not in educational institutions is high in UNESCO’s report begs the question, which UNICEF indicates in its report at the end of the monitoring and evaluation process. Social and household demands, cultural norms and traditions which prioritize the men’s education when the family has limited financial resources, early marriage, female genital cutting and a lack of female teachers are some of the factors that reduce women’s access to education. And the report shows that if some countries like Sub-Saharan Africa and West and South Asia would provide compulsory secondary education for girls, the child marriage would fall 64%.7 And another external reason is that girls are less motivated by attending the schools in such countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the bombing, attacks and violence are daily occurrences.

Women’s education is a must in this challenging world. Educating them in every aspect of life means empowering them by building self-confidence and providing opportunities to become positive role models for future generations especially for their daughters by changing traditional gender roles in domestic and in social situations.8

6 Ibid.
8 Lynne Chisholm and Abrar Hasann, eds., Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), 2009).
Creating the positive changes in the social and educational side of a country for the sustainable development is not only work and the project of any country, but also NGOs, civil society organizations and educational institutions which have a great impact on the policy makers can participate to be the part of this development process women’s education. Irina Bokova mentions that the activities, programs, and projects for the improvement of women’s education, which have been provided by UNESCO, must also increase together with the successful and innovative partnerships or any organization that enhances the best practices of education, improves the status of women and brings gender equality in every aspect of life for the betterment of the nation and to achieve the SDGs goals. Therefore, it is the job of everybody to create peaceful societies by promoting gender equality through education.

In this context of understanding of the process of improvement and development of women’s status and education, many movements around the globe brought attention to reducing and eliminating obstacles, which women faced since the 19th century. Some of movements failed because of lack of government or public support whereas some of them expanded rapidly and played a crucial role in pioneering and in promoting education in the domestic and international arena. From the perspectives of scholars, academicians of sociologists and even the religious community leaders have spent a lot of time analyzing the movements’ birthplaces, background of participants, and reasons for failure or success.

1.2.1 Classifying the Hizmet Movement

One of the social movements, which captured enormous domestic and international attention is the Gulen Movement (aka the Hizmet Movement) founded around the 1970s in Turkey. The initiator of this movement is a Turkish scholar, M. Fethullah Gulen. People name this movement as using his last name, but Mr. Gulen insists his followers using “Hizmet” Movement instead9 because when we say “the Gulen Movement”, it emphasizes an individual, but actually the movement is for all and all activities are done by volunteers. “Hizmet” means “service” in Turkish.

Service to humanity where there are altruistic activities and projects which are closely related to and done for “universal human values” to meet the local and global needs of people for the sake of God by its volunteers. It is a civil society movement, which also emphasizes the importance of fostering the spiritual and intellectual consciousness of an individual by using the tools of education and dialogue. It is not a state sponsored organization nor carrying a state; it is neither political nor religious ideology.

When we consider social movements and their initiators, initiators are in some sense accepted as “activists” too. The reason is explained by Ron Eyerman and Adrew Jamison:

… because through their activism they contribute to the formation of the movement’s collective identity, to making the movement what it is. All activists do not participate equally in the social movements. However, some actors are more visible as organizers, leaders or spokespersons.10

As it is clearly understood from the sentence above, both authors mentioned the great importance of having activists and leaders in social movements to shape activities, inspire followers, guide in the right direction and also to provide opportunities for all participants. In short, they are there to shape the identity of the movement.

1.2.2 A Short Biography of M. Fethullah Gulen

M. Fethullah Gulen was born in Erzurum, a city in the Northeastern part of Turkey in 1941. He completed his primary education in traditional institutions, madrasa, and later, he attended the courses to be taught about the principle of Islam and humanity. Those subjects were taught by respected and famous scholars at that time like one of the Sufi masters in Erzurum, Muhammad Lutfi Efendi. And Gulen also was introduced to Risale-i Nur, which is a collection of books written by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and impacted Gulen’s intellectual and spiritual

development. On the other side, Gulen’s parents especially his mother played an important role in educating and shaping his character.

Gulen’s reading habit was extensive. He did not read only Islamic books but also he benefited from an indepth study of modern science with its global figures and well-known philosophers. As he was on duty as an Imam, he was awarded a state-preacher’s license. Later on, he was transferred from one city to another with the desire to move and with the passion and strength of youth. Gulen’s works can be divided into two categories: audio/video and written texts. So far, he has written more than 60 books in Turkish and many articles in magazines of Fountain, Sizinti and Yeni Umit. Some of his books and articles have been translated into more than 30 languages.

Building upon the lessons learned from studying the works of Said Nursi, he shared his ideas about three enemies of society: poverty, ignorance, and disunity (internal division). Whenever he visited cities to preach, he railed against those great enemies, which could be eliminated firstly through education, humanitarian aid and dialogue. He sees ignorance as a serious problem that we face today, which can be defeated only by “education”. So, investing in education, which results in positive effects at the end, is important to ease those societal threats for the betterment of the nations. Therefore, as Gulen gives immense importance to educating individuals, he has encouraged and attracted Turkish businessmen to open educational institutions rather than building mosques.

Although he was educated in traditional Islamic Institutions, he urged his listeners to open modern schools rather than traditional madrasas (Islamic Schools). He even advised opening schools instead of mosques.

While he was doing his preacher duty during 1972 and 1975, there was a political and economic instability caused by both left and right radical elements in Turkey.

Gulen insists that the schools were inspired by the movement to avoid politicization and radicalization. Despite being

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approached by various political party leaders for endorsement, he has always maintained a non-partisan stance and strongly encourages his followers to remain out of direct involvement in politics.\textsuperscript{13}

Muhammed Cetin also explains this political situation in Turkey like this:

At this time educational opportunities were still scarce for ordinary Anatolian\textsuperscript{14} people. Most student accommodation in the major cities was controlled by those radical elements of politic views. Parents in provincial towns whose children passed university entrance examination were caught in a dilemma- to surrender their children’s care to the ideologues or to deny them further education and keep them at home.\textsuperscript{15}

Therefore, to address this difficulty, Gulen and his inspired followers offered parents dormitories, hostels and houses for their children to keep them safe during that time. The movement also established university preparatory courses in every city in Turkey to support children of middle and low-income families for their higher education and to educate them in peaceful way. Not only businessmen but also other people who worked for the government sectors were inspired by Gulen’s educational ideas and work, helped those students regularly providing them scholarship funds. Since the 1980s, more than a hundred successful private schools, dormitories and hostels for higher educations have been set up in Turkey.

In short, from its humble beginnings, the movement has grown all over Turkey, setting up huge universities in many Turkish cities, and making it easy for those in rural areas to access modern education.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} Ebaugh, “The Gulen Movement,” 35.
\textsuperscript{14} Anatolia, which roughly occupies the area covered by the present day Turkey, means “the land where the sun rises” (Ancient Greek name). See more on Anatolia, “Geography,” http://www.ancientanatolia.com/introduction.html (accessed April 7, 2016).
After the expansion in Turkey, Mr. Gulen started to think of opening institutions around the globe. So, he and his followers started with the nearest and neediest countries in terms of education and economic opportunities:

After the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1989, the Gulen Community was a key player in reconstructing post-Soviet education. Hundreds of schools and universities were set up throughout the former Soviet republics, both in the Russian Federated Republic, particularly in its predominantly Muslim regions, in the newly independent nations of the Caucasus and Central Asia, and in the Balkans. Television programs were made for the vast reaches of Central Asia, and scholarships were granted for study in Turkey.17

The dreams of Mr. Gulen’s and his participants in the Hizmet Movement for creating a peaceful coexistence for all nations and having extraordinary projects and activities by opening educational institutions have not stopped. This project continues to spread worldwide. According to the necessity and demand of countries, the schools continued to open in many parts of Western Europe, South and North America, Asia, Africa and South East Asia too. There are over 2000 schools that exist in 160 countries located in 5 continents throughout the world.

1.2.3 Philosophy of Gulen Educational Model

Gulen’s educational method is different than other models. He has criticized the traditional madrasas (religious schools) by arguing that they are not enough to meet the needs of modern life, as they do not prepare students for modern life. And he also criticizes secular schools where the spiritual and ethical values are low, although they have well equipped technology and science.18 On the other hand, in terms of emphasizing the great enemies of society where they are seen as obstacles to achieving peace and to sustain the development of the countries, he sees education as the primary solution to those problems that plague developing countries, namely:

18 Ebaugh.
ignorance, poverty, and internal division.\textsuperscript{19} He integrated scientific and spiritual knowledge to bring about the “marriage of mind and heart,” which is essential for the progress of the nation. Hearts are enlightened by the spiritual knowledge and minds are filled with positive science. By this model of education young people will discover solutions for economic, political and social issues. This was also mentioned in some of his sermons as emphasizing the importance of creating a “Golden Generation” by using the term Western knowledge with spiritual values through education to resolve society’s problems.

Gulen offers a vision of a “Golden Generation” that can combine technological advancement with deep religious insight that will turn science into a reliable servant of humanity.\textsuperscript{20}

All the way down, when education and his vision of the Golden Generation are concerned, Gülen does not focus on only one gender, one ethnic group, one race or even one class or nation. He believes that “every” individual has the right to access and receive education, acquire scientific and spiritual knowledge to enlighten their hearts and minds and that the people have the right to engage in social activities in solving the world’s problems.

\subsection{1.2.4 Significances of Volunteers of the Hizmet Movement}

For Gulen, a real human being is the one who serves humanity. Dealing with the humanitarian problems and trying to find solutions to each are good deeds in his understanding and perspective of Hizmet (service). His principle is “Serving the people means serving God”. Therefore, he mentions that there is no limit to doing good deeds to another. That’s why in this globalized world where the farthest place just click away and where different cultures, religious, ethnic background come together to create richness in the beauty of diversity, Gulen and his volunteer participants have chosen education as a tool to instill common moral values, tolerance, and love for the young generations. Therefore Gulen sees the teaching

\textsuperscript{19} Ebaugh, “The Gulen Movement,” 95.
activity is a “Holy” job and the teacher, he considers a “Saint”. As Erkan Toguslu implies the Hizmet from Gulen’s perspective is the source of “Gulen’s Theory of Arab and Ethical Values of the Gulen Movement” as follows:

Hizmet for Gulen, implies that a person excessively devotes his life to humanity, is interested in the others needs and prefers their happiness rather than his own needs. He assume that the altruism and the essential moral principle that the educators must have for the humanity.²¹

As it can be figured out that, building a modern school, having academic excellence and bringing the best technology to homes or a host country where the Hizmet Movement operates, somehow are not enough. What is also needed the most are volunteer educators who can spread knowledge of universal human values, ethics (ahlāq) to bring out an ideal human character (İnsan-i Kamil) and he believes that learning and teaching, as they are two divine duties of individuals.²²

Over time, the students who live in dormitories, houses and hostels became major advocates of Gulen’s service ideas and returned to their villages and towns or other countries to spread the word of their valuable experiences and opportunities.²³

… extra care is taken in those schools by Gülen-inspired educators by providing peace where the operation is in progress for reconciliation, societal peace and tolerance. When the students diffuse the values in society that they have acquired in school, everyone is proud of their achievements and the youth raised in these schools become role models for others.²⁴

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… in Gülen's schools, teachers are inspired to give and impart wisdom as well as qualities such as devotion, simplicity, trust, loyalty, fidelity to friends, humility, modesty, contentedness, which are the result of the role of exemplarity of volunteer teachers.25

According to the outstanding projects/works and ideas of Gülen with his life dedication to humanity, people ranging from academics, education activists, journalists, authors and peace advocates have realized and respected The Hizmet Movement’s activities nationally and internationally and they started to support the movement all around the globe. “All members of the community are simultaneously autonomous individuals and integral parts of the whole.26 As a result of his continuous commitment, Gülen was voted the world top public intellectual in the 2008 FOREIGN POLICY/Prospect poll27 and the TIME magazine presented its annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world and he was chosen in 2013.28

Gülen received the EastWest Institute Peace Building Award on behalf of the countless volunteers of the Hizmet (service) Movement for their selfless work to bring peace and harmony to our world in 2011, New York. And another award came from prestigious Manhae Grand Prize as one of the world’s most important Muslim figures in 2013 in South Korea.29 And recently last year in 2015 Gülen got The Gandhi King Ikeda Award for Peace which was created by the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College due to his "interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue about science, democracy and spirituality and opposition to violence and the

25 Toguslu, “Gulen’s Theory.”
27 Please see the full interview at http://foreignpolicy.com/2008/08/04/meet-fethullah-gulen-the-worlds-top-public-intellectual/
misuses of religion as political ideology which made him the humanizing face of Islam.\textsuperscript{30}

1.3 Research Objectives

Since the issues of gender equality, status of women, and women’s right to have education have its own place in the international agenda by gaining attention from governments, NGOs, academicians and scholars and taken some constructive steps forward to create better lives for all women, my paper attempts to discuss and analyze those issues under the perspective of the Hizmet Movement with its primary role on promoting education and creating space for women in society by providing altruistic activities. My objectives of the research are:

- To understand how the Hizmet Movement observes the status of women in society and why the Hizmet Movement gives importance to women’s education
- To find out the influences and role of the Hizmet movement on higher education for women
- To analyze how The Hizmet Movement creates space for women to interact each other internationally and encourages women to participate in global issues for their positive contributions to world’s problems as they are considered the part of society
- To examine the motives and drives of women participants of The Hizmet Movement in educational, social and global altruistic activities

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the improvement of the status of women in society and importance of education of women, universal values, and experiences of women participants/volunteers of The Hizmet Movement all over the world, there are some research questions that emerge in this section.

1. What are significant roles of the Hizmet Movement in elevating women’s status and giving importance on women’s education especially in higher education as a result of observing the need of women’s education in Turkey and other countries?

2. To what extent the Hizmet movement’s female participants have been encouraged in the development of society and what are their experiences being a part of the Hizmet Movement in Turkey and other countries?

3. What outcomes can be seen in education model of the Hizmet Movement?

The first question is designed to analyze the challenging status of women in history and also current situation of some countries under the perspective of social, economic and educational activities and how The Hizmet Movement tries to find solutions in eliminating the issues related to women and creating or reconsidering a space for women to contribute more in their societies. In this question, I take the attention to the Hizmet Movement and its educational and social activities related to women in Turkey and in other countries as well.

The second research question was arranged to understand deeply the dynamics and motives of The Hizmet Movement. As Gülen emphasizes three great enemies -namely ignorance, disunity and poverty- of the society which can only be eased through education, participants especially women (either teachers or university level of students in The Hizmet Movement) willingly take a part to serve humanity to come together around universal values with mutual understanding and respect for one another without any discrimination on race, religion, ethnic and gender. This research question also greatly sheds light on the success of the movement to become globally active.

The third question is for the result of my interviews on the Hizmet model of education by analyzing its achievements. Here, I am going to focus beyond the educational field, which means that after having higher education by the support of movement, women participants with the aim of providing peace and harmony in society, get involved or participate voluntarily in fruitful national and international social and economic projects/activities done by The Hizmet established institutions
like Dialog Platforms, Cultural Centers, Hospitals, Media Centers, and humanitarian aid foundations, etc.

1.5 Hypothesis

As The Hizmet Movement is committed to educating youth by opening high schools and institutions in Turkey and around the world, it also encourages and supports girls to continue their higher level of education by providing scholarships according to the country where the girls want to study. Therefore, my hypotheses is that the girls who finished their high schools in any The Hizmet Schools or get in contact with any The Hizmet movement volunteers in their life, want to go to another foreign country supported by The Hizmet movement to study their higher education, and get involved in social activities in promoting peace and universal values for a better world.

1.6 Literature Reviews

The study on this topic has stimulated me to explore more about The Hizmet Movement and its altruistic activities and projects done in Turkey and at the same time in other countries. Therefore I came across many literatures written by Turkish and foreign academicians about Gulen and the Hizmet movement from various perspectives.

To guide my analysis and try to find the answers to my research questions, I have classified my literature reviews into three categories. Firstly, since my research fall into the category of women and education, here I will meld several literatures about status of women and women’s education in the perspective of the ideas of Gulen as he is known as the initiator of the Hizmet movement. I am also going to use Gulen’s sermons, his books and interviews done (visual and written sources) as secondary sources. Secondly, I will look into the reviews, which have emphasized projects done by the Hizmet and its volunteers to promote gender equality and women’s education. And finally, I will investigate some other reviews related to the social dimension of the Hizmet movement, as the movement is a civic and faith-inspired movement.
Only with good quality education can nations achieve their social and economic goals. Ebaugh states that:

Producing, maintaining, and disseminating knowledge can only be achieved through quality education, not by politics or force.\(^{31}\)

And for Gulen education is the answer for all major problems in this world. “….Let us spread education so that ignorance can come to an end”.\(^{32}\) He also mentions that with education individuals become more productive and contribute in every society and no individual or any society can reach its fullest potential without education.\(^{33}\) He also continues by saying:

The main duty and the purpose if human life is seek understanding. The effort of doing so, known as education, is a perfecting process through which we earn, in the spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of our beings.\(^{34}\)

… and education is a prerequisite for social, economic and political modernization and advocates that individuals will respect democratic law and human rights only if they receive a sound education.\(^{35}\)

The Gulen model of education focuses on human need and tries to solve the humanitarian problems. Therefore, he suggests to “train the minds and hearts of the young generation in modern schooling systems” because one sided education increases the crises in society and produces only youth with no ideals\(^{36}\) and he continues offering a new style of education which will fuse religious and scientific knowledge together with morality and spirituality in order to generate enlightened

\(^{32}\) Ergil, “Fethullah Gulen,” 274.
\(^{33}\) Ibid.
\(^{35}\) Ebaugh, “The Gulen Movement,” 34.
\(^{36}\) Gulen, “Toward the Global”.
individuals with hearts illumined by religious sciences, and minds will be illuminated with positive sciences.\textsuperscript{37} Ahmet Orhan Polat and Thomas Michel further explain this through the new educational style, the students are to be given non-material values such as ethics, tolerance, openness, acceptance of diversity,\textsuperscript{38} the profundity of ideas, clarity of thoughts and depth of feeling by dedicated teachers who are committed to devoting their lives, time and knowledge to teach and lead the young generations in educational institutions.

Gulen, as an Islamic preacher and an activist supports his modern educational model for youth by emphasizing that everybody should become educated and contribute to society for better. Therefore, this model does not exclude anyone as he is promoting human rights. He recognizes women’s rights to pursue higher education and careers in the public sphere \textsuperscript{39} and he further argues that “gender equality is a fundamental Islamic principle and advocates the need for women to be fully operational in society”\textsuperscript{40} because Gulen strongly believes that the inequalities that we see today are subsequently due to pre-Islamic cultural traditions that through the course of history have become incorporated with the religion and misunderstood as being Islamic.\textsuperscript{41} Gulen states

The woman is not inferior to the man. If we are to think of the man and the woman like nitrogen and oxygen, both of them with their attributes and their special places are rather important and they are in need of each other to the same extent. …in terms of their mission in this world and their creation they are not

\textsuperscript{39} Rausch, “Gender and Leadership,” 133.
\textsuperscript{40} Safiye Embel, “Women in Leadership Positions in Hizmet: Understanding Gender Imbalance at the Top of a Global Social Movement” (PhD diss., New York University, 2016), 22.
different from each other and they are like parts of the same whole or different faces of the same coin.\textsuperscript{42}

Here, Gulen points out the “real” face of Islam that his commitment and philosophy based on the Quran and Sunnah. And for the misunderstanding of Islam and its teachings, he offers to consider the religious practices during the time of Prophet Muhammad; look at how they implemented then applied the Quran and its rules to the circumstances of our time.\textsuperscript{43}

Gulen does not agree to restrict women’s capacity to engage in any social activity, work and education. Jamia Tarabay who interviewed with Gulen on 14\textsuperscript{th} August 2013 asked whether the role of women in Islam was limited to motherhood or not and his response was\textsuperscript{44}

The noble position of motherhood aside, our general opinion about women is that, while taking into account their specific needs, it should be made possible for them to take on every role, including the jobs of physician, military officer, judge and president of a country. As a matter of fact, in every aspect of life throughout history Muslim women made contributions to their society. In the golden age (referring to the years during Mohammed’s lifetime) starting with Aisha, Hafsa, and Ummu Salama (the Prophet’s wives), had their places among the jurists and they taught men.

Throughout the history of The Hizmet Movement, women have been seen and considered as backbones of the nations and play a crucial role in nurturing the young generation for becoming much better individuals for themselves and citizens for the nations. Therefore, national and international activities or projects are continuously done by The Hizmet movement focusing on the improvement rather than excluding any gender, religion or race. For example, during the political struggle

\textsuperscript{43} Ergil, “Fethullah Gulen,” 124.
in 1980s in Turkey, there were extreme groups, leftist and the rightist who controlled the higher education system and accommodations in a “hyper-politicized atmosphere”.

As a matter of fact that, families had two choices, either sending their children to the cities that they needed to attend universities where there was a risk of falling in one of these ideologies or keeping them at home. Therefore, “Gulen began promoting activities that enabled male and female students to attain higher education” and he urged businessmen to open hostels and dormitories for those who were in need to escape from this extreme environment and also help low-income families to support education and accommodation fees. As a result of this, families perceived those houses and dormitories protective for their children. This is stated by Ebaugh that

The dormitories and houses are served as shelters against alcohol and drug use, premarital sexual exploits, and involvement in communist, ultra-nationalist or other radical movements. Many conservative and religious parents encouraged their children to live in the dormitories as they attended university in the big cities in Turkey.

The houses are referred as “lighthouses” (ışık evleri, dersane) where high school or university level students could live together. This was also mentioned in as Light Houses were the apartments that were owned or rented by the community for a group of same-sex high school or university students to stay and live a communal life, and they were provided food support by the community. The Light Houses, which do not ask for rent and offer free food, are attractive especially for the lower-class students having hardship in affording education fees. There, students have collective sessions not only gather for their studies on university or high school subjects, but also for improving their spiritual life by praying and listening to advice from each

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other in sohbet-nasihat (conversation) meetings, which are in practice teachings sessions on Quran.\textsuperscript{49}

Therefore, the lighthouses became channels of representing good deeds and intentions.\textsuperscript{50}

This successful local assistance also gave Gulen an idea about setting up same structure of dormitories and houses for secondary and university level students abroad as well. In a parallel to the establishments of the private high schools abroad, Gulen has encouraged Turkish male and female students to study higher education and at the same time movement has provided an opportunity for them to be interns by assisting voluntarily to Turkish or foreigner teachers who teach at those private schools abroad. It is important to understand Gulen’s notion of education here as harmonized with altruistic behaviors of the participants of the movement.

As a result of those impressive works and activities, The Hizmet movement has received attention by emphasizing the importance of education and arguing that knowledge is equally a duty of man and woman. When we say knowledge, not only in the area of modern education, but also in the area of spiritual and moral education needed for further development of an individual, society and nation.

1.7 Theoretical Frameworks

In order to analyze the objectives and find answers to my designed research questions, I will also focus on two theories, one related to women’s education approach in the light of liberal feminist theory and the other based on the organization theory under the study of social movements.

Liberal feminism has been employed to explain inequalities and oppression of women in society. Therefore, the central argument of liberal feminism is that women are equal to men and should be treated as such in public spheres. As a result of this, liberal feminists have improved women’s status in many areas


\textsuperscript{50} M. Hakan Yavuz, 	extit{Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gulen Movement} (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 41.
especially contributed to educational reforms by creating spaces for more women to become professionals.\textsuperscript{51} It is said that liberal feminism is an individualistic form, concentrating on women having the ability to maintain their equality through being responsible for their own actions and choices.\textsuperscript{52} Liberal feminist theory is explained under the perspective of Anthony Giddens that it believes gender inequality, which is produced by reduced access for women and girls to civil rights and allocation of social resources such as education and employment.\textsuperscript{53} Allison Jaggar expresses her opinion in her book of Feminist Politics and Human Nature on the early liberal feminists’ efforts that they were for equal education as this was the most effective means of social change.\textsuperscript{54}

There are many contributors to liberal feminist theory including Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor, John Stuart Mill, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Mary Wollstonecraft considered a liberal classical feminist as her approach is related to woman and also her rights. She was a writer and philosopher and the most influential educational theorist, which has been also called “mother of feminism” as she was one of the earliest feminist writers in eighteen century. She claimed that women must be educated for the primary rights of women because women are the responsible to educate young generations. She mentioned women’s rights and mostly focusing education of women in her book, “A Vindication of the Rights of Women\textsuperscript{55} as follows:

Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. And how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she knows

\textsuperscript{54} Alison M. Jaggar, \textit{Feminist Politics and Human Nature} (Sussex: The Haverster Press, 1983).
\textsuperscript{55} A Vindication of the Rights of women (1792) is one of the earliest works of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) during the early feminists period.
why she ought to be virtuous? Unless freedom strengthens her reason till she comprehends her duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good.  

Mary Wollstonecraft also argues that ignorance and oppression of women will be eliminated through education and at the end education will produce stronger societies with the high standards of morality and marriage, which provide benefits for future generations because she believes that women are capable enough of receiving education, which is even useful for their domestic lives (private spheres) too. She worked for better education for women where she saw women’s inferior status as the result of their environment and not from a lack of natural abilities. Here, the emphasis is done for gender equality where all women and men have equal conditions and opportunities rather than focusing on only biologically determined roles and capabilities of both genders. Gender equality also enables the realization of human rights are for all and all can contribute more globally in social, economical and political development of the states and at the end everybody will get the benefit from the results. Therefore, achieving gender equality and creating space for women to access educational opportunities would require some changes or transformation in policies and practices. This can be done as Mary concludes her ideas by emphasizing that education is the heart of human development and empowerment to overcome inequality and oppression of women.

When considering the liberal feminists approach in supporting the improvement of the status of women and women’s education, it is very much possible to apply this theory to my research questions and also guide my analysis for the role and contributions of The Hizmet movement on status and women’s education. Since the establishment of The Hizmet movement, space and opportunity have been “recreated” for women and progressively projects done to raise awareness of the need

for women’s education. Gulen calls for attention by defending the right of woman and her space in every field of life as equal to man.\(^\text{59}\)

It is also important to respond and shed light on my research questions through applying another important theory, organizational commitment theory, whose mechanism explains that the movement has captured the enthusiasm of millions of Turks within the country as well as in the countries to which movement’s participants migrate for The Hizmet (service to humanity) voluntarily.\(^\text{60}\)

What makes the movements so active and successful is closely related to its members’ commitments to the movements’ goals and values. Rosabeth Kanter, a sociologist, introduces the notion of commitment as follows:

Commitment is a consideration, which arises at the intersection of organizational requisites and personal experience. On the one hand, social systems organize to meet systematic ‘needs’; and on the other hand, people orient themselves positively and negatively, emotionally and intellectually, to situations. Since social orders are supported by people, one problem of collectivities is to meet organizational requisites in such way that participants at the same time become positively involved with the system-loyal, loving, dedicated and obedient. Commitment then refers to the willingness of social actors to give their energy and loyalty to social systems.\(^\text{61}\)

This is greatly important in my research that Kanter links the maintenance of an individual’s goals and values with the maintenance of the organization’s goals and values. She focused on the organizational requirements that influence individuals to feel that their own self-interest is indistinguishable from that of the group in their sense of commitment. She further explains that a committed person is loyal and involved effectively, has a sense of belonging, a feeling that the group is an extension of himself or herself and that he/she is an extension of the group.\(^\text{62}\) As a result of this loyalty, members especially women, give up or let say, “sacrifice” their time, and

\(^{59}\) Ergil, “Fethullah Gulen,” 121.


energy on the works and activities of the organization, which in turn increases the commitment as a positive correlation.

Porter et al also agrees with Kanter on the topic by further describing that organizational commitment is “an attachment to the organization, characterized by an intention to remain in it, an identification with the values and goals of the organization and a willingness to exert extra effort on its behalf.”⁶³ O’Reilly characterizes the concept of organizational commitment theory as “it is an individual’s psychological bond to the organization, including a sense of a job involvement, loyalty and belief in the values of the organization.”⁶⁴ According to the literature here, the individual adopts the organizational values and goals to carry out job responsibilities. If I put it in another way, more committed members become more responsible and loyal to the organization.

When we consider the Hizmet movement and its inspiring educational activities and faith based dialog projects in Turkey and around the globe, participants especially women deeply impressed by the ideas and thoughts of Gulen and got motivated to work for a better world “as Gulen elevating and motivating his followers, providing the movement’s vision, defining its values, and guiding them toward constructive for a better change.”⁶⁵ Therefore, the movement got captured attention and attracted by “numerous Muslim and non-Muslim supporters which is difficult to estimate how many people are involved.”⁶⁶

Cetin further explains the motivation and encouragement that volunteers of the Hizmet movement get as follows: “Gulen encourages people to serve humanity through education and through intercultural and interfaith activities in formal and institutionalized efforts and projects.⁶⁷ These services can reduce the gaps between people and the nations and establish bridges for the common good and peace”⁶⁸ That’s why the volunteers especially women come around for the Hizmet, which

⁶⁵ Fontenot and Fontenot, 24.
⁶⁶ Ibid., 19.
⁶⁷ Ibid., 21.
⁶⁸ Cetin, “Hizmet: Questions and Answers.”
“recognizes the need for a new and inclusive synthesis arising from the past but based upon universal values and modern realities. Therefore, the movement emphasizes a different array of factors, including values, such as equality, freedom, dignity, altruism, ecology and morality; these are the needs and issues.\textsuperscript{69}

Ergil also mentions this commitment to the movement as The Gulen community thus started and developed as a civic movement. The reason why it has grown so rapidly and so large is its civic and voluntary character. Additionally, it empowers its adherents through a system of solidarity and collaboration. They grow a sense of belonging to a worthy group that protects and supports them through mutual economic enterprise; they help each other by engaging in common venture.\textsuperscript{70}

1.8 Methodology and Scope of Study

To analyze my research, I conducted the qualitative research method which is based on in-depth individual interviews with women from various backgrounds and nationalities and length of time around 40 minutes each from Thailand, Turkey, Nigeria, South Korea, Laos, United States of America and Japan. The interviews was held between in February and August, 2016. All women except three were born in Turkey and all moved to another foreign country to continue their higher education by the support of the Hizmet Movement. Some of women I interviewed got graduated from bachelor degrees and have been working in the Hizmet Schools or participating in any organizations affiliated with the the Hizmet initiative that promote peace and education. Some of women whom I listened to are still studying in various universities in Bangkok, Thailand.

In order to provide a clear understanding of ideas and interpretations of the interviews, additional data was also used from secondary sources. What I mean from the secondary sources is they are consisted of Gulen's video and audio recordings from the websites and his books which explain the idea of improving the

\textsuperscript{70} Ergil, xi.
status of women for the better through the philosophy of his model of education in the globalized world.

1.9 Concluding Points

Under the light of these information and provided research methods, it will be profound to understand that how the Hizmet movement has a pioneering role to improve the status of women and promote women’s education. The movement greatly emphasizes the need of women’s education as to be the part of solutions to women’s issues by creating awareness around gender equality and empowerment as this was greatly emphasized in the literature reviews and in the theoretical framework.

In the perspectives of globalization and modernization, the Hizmet Movement, which is a faith inspired movement, combines modern education and moral values to teach and train young generation especially women with the successful alturistic activities for the humanity as firstly because the combination of modern education and moral values observed as two wings of the development of the nation and secondly women are seen as the nurturer of new generations.

As education is a pre-requisite for economic, social and political development, through the engaging activities globally, the Hizmet Movement chooses its first priority, "education", to combat women’s issues globally and to achieve desired goals because "main problem in the world is the lack of knowledge, and related problems concerning the production and control the knowledge. This can only be truly achieved through education."\(^71\) It is also important to conclude my points here that the motives and the commitments of women volunteers make women unique actors in international relations when they participate in Hizmet movement's activities and projects for further development of society in national and international level.

\(^{71}\) Cetin, “Hizmet: Questions and Answers,” 44.
CHAPTER 2
A GENERAL VIEW ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND WOMEN’S EDUCATION FROM THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

2.1 Overview

According to the general conception of analysis from literature reviews, there should be a great involvement and active participation of citizens needed for a country’s progress and its sustainable development. Women’s participations and efforts, which their roles cannot be ignored, in the process of development start with the concept of whether -or how- women are considered as a part of development or how the countries see the status of women in society because women’s access to education, objectives of women’s education and being able to have a position in the system created by the policies are all linked to the development of a country. Therefore, analyzing the status of women and education of women needs to be considered by the framework of understanding the concept of cultural norms, values, political and socio-economical aspects, regional context and global system of the states that influence the role and the status of women, which also has a big impact on accessing education in each country.

The purpose of this chapter is designed to shed light to find the answer to the first question, which was mentioned there as “the need of women’s education” to understand by analyzing from the existing data and current situations about the status of women in society from the angles of economic, politics and women’s education are going to be explained for some regions –mainly Middle East and North Africa (aka MENA), Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern part of Asia where women are somehow being discriminated a lot against the position in the public life, accessing education and health service. There will be a selection of regions and countries which are mainly based on a result of my initial personal observation in participating in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 59th and 60th sessions, respectively in March 2015 and 2016 at United Nations Headquarter in New York. It is possible to consider the ideas and experiences to discover that there were many
women participants\textsuperscript{1} from those regions mentioned above, which captured my great attention. They took part in the CSW sessions to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women through education. Therefore, the selection of countries brings together as a result of available literatures, which will provide systematic and comprehensive explanations to my reader to understand and analyze the situations of why status of women and accessing education high or low. And secondly, with the acknowledgement of global women’s issues especially in the area of education has made the Hizmet movement voluntarily take effective steps in promoting education for all and eliminating the inequalities in each society with its unique model of education as it tries to reach out every corner of the world to be the part of solutions for those challenging issues.

2. 2 Status of Women and Women’s Education in Mena Region

2. 2. 1 Profile of the Region

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region covers the countries from Morocco to Islamic Republic of Iran including all Middle Eastern Mashriq (East) and Maghreb (West) countries\textsuperscript{2}. The MENA countries are Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. According to some definition of MENA, Turkey is also included in this country list. The region has a population of more than 450 million people and around 38\% of the population belongs to the age that are under 18. Those countries mentioned have common features for example bureaucratic institutions and procedures, economic strategies, cultural norms inscribed in the international treaties that governments have signed,\textsuperscript{3} and at the same time they have distinctive characters in terms of their

\textsuperscript{1} Every year thousands of activists from civil society organizations around the world come to New York to take part in the Commission on the Status of Women. Around 4,100 non-governmental representatives from more than 540 organizations participated in 2016, the highest number ever for one of the Commission’s regular annual meetings; UN Women, “Participant Voices,” http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw/participant-voices#sthash.HG4PDnk.dpuf (accessed June 12, 2016).


\textsuperscript{3} Valentine M. Moghadam, Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East (Colorado, U.S.A.: Lynne Reinner, 2013), 10.
historical backgrounds, economic structures, sociopolitical compositions and cultural arrangements. Like for example, all countries except Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and Israel fell into the colonial rules and power. As a result of this Western colonial power in some MENA countries, their social structures and institutions were damaged and left some sorrowful memories to them. Except Turkey, Iran and Israel, all countries are predominantly Arab\(^4\) and except Israel, all are Muslim majority countries and only Iran is Shia in large population where all others are Sunni. Being Muslim majority countries in MENA region enable to consider that the region is the core of Islamic world out from Saudi Arabia.

From the political perspective, some of the MENA countries during the post World War II removed the rule of monarchies from their government to be replaced by the authoritarian republican regimes. Regime types of MENA countries in current situation range from theocratic monarchies (Saudi Arabia) to the secular one (Turkey). Therefore, there are different internal politics varied in this region. Many of the states in Middle East has faced legitimacy problems where the Islamist movements began and spread across the region in 1980s\(^5\) and that’s why this region got captured a great attention by its weak or absence of democratic profile when it is compared any other regions. Although in 1990s many MENA states experienced political liberalization and quasi-democratization, the most part of it remained authoritarian with the limited participation of their citizens.\(^6\) After the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, one commentary article mentioned that there is a slow progress in Islamic societies, which questioned the Middle Eastern countries to establish democratic, secular and equality in gender structure.

This region is also well known by its cross-national conflicts, which put the states to national competitions where there is no single state domination in the region. As a result of these national rivalries and territorial or border demands, the MENA region stays unstable in security, therefore, it has been heavily militarized. A massive amount of oil in the region is also shaping the formations and behaviors of

\(^4\) Moghadam, “Modernizing Women.”
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid., 16.
the states and also political development.

2.2.2 Status of Women in MENA Region

Women in these countries mentioned above might face and experience similar problems or obstacles related to status and role of women to their advancement in their societies. According to some scholars and sociologists that to understand the role and the status of women in the anatomy of family and society, it is useful to analyze or evaluate the economic developments and unstable political structures which in turn closely affect the development progress of the region and at the same time of the world. On the other hand according to the research done by Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, cultural factors and norms, which divide West and the region as Muslim Nations are observed the most traditional societies they hold, are the effective forces that democracy may not be sustainable in their societies although they favor the democracy in the region.  

In general, from the analytical point of view, the evolution of the status of women in this region very much influenced by external and internal factors. Those factors have brought advantages as observed positive impacts and also many disadvantages to the region. An example to the external factors like the foreign occupation especially Western colonization plays a negative role on reshaping the structures of society especially on the less respecting the status of women through politics and economy. Another type of the external factor which has observed a positive pressure to improve the status of women comes as a result of an idea of modernization caused by globalization is the world system or “world society” in the form of international standards and norms.

Achieving gender equality in terms of equal treatment of women in domestic and public life requires changes in institutional practices and gender relations. Therefore, to achieve this, the standard norms and a set of shared values came into world’s terminology by the world community to have gender equality for diverse and unequal world. I will elaborate this international standard mechanism which some of MENA countries are agreed upon.

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7 Moghadam, “Modernizing Women.”
8 Ibid., 11.
The international standards and norms were established and developed by the United Nations\(^9\) (UN) focusing on peace and security, human rights, gender equality, poverty reduction, access to education and health services by eliminating sex and racial segregations. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)\(^10\), which established in 1945, is one of the UN’s six central organs to foster social and economical development and protecting environment. One year after the establishment of ECOSOC, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which is the functional commission of ECOSOC, was held in June 1946 to promote and shaping the standards of gender equality, women rights and empowerment of women around the world.

In the following years, declarations and conventions accomplished within the UN related to advancement of women’s status and improving the social, economic and political conditions of women in society are Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), Beijing’s Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), Millennium Development Goals (2000) and Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

CEDAW is generally described as an “International Bill of Rights for Women went into force in 1981 and consists of 30 articles. It focuses on culture and traditions as they are seen the main and influential forces that shape the roles of women in the structure of family and society. Some countries ratified the convention completely or some ratified with reservations or even some remained out of the convention. Countries in MENA region at first defined the CEDAW provisions as a challenging to the Sharia Law, but later, all countries\(^11\) including Saudi Arabia,\(^12\)

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\(^9\) United Nation (UN) is an intergovernmental organization, which established in October 24, 1945 to promote cooperation among countries and also to prevent another conflict like World War II.

\(^10\) The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), established in 1945, is at the heart of the United Nations system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, identifying emerging challenges, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits. For more information see United Nations Economic and Social Council, “About Us,” https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/about-us (accessed July 11, 2016).

\(^11\) To see the all countries with CEDAW ratification dates, please visit: http://indicators.ohchr.org
except Iran and Sudan, have ratified the convention in the region.

After the ratifications of countries for CEDAW, some progresses have been observed that governments have tried to reassess and implement their plans for the betterment of women in society. As these slow but dramatical progresses cannot be unnoticed, there are still some strong hindrances and barriers left to fully achieve gender equality and accessing the appropriate education for women as there has been seen a high demand of improvement of women conditions within society.

Moghadam further mentioned the status of women in MENA as “Women have been socially constructed as symbol of the nation state, bearers of cultural identity, and repositories of religious values.”\(^\text{13}\) Therefore, states are not always positive and favorable to the advancement of women’s status, social, economic and political empowerment of women since the states constituted by men by carrying the characteristic of patriarchal norms and values in the family and society. So, “Radical measures” generated by the states with their political ideologies were important factors.\(^\text{14}\)

Religious based law is seen in this region, as the majority countries consist of Arab background. Most literature related to Islam carry the message of the idea about the status of women is equal to men when religious obligations like fasting, praying, etc. concerned. On the other hand, analyzing from the current issues men have been assumed and regarded as strongest and highest positions they hold by taking active part in the official spheres of the society. This unequal treatment has explained by one the British sociologists and theorists name Thomas Humphrey Marshall\(^\text{15}\) (1893-1981) in his essay as follow

Custom was one of the obstacles to change. … Social class on the other hand is a system of inequality. And it too, like citizenship, can be based on a set up ideals, beliefs and values. … Civil rights gave legal powers whose use was drastically curtailed by class prejudice and lack of

\(^{12}\) Ratification date is 7\(^{th}\) September 2000.
\(^{13}\) Moghadam, “Modernizing Women,” 25.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 26, 104.
\(^{15}\) T. H. Marshall’s theory of citizenship is a classical liberal theory, which has historical analysis; social rights followed the civil and political rights established during the democratic revolutions and struggles in the 18\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) centuries; Moghadam, “Modernizing Women,” 100.
economic opportunity. Political rights gave potential power whose exercise demanded experience, organization and a change of ideas as to proper function of the government.\textsuperscript{16}

As Marshall mentioned that right to involve in public sectors ranging from economic and political sides is individual’s choice, as it is observed a civil right. Yet this civil right engagement in society of MENA region has not been represented although it is enshrined in the UN’s International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).\textsuperscript{17} Like for example, women in Saudi Arabia needs to get a written permission as proof from their husband or male kin in the family to travel, and they also do not have right to drive. The migrant women from other region like Asia has been brought to MENA region and filled the jobs that local women cannot do because of strict application of Muslim family law which restricts women’s occupational mobility\textsuperscript{18} and they are barriers to enjoy the civil rights as they are the part of the society.

**Economic Involvement of Women in MENA**

From the economic perspective, countries in the MENA region are considered “developing countries” in the world system. According to their locations in the world, some are in the periphery economic zones; some are in the semi periphery with their vast resources like oil. State expansions along with economic development in rich resources, provide increase in integration and interaction with other states of the region brought educational and employment opportunities for women to the region.

Economic citizenships of women is closely related to work and employment that governments create and sustain the jobs for them and it is also a prerequisite for political positions where women are supposed to have public confidences.\textsuperscript{19} Although there have been seen advantages of female employments and also a labor force growth is from primarily from the increase in female economic participations in the region, MENA still low in female economic participation

\textsuperscript{17} Moghadam, “Modernizing Women,” 99.  
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
comparing to international standards and to other region in the world when economic (oil based economy, absence of variety of jobs) and non economic factors (traditional norms and values as conservative in the region’s family law) are concerned.

Women in MENA region are seen at disadvantaged position compared to male in economic freedom. Barriers to female participation in economic sectors are the set of social institutions and norms where the men as regarded as breadwinners and women are observed as homemaker\textsuperscript{20} primarily being wives and mothers. Therefore, double income, which is a figure of China and Western countries, is rarely found in MENA region. This norm is inscribed in Muslim Family Law, which Roald described this where women subjected to face constraints including an institutional obstacle to increase the female labor supply and demand and also female mobility\textsuperscript{21}.

There is a link between education and employment, which has created a discussion space in the literature. Although a positive relationship between female work force and higher education of female is seen, being unemployed is in higher rate. And there is a main issue among women with university degrees when it is compared to the males, because female unemployment rate increases with the higher levels of education whereas male unemployment rate decreases with the additional years of educational level\textsuperscript{22}. In the year between 1960s and 1980s, when there was a rapid growth of economies in the region, governments came up with the social security programs (labor law- a kind of agreement the governments and the firms) to protect women’s right like maternity leave policies, nurseries/child care centers and transportation services in workplaces. But later on this program became ineffective for some reasons firstly because the civil and political rights became limited, so, the state only did provide this program to the ones who are in the government sectors. And secondly, these programs had higher costs for employers who hire female workers. As a result of this reason, occupational segregation by sex had occurred by the employers who wanted male workers than females in higher positions for long-


\textsuperscript{21} Moghadam, “Modernizing Women,” 98.

term basis. Lastly, the MENA region is dominant in patriarchal family unit. Muslim family laws have served to reinforce patriarchal gender relations (or in another term patriarchal gender contract) and women’s subordinate position within the family. Why males have a direct access to the employment, labor force and have control over the means of production is as a result of they are observed as breadwinner in society and this discrimination on the resistance to women’s economic emancipation and full participation can hinder the future progress of many states in the region.

**Political Involvement of Women in MENA**

Although there has been encouraging development seen in this region, women’s public participation and representation in political arena remains the lowest in the world. The proportion of seats held by women in parliament increased from 3.9 percent in 2000 to 8.8 percent in 2007. To understand and analyzed the current situation, the data below was provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and national official documents as follow

Across the MENA region, women’s participation in representative bodies shows improvements, although it is still uneven, with most countries still far from reaching the 30% critical benchmark, with the regional average of 15.9% (as compared to the world average of nearly 21.8% according to IPU). Algeria is the only Arab country that has managed to reach the target of 30% of women in its National People’s Congress. Yet in August 2012 no woman in the MENA region held the position of parliamentary president, as compared to 37 women occupying such a function worldwide. (Representing 13.5% of all parliamentary presidents).

Like in any other countries, women have greatly participated and engaged in variety of revolutions, demonstrations, social, political, religious and national movements and so on. The involvements somehow had impressive and direct results as the actions seen as remarkable for women social positions where women have been

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24 World Bank Central Database and Inter-Parliamentary Union, September 2008; MENA and income group averages are from 2007, while MENA country and world average data are from September 2008. In the West Bank and Gaza, the Legislative Council is considered the National Parliament.
unfairly treated by existing customary and religious law. Moreover, those activities might not be positive as states may be subject to some constraints like civil war, poor resource endowments.25

There are also a lot of women’s organizations and networks established in the region. Some of them are Arab Women’s Solidarity Association, the Magreb-Mashrek Gender link Information Project (GLIP), Permanent Arab Court to Resist Violence against Women and Arab Human Rights Organization. Those organizations have also connection with transnational feminist networks and groups. The main objective of these national and regional organizations is to increase the encouragement and involvement of women to participate in the elections, and to be appointed in ministerial positions.

In contemporary times, the issue of female judges in the sharia court is a still controversial matter in a Muslim context.26 And when the female leadership position in society is concerned, it seems to have idea confusion between Sharia and actual practices of the states at certain times in history. According to the Anne Sofie Roald’s discussion where she focused on the issue from the Muslim and Islamists framework, she characterized that the female participation in society in a positive way as in the hadiths literatures mentioned. She further continued by giving an example that Aisha, the wife of Prophet Mohammad, has a strong personality who also took a part during the war and also during the political disputes.

Women in MENA are greatly aware of the structures of the states as they are (neo) patriarchal and authoritarian in nature. This unavoidable situation pushes women to work for more to improve their legal status and positions in the public and also work for the effective implementation of the international conventions like as CEDAW that the countries in MENA had signed and ratified.

2.2.3 Women’s Education in MENA Region

Although there had been a dramatically increase in the enrollment in the primary level, secondary and tertiary, the gender gap is still big in secondary and university level as because of not being able to complete.

26 Roald, “Woman in Islam,” 139.
There are many challenges remain that girls are still in the low access condition as they are excluded from education. Although majority of the countries are Muslim and where there is an awareness about Prophet’s saying the about searching the knowledge is a duty of man and women, certain attitudes, and traditions discourage the female access to education. Muslims’ attitudes towards the daughters as desire to keep their honor reflected as securing them at home. Therefore, for some scholars this is the Arab culture, not Islam itself that limited the girl’s education.

Division of labor in the marketplace also put women in lower position and lower value on educating girls than boys. Living under the patriarchal gender environment is hindered for girls’ education. Therefore, early marriage and raising kids becomes the ultimate goal of the girls in this region.

The perceptions and expectations from families on the role of women in the family are high while the schooling decision for them is low.

In the 1970s and 1980s female education was seen as luxury for privileged members of the Muslim society in the region. And later on, the girls were lucky to go to schooling where families’ socioeconomic statuses were good. Moreover, parents’ educational background is another factor to determine the accessing of the schools. Educated parents are more likely to send their daughters and encourage them to acquire knowledge.

Although there is some obstacles have been observed in this region, benefits of women’s education for empowerment and gender equality are highly recognized. In a parallel to this, girls express their high demand and desire for liberation on education, which they observe this as an only way for social advancement. Therefore, countries in this region are continuously trying to shape educational policy and strategies for increasing the girls’ access to education and improving the social mobility by developing the self-confidence in the public.

2.3 Status of Women and Women’s Education in Sub-Saharan Region

2.3.1 Profile of the Region

The term Sub-Saharan Africa is generally described for the area in

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27 Roald, “Woman in Islam.”
African continent which countries are covered from the south of the Saharan Desert to the south of the African continent. There are 42 countries located in this region. The majority of population consists of the age less than 20. The region is home for about 853 million people with its fast growing population in the world. The life expectancy is below 50. This can be attributed to the poor access of health service, and low standards of living as a result of its poor economic conditions. The impact of HIV/AIDS pandemic is another factor as well which ravaging the population of the region.

Generally people use one of six hundred Bantu languages, and beside they speak European language as former colonial powers.

The majority tends to be Christian or Muslim and small percentage is still performing the indigenous religions’ order.

From the economic perspective, the region is the poorest region in the world. Colonialism, slavery, corruption and inter-ethnic conflict have been the main obstacles, which the countries are still suffering from. Economy of the region depends on the subsistence agriculture and export of natural resources like coffee, cocoa, and metals. Political and legal conditions of the countries influence the level of foreign investment.

After The Cold War and structural changes in the world let African states to transform their systems like other countries in the world. Politically, states, which had been applying the socialist model instituted reforms to liberalize their political and economic structures. As a result of gaining democracy in some states of the region, there have been some progresses observed in fighting with corruption, armed conflict, ethnic tension, border disputes, and expanding government transparency.

2.3.2 Status of Women in Sub-Saharan Region

Although women are the backbones of the region’s economic development by providing almost 80% of region’s food, the status of women does not in its desired point. Discrimination still remains and women are denied as equal rights as the men have related to access to education, health, property, economic and political freedom. On the other side, violence is still seen in public and private spheres. In fact, some laws still treat women as minor or second-class citizens.
Therefore, primary and important job of women in this region is limited to be responsible for growing crops, working in the farms, raising children by providing needs, doing domestic chores. Women, therefore, remain at the bottom of the social order.

As women are poorer than men are much more affected by the lack of implementation of social program and insufficient law for the people especially older. Therefore, women have faced the difficulties by not accessing the resources like land, housing, and property. Like for example, in some states of the region, a woman has to have a husband’s consent to open a bank account.

Majority of African Unions member countries had ratified CEDAW and African women work hard to promote those agreements, which advance their rights. Since there is an absence or insufficient of a legal framework to fight for gender equality, with the influences of CEDAW and regional integration in African states, there has been public awareness created on women’s issues by interacting with many NGOs to develop their countries and as well as the region for better conditions. Therefore, the image has been changing gradually in positive way.

**Economic Participation of Women in Sub-Saharan Region**

The majority of women in the region live in rural areas. With the advancement of economic situations and higher growth rate than any other developing region, had forced men to move to urban areas in occupying better paid jobs to support their families. Therefore, women stayed in rural areas by engaging the work of doing primary production.

Some scholars argue that economic status of Sub Saharan women is relatively in high rate when this is compared to women in South Asia. John Casterline mentioned this

…”by many criteria, such as schooling participation, economic independence and freedom to circulate outside the familial setting, the economic status of women in Sub Saharan Africa is higher than that of
women in North Africa and south Asia…

The migration of men to urban areas resulted in the creation of a situation where the majority of women took care of themselves and their children. As it is clearly understood from that although women are responsible in managing the activities in household and farming and also taking care of their children alone, they are not regarded as the head of household. Dorothy L. Njeuma shed light on this as follows:

…most African households are not only patriarchal and patrilocal but also, in many parts of the region, polygynous. It is assumed that girls are dependent on their fathers; women are dependent on their households, carrying the burden alone of caring and providing for their children. …migration of men has left about 50 percent of women responsible for having the rural work. Even in polygynous unions in which the husband is physically present, women still bear the responsibilities.

Economic independence of women in this region comes from the traditional practice since they do not have rights to buy a land by their own. The only system is applied here is the traditional method which is receiving land from their husbands’ lineage to grow crops and others to meet the demand for their children. If the production is a surplus, they can sell in the market and bring extra income. Those opportunities give women economic freedom and decision-making authority in the region.

**Political Participation of Women in Sub-Saharan Region**

Women in Sub-Saharan region where they produce 80% of the region’s food, have lack of accessing the political participation in the governments. Women involvement in political especially in decision-making process is not only the need of justice and democracy, but also need for improvements of the conditions for all women. Jill Ker Conway analyzes this situation as like that

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Women need the political skills to maintain their traditional rights over land, in the face of Western-style development, with its stress on exportable cash crops cultivated by males and its relegation of female food producers to marginal land. … Women are committed to preserving women’s traditional knowledge of the environment, along with their politicized role as its preserver.30

There are five international organizations work together to make progress in women’s political participation. Those are International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), National Democracy Institute (NDI), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN).31

Since 1990, there have been seen an increase in the representation of women in parliaments. The significant increase is seen in Rwanda the highest percentage even higher than the Sweden in 45%. Other countries followed by Mozambique, Burundi, and South Africa. This increase might be explained by some researchers as because of the gender quotas performed in the region. Gumisai Mitumi explains this increase as

Between 2000 and 2002, elections were held in 23 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with increases in women parliamentarians in 14 of them. Most of the countries that have achieved significant increase in women’s participation have done so through the use of quotas.32

Women in this region also played an important role in the movements of

liberation process and reforming in the early 1990s. Those active participation in the movements resulted in creation of women organizations in sub Saharan Africa. Main objectives of these movements are to empower women and promote them to decision-making positions. Later, the movements expanded their cooperation and got into the agreement with international organizations on women’s rights and gender equality. The efforts have been taking for further development by urging the African government to provide necessary and effective plan and actions to implement commitments for the needy areas in women’s issues.

2.3.3 Women’s Education in Sub-Saharan Region

Perceptions on the region of Sub Saharan are different but negative. The region is considered as having the world’s poorest countries with its highest illiteracy rates lies in. According to the diverse groups of nations, which occupy the region, have been shaped by mixture of diverse cultures. The wide occupational diversity was also a product of many influences as have been seen as external and internal forces. Karin A. L. Hyde has explained this situation as follows:

…Christianity, Islam and Western type schools set up by missionaries and colonial governments. The region encompasses Nigeria, where school enrollment of the girls in the Muslim north is lower than in the rest of the country, …And it includes Chad and the Central African Republic, where women make up less than 10 percent of the students in institutions of higher learning.33

Despite the considerable improvement and progress seen as they have been accomplished by the United Nations’ initiative projects on women’s education and improvement of the status of women, there is still lack of success on achieving the desired goals. In fact, there is awareness shown by both government and parents’ sides on how education is important for both genders for individual and national developments. Therefore, when both sides means the governments with their effective planning on access to education and as well as parents’ willing to send their daughters

33 Karin A. L. Hyde, “Sub Saharan Africa,” in Women’s Education in Developing Countries; Barriers, Benefits, and Policies, eds. Elizabeth M. King and M. Anne Hill (Maryland, USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1993), 100.
to school will increase the enrollment number in educational institutions.

Researchers and scholars have met at the point where the main reason or a major factor responsible for the largely second-class status of women in educational system of why the illiteracy rate is so high in this region is because of poverty. Poverty is still a painful reality. Illiteracy of women has the highest rate and the level of women’s education is in lowest rate. There are thirty countries in the world that are the poorest and twenty of them are in this region.

As we all know that to reach educational standard, there are some needs of like for example schools, teachers, and equipment. But when this region is concerned, it seems there is a lack of budget on education to spend as because the economic crisis which governments faced, and rapid growth on population in the region. Therefore, education of all children becomes a major issue to be solved rather than paying special attention to women’s education alone.

Economic factors are also driven forces, which result in the less number of girls to attend the schools. Except the girls who are from economically advantage families have much better situations and they enjoy education rights. And additionally, the girls have higher chances of attending schools when family’s educational background is strong.

As the situation mentioned earlier in this chapter, majority of men leave their families in rural areas to find better-paid jobs options in urban areas. As a result, the burden of workload of both households and farming duties are left for women and the children. The primary concern of women in rural areas is whether the production is carried out or not. Therefore, the need of labor force is exposed and the job will be occupied by assigning their children to the work. That’s why the rate of attending the primary level of education for girls is higher than attending the secondary level of education. And even the girls, who start and attend to the secondary level of education, are likely to leave the school before the graduation than boys. Kabiru Kinyanjui explains the reasons as follows:

…pregnancy and lack of financial support account for most of the dropout rate at the secondary school level, there is also likelihood that the curriculum offered, the materials to which the girls exposed, and the attitudes of the teachers may contribute to the dropout rate. Moreover, it
has become painfully apparent that girls face sexual harassment and violence in some boarding school situations.\textsuperscript{34}

It is also important to notice that when the parents would like to send their daughters to attend the school, the girls have to stay in the dormitories as because the far distance between home and the location of secondary schools. This creates another barrier for girls’ which reduce the number of attendance when they want to make a transition from primary level of formal education to the secondary school.

Leaving the school as a result of high pregnancy rate seen in secondary school of education is not only the reason for dropout but also social patterns and attitudes with pressures surrounding engagement; early marriage and initiation rights towards the girls are another factor. Girls who become pregnant generally have to drop the school and later they face difficulty reenroll again. In many African societies girls are married in at their early ages and this “tradition” is highly seen as girls bring an extra labor values to the income of the family rather than spending money on educational expenses like paying for boarding schools of their daughters etc. which is considered as less worth-while investment. Girls in society are required to help their mothers, as the elders are regarded second mother at home by taking care of the their younger siblings. As a result of these heavy workloads, girls are not able to find time to learn and study.

Opportunities, which created for education, sometimes do not meet the needs of women in this region. What I mean by opportunities means that the quality in content of the system is more important than what the system is. The school, curriculum with teaching methods and well-qualified teachers are important factors that increase the enrollment at the school in every level. Like for example, schools for boys have much more broader variety of subjects where girls have limited on that. On the other hand, textbooks that there is a stereotyping the roles on girls and together with attitudes of teachers restrains the achievement of women at school. Kabiru mentions the analyzes of Anna Obura and Ruth Kagia in his article as follows:

\...textbooks for teaching agriculture at the primary school level

indicates the erroneous image of the Kenyan farmer being conveyed to girls. The farmer in the textbooks is always a male, which contradicts the reality. Obura argues that, ‘in failing to portray women in real roles, the textbooks deprive school girls of role models, falsify the picture of the real world for teachers and pupils alike, and conditions boys to expect men in these roles, which is not conducive to facilitating the social change. Ruth has also pointed out how the images of women as subservient to men are perpetuated in society to the extend that they penetrate and pervade educational materials.\footnote{Kinyanjui, “Enhancing Women’s,” 143.}

Karin also raised this topic by indicating that

The schoolbooks contained many more male than female characters, and those female characters that appeared did so primarily in domestic roles and were presented as passive, stupid and ignorant. Men’s activities were admired, women’s ignored.\footnote{Hyde, “Sub Saharan Africa,” 123.}

Learning from those materials are creating the attitudes on girls either they leave the school or keeping women be away from the subjects related with science and technical field. Therefore, for those who remain in the field often show low scores as a result of less encouragement. Finally, women are only seen in low paid with low prestige jobs.

Parents’ desire of being ‘protective’ from unwanted influences is another tradition, which is witnessed in this region. Like for example Nigeria shares high percentage of number of girls not attending any school. As Western education was spread during the colonial period, it has been seen as a threat especially to both urban and rural women, which destroys traditions and cultures.

Women in this region are also suffering from having health problems as having less knowledge on health and sanitation and somehow hard for them to control. In some cultures of this region still practicing the traditional custom like female genital mutilation. This causes long-term damage physically and psychologically, which raises the risk of having problems during the childbirth.
As a result, governments work along with NGOs in this region of Sub-Saharan Africa have highly become aware of the need of women’s education by promoting women’s work and projects for further regional development. Some countries in this region have already taken concrete steps to advance women’s status in society and provide good quality of standards of education and eliminating gender segregation in work environment for women. They have also highly recommended increasing the number of female teachers as implementing the best practice of strategy to achieve success in forming the personal development of girls and national development of countries.

2.4 Status of Women and Women’s Education in South Asia

2.4.1 Profile of the Region

South Asia is also known as Southern Asia, which is the southern part of the Asian continent. It consists of Sub-Himalayan countries together with its adjoining countries. Countries in the region are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. India is occupying the largest space in the region. The population of South Asia has the world’s one fourth, as around 1,855 billion. The region has wide variety of ethnic groups with more than 2000 entities. Therefore, as a result of this great diversity in the region enables us to see and witnessed the world’s richest mixtures of many cultures, traditions and beliefs existed.

India is about 80% Hindu and minority groups are Muslim, Buddhist and Christian, while Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh are predominantly Muslim. Majority in Nepal on the other side is Hindu and Bhutan is Buddhist. Sri Lanka is partly Buddhist and Hindu. Arabs brought Islam to the region by trade.

The language is widely spoken in this region is Hindu with around 425 million as India’s topographically large occupation in the region. Secondly, Bengali comes in around 200 million.

2.4.2 Status of Women in South Asia

According to the many perspectives from researchers, women in South
Asia remains the most gender un-equal and insensitive region by having subordinated positions to men and they are all dependent on men culturally, socially and economically. Besides, women are also not included in the decision-making process and they also have limitation over controlling the resources and access to the resources. Therefore, their mobility is so much restricted by male dominant factor. Perception on gender is generally shaped by the economic framework means that sons are regarded as a source of income provider; on the other side daughters are often considered liability because of dowry system.

The region is characterized as being patriarchal society, which creates many obstacles to women by giving less value and power in society. In fact, countries have had codified legal rules to protect the right of women for the family matters, but in reality, women have no power or authority in making a decision in the family as because traditional patriarchal structure plays more important role over women than government rules and regulations. So, legal provisions, which promote gender equality in society, are not effective where there are social and traditional values with their impacts on women are high.

All countries except Pakistan and Maldives in South Asia have ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). After the ratification of the countries, issues and the principles were discussed some legal regulations have been made but there have been strong barriers that make the governments unable to implement what the International Law and regulations demands from the states.

**Economic Participation of Women in South Asia**

This region is the poorest region like Sub-Saharan Africa. Although, there have been some improvements reducing the level of extreme poverty, progress are not fast enough to achieve Millennium Development goals by 2015. Poverty is seen everywhere. Majority of the population in South Asia live in rural areas which their income is provided by rely on the agriculture.

Indian is having its largest economy in the region and next Pakistan

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38 CEDAW in South Asia: http://cedawsouthasia.org
comes. The percentage of income, which is earned by women in this region, is the lowest. Lack of opportunities for employment is also seen as a root cause of poverty. Half of the population has been employed in low paid jobs which less benefits, in poor conditions with no social security and legal rights. Male employment is high when its compared to women as because discrimination, and culture. And women labour skills and competencies in agriculture or home-based work are generally unvalued or invisible.

Most women in the public sphere challenged by facing the harassment in the work place. Women’s positions are generally limited to teaching and health sectors only. As it can be figure out that the large majority of women are engaged in the informal sector. As a result of that women become unacknowledged about the social security conditions and all. This is also some for women who work in rural areas. Lack of access to land, credit and decision-making process in rural economies are the major issues today.

**Political Participation of Women in South Asia**

As India covering ¾ of the land area in the region, dominant political power can be felt, which is populous democracy. On the other hand, Pakistan maintains its balance of power strategy in the region regarding to its strategic location and relationships with Arab countries and China. Therefore, India and Pakistan are observed as nuclear power countries due to some facts.

In the region women’s presence in the government sector is varied. But in general again women face discrimination in participating political arena by the combination of effective religious law with government law. This creates challenges for CEDAW in implementing the policies where cultural and religious conflicts arise when the laws rearranged in order to fulfill the requirement the international policy, CEDAW. Therefore, generally local governments refuse to open space for women. Without having right to participate in society, it is hard to shape the society by women, then.

The CEDAW is highly dependent on the governments’ will and this can be created through development not only by women but also within the government bureaucracies too.
2.4.3 Women’s Education in South Asia

South Asia has the highest number of out of schoolgirls in the world along with Sub-Saharan Africa for almost the same reasons. Except Sri Lanka, all countries in the region are sharing the low enrollment rates at the primary level. And at the secondary and higher levels the region has the largest gender gap despite the slow increases. Education system got its reform and inherited by Britain during the colonial period of time. But later on the system was blended with British and American characters.

Poverty is the biggest obstacle and hindering factor for girls’ education in the region. As the countries are the less urbanized, educational level in the rural areas are more dramatic than in the cities. So, illiteracy rate in villages are still one of the major problems for the countries in the region.

Not only poverty but also cultural and traditional factors that we also have seen and analyzed for any other regions in this chapter are also barriers to education for the girls in this region. Marriage at early age like even around 15 years old and dowries are restricting the access of schooling and also they are affecting the girls’ physical and mental wellbeing. As a result of early marriage and also lack of nutritional knowledge in adequate feeding and caring practices, the region is suffering from having the highest infant mortality rate than any other region in the world. And life expectancy rate of women is lower than men. Therefore, I can say that infant mortality together with life expectancy is closely related to the literacy and education of women. For some countries like India, higher cost of secondary education of girls, which is perceived unnecessary luxury and liability for parents is another reason to go for early marriage for their daughters.

On the other side, attitude of educated parents and family’s income display different approach towards their daughters on the perception of education than uneducated ones. Both are the effective factors to create and provide more positive atmosphere for girls to get encouraged.

Majority of countries in this region is also conservative in some manner. According to some scholars, the religions and their extremism behaviors towards educational attainment of girls are another factors for limiting the access of education for girls. This might be explained that, extremism on cultural norms and values are the
main drives which are being tried to link to the religion itself which there is no gender segregation in any faculties of society in the origins of religions. Therefore, if daughters were treated equally to their sons, the result might be positive.

Another cultural factor that parents are highly concerned is whether having single sex schools. From several studies and researches show that lack of separate schools create less enrolments at especially secondary level of schools. Single-sex schools also create a high demand for employing women to teach and to be the role models to the girls where the number of female teachers is low in the region. Moreover, accommodation and lounging expenses for girls as a result of remoteness to the school are another barriers.

Fast growth in population also a big influence on governments’ educational plan and projects. This fast growth may limit and less allocates the budget for spending on education. Moreover, high level of corruption, distributions of wealth and disagreement on the political issues are another domestic factors of countries in the region which girls have less advantage in accessing education in any level.

There is another issue, which has also great impact on accessing education in some countries like Bangladesh is a security concern. Roshan Chitrakar mentions her analysis about the security issue in the book of Overcoming Barriers to Girls’ Education in South Asia follows

The belief that girls are inherently inferior to boys in mental ability and aptitude, and hence are less worthy of investment for education, is still very pervasive. This perception about girls and women increases their vulnerability to social harassment, abuse and domestic violence. While on the one hand girls’ participation in education is progressively encouraged and supported by state laws and policies with provision of attractive incentives, ironically girls walking down the street, for example going to or returning from school, become subject of ‘female infanticide, kidnapping, public assault, and acid throwing [including] rape, incest, and harassment through language, trafficking and forced prostitution.}\(^{39}\)

As it is understood from the analyses above, violence against women in South Asia is clearly appeared in many ways and there is a range of types of violence in their lives. It could be in/from the public or domestic violence as unfortunately, women are always been the victim of and abused by their husbands or close male relatives. Consequently, violence on women and even in their childhood has negative direct effects on them to be fully beneficial in the schooling or employment.

In addition to the violence and security concern of the families, continuous attacks by Taliban in Afghanistan on especially girls’ educational institutions are another factor why girls opt out from the school. Not only poor security conditions are discouraging but also type of the school building with its female teachers in it so much important for girls to be sent to school.

An example related to security issue comes from Pakistan, Malala Yousafzai. She is the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 who has been advocating the all for the rights of women’s education. She was shot by the Taliban, which is the extremism group, in 2012 because of her views on education. Later in UN, she passionately delivered her speech on focusing female education by saying that ‘One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world. Education is only the solution.’[^40] As Pakistan and Afghanistan where both countries are mainly struggling with modernization through globalization competing with tradition and religion, women face many challenges by being attacked like Malala and sometimes killed on account of protecting educational and working rights.

There are some national and international organizations working together with the governments towards the betterment of women in each society by improving educational conditions and also status of women and trying to encourage families and girls to enroll educational institutions in each level.

### 2.5 Concluding Points

The regions along with some country profiles explained in this chapter indicate that the status of women, gender equality and women’s education have still been the most important topics in today’s world as they are related to all sectors of life.

ranging from social, economic, and political sides of the development in international agendas of the states. Lack or low level of improvement in those hot topics means that there is a low level of awareness of the importance of poverty reduction, and less attention to the improvement of human development as a result of ignorance on women’s issues like low status of women, low paid jobs and excluded from decision making process and so on. These have been observed and analyzed as the obstacles and barriers to education of women, which women often suffer from and also challenges to the sustainable development goals of the states for better.

From the general understanding of this chapter indicates that the countries generally share the same factors that affect educational status of women. The factors mentioned are negative attitudes of families and society towards Western education of women, lack of female teachers, low –quality of schools with high cost of time to reach with increase in accommodation cost of girls, customs and traditions, socio economic and political factors and the most importantly, poverty.

As all countries in those regions are making serious efforts to better to eliminate women related issues, both policy makers and practitioners from governments, NGOs, and INGOs as well as academicians help ensure that women can realize their rights in every level under any circumstances they face, as this is their one of and basic human rights to access education through good quality teaching and materials. The positive effects of education of women especially in higher education helps improve the condition of women in terms of physical wellbeing and psychology of women.

Reflecting to this, the Hizmet movement, a civic grassroots initiative movement, emerged the importance of education by having the holistic approach and its potential to help in trying the best to solve global issues especially related to improving women’s status and eliminating the challenges on accessing women’s education that we witnessed in some parts of the world today.

The movement’s activities ranging from promoting education regardless gender and religion segregation, interfaith, intercultural dialogue activities and humanitarian aid to provide and reach the needy countries will be highlighted in chapter 3 in details in order to be the part of solutions to the problems, which partly focused in this chapter.
CHAPTER 3
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HIZMET MOVEMENT AND ITS
HIZMET-ORIENTED ACTIVITIES IN
TURKEY AND ABROAD

3.1 Overview

The main aim of this chapter is to find the answer to the first research question to analyze and understand the significance role and the contributions of the Hizmet Movement on improving women’s education through its educational and dialog activities in Turkey and as well as in other countries.

Turkey is regarded as the birthplace of the movement. Hence, giving a space for the movement to get to know the activities and projects related to women’s status and education hold in Turkey and as well as in abroad is seen essential in this research paper. Therefore, understanding the vision and mission of the Hizmet movement help better understanding the concept of women’s status and women’s education in the perspective of the movement.

3.2 What is the Hizmet Movement?

The Hizmet movement is a transnational, a faith inspired and a civic initiative, a movement that is not a governmental or state sponsored organization. It strongly advocates democracy, equality, human rights, non-violence and acceptance of one another regardless of religious and cultural background.

It emerged in 1970s in Turkey as a need of helping for the humanities problem including Turkey itself where there were some social challenges faced at that time. The movement since its establishment focuses on wellbeing and improvement of young generation. That makes the movement useful as its name indicates that the Hizmet the word literally means ‘service’, service to humanity with its full capacity and potential to help. Therefore, it does not carry any state ideology or any political policy in their activities instead it stays neutral to any political party.

The Hizmet movement is a global phenomenon now as it transformed itself from a grassroots community in Turkey into global level with its diverse service
projects from education to humanitarian aid. Here, the question emerged that What is different in the Hizmet movement that creates the difference and attracts vast majority people around the world? This is unlike anything else in any other countries. Many movements especially in Muslim countries in the modern period of time did not last long due to fact that their political engagements. In addition to this, during 19th and 20th centuries, many countries including scholars were carrying the thoughts of anti-Western and anti-modernity notions as a reaction to the colonial powers. For the Hizmet movement, this is quite different. Although the movement witnessed the cultural and religious diversity in Turkey, It is not fully fundamentalist to the West and modernity nor accepting it fully. Ismail Albayrak mentions this as follows:

...The movement represents middle and more balanced way in many respects. They are open to recognize the contribution of others. In fact they are extremely positive about the use of mass communication technology in human service and very conscious of how globalization removes the borders among nations and brings people frequently together. The question of how Muslims can be involved and contribute to this process lies in their understanding of humanity and serving to humanity in a global way.¹

And this also is explained by Marie-Elisabeth:

By anticipating the need to adapt Islam to the present times, confident that the Turkish Republic would have to adapt too and open itself to more diversity, Gulen has been a visionary. He has unlocked the way to a new global culture that places Muslim democrats ahead of any radical thinking and he has sent a strong message to the Muslim world showing a successful way towards democratic transition and gradual adaptation to globalization because the Qur’an teaches compassion, love and tolerance and, through these principles, nothing should prevent a Muslim from being, at one and the same time, a servant of God and a first-class citizen

within a democratic country.²

Attitude toward globalization of the movement might be as a result of some conditions like Turkey’s geographical location to the West, never had been colonized, and secular and democratic regime. Consequently, as globalization has a great impact on shaping the international and domestic structures, the Hizmet movement promotes the positive relationships between West and the East especially Muslim world to take constructive approach on the issues like multiculturalism, globalization and dialogue in the secular modern age.

The movement structure is further explained by Ebaugh as follow

The Hizmet movement has no formally organized, hierarchical structure but it, rather, a loosely coordinated network of local circles, each having its own autonomy in terms of content and frequency meetings, diversity of members and projects to be supported. This grassroots structure promotes commitment and involvement. …The decentralized authority and administrative structure promotes member involvement and a sense of responsibility on the part of the millions of participants who have a personal stake in the achievements of the movement.³

3.3 At a Glance: A Short Biography of Gulen

M. Fethullah Gulen is an Islamic scholar, preacher, educational activist, and he has been regarded as the inspirer of the worldwide social movement, the Hizmet movement. He was born in 1941 in Turkey and raised by a humble family. As he had partly attended in an elementary school due to no public schools in the new place of his father’s appointment, he studied and passed the comprehensive examination for the first level. Later, he completed his secondary level of education by conducting positive sciences, literature, history and philosophy through external examinations. Meanwhile, he also completed his religious education and training by

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under the instructions of various scholars and Sufi masters who greatly influenced his intellectual development. It is also important to mention that his parents also played an important role in shaping his spiritual development.

Later on, he was appointed by a state preacher in Edirne, a province in the European part of Turkey followed by Kirklareli and Izmir. He, as being keen on learning, has deepened his knowledge in Islamic tradition with humanities and science of Eastern and Western philosophy. Through his career, he had witnessed the conflict, which young generation were so much attracted and surrounded by the extremisms and the radical left and the right ideologies.

Gulen preached in not only mosques but also in coffee shops, workplaces and arranged reading sessions in village gatherings. His topics were generally ranged from education, economy, social justice, science and theological subjects. His main goal was emerging the young generation to have intellectual enlightenment combination with spiritual knowledge. So, his outstanding discourse on solutions for problems began to capture the attention of public.

Although many of activities initiated and inspired by Gulen, he himself has never made any claim to be a leader to the movement.

His works can be classified in two, speeches and books. In total around sixty books of him published in Turkish and some of them have been translated in more than twenty-five languages.

He currently lives in Pennsylvania, USA to receive medical treatments for his health conditions. But he never stops reading, writing, and teaching for small groups.

3.4 Sociohistorical Background of the Hizmet Movement

The Years between 1970-1980

During the high tension, hyper-politicized atmosphere, parents fell in to the dilemma whether to sent their children to the towns to study in universities after they passed entrance examination. Therefore, Gulen inspired his companions and encouraged the businessmen to set up hotels, dormitories and houses for offering parents to send their children for their further education. And even bursaries were given to the students who were coming from low-income families. In following year
with the need of establishment, the first university preparatory course center was open.

The aim of the project was to find ways to provide accommodations and to create educational opportunities for university level of students. This project regarded as protecting young generation fall in to the bad habits, and involvement in violent extremism groups, which resulted many deaths by killing each other.

Consequently, these students, who were observed in many ways by public, was motivated a lot for the accomplishment in the examinations and got highest scores in the entrance examinations.

**The Years between 1980-1990**

The effective and successful works in educational field of previous years created trust in public and provide many opportunities to the movement for its further projects like for example, first schools of the movement were open in this decade.

The establishments of the brand new schools created the demand of teachers. The graduates from universities, who entered the prestigious universities by the support of the Hizmet movement, were involved voluntarily in teaching positions rather than going into better paid careers. They pursued the teaching the young generation is the biggest investment in long term. They became a role model to their students by being hardworking, self-sacrificial and also being away from bad habits like smoking. They taught what they have learnt during their stay in the houses and dormitories.

Economic condition of Turkey gave political liberalization, which increased in new class of professionals, businessmen, and entrepreneurs. The economic and political improvements had been led by Turgut Ozal, the 8th President of Turkey, in the late 1980s. This was also another positive impact for the movement to expand its educational activities nationally and internationally in next decades.

**The Years between 1990-2000**

In the beginning of this decade, participants of the movement started setting up schools and universities in the Central Asia. This was the first time of expanding the movement’s activities in abroad after the establishment around more than a hundred schools and study centers in Turkey. Sanaa El-Banna mentioned this
expansion as follows:

The social and cultural constituency for Gulen’s ideas was further multiplied after the collapse of the former Soviet Union in the early 1900s, and the consequent liberation of many Turkic nations in the Central Asia and Balkan regions. The concept of tolerance, human rights, education and dialogue, which had hitherto comprised the themes of Gulen’s writings, became ideally suitable for his new listeners in the multi-ethnic Turkic societies.\(^4\)

As the need for education had been highly realized in the independent Turkic countries, the participants especially newly graduates in the movement once again showed the great enthusiasm by engaging teaching activities at international level. Establishing houses and dormitories for the students of neighboring countries were followed as the same structures and methods as they were in Turkey. These educational institutions along with the dedicated teachers and accommodations were very welcomed and well received as they had been thirsty for. The success of this initiative project was also as a result of continuous support of the generous businessmen.

The efforts spent for the improvement of the individual’s scientific and spiritual knowledge highly recognized by other countries as the schools in Turkey and abroad created reputation by demonstrating the outstanding academic achievements. The schools were not only in Muslim countries but also in the countries whose majority religions are Christian, Buddhist and Hindu. Therefore, today there are more than two thousand schools that exist in more than 160 countries in five continents as they have different names and operate using their own national curriculum of the country where they are located. They all have been regulated and run by the local and independent board of presidents and directors.

In addition to this, the decade was important for high school graduates in Turkey. The students, especially girls were offered to study further to complete their bachelor degrees in the universities. Then, the houses and dormitories were set up to

support those newly high school graduates firstly in Central Asia followed by the Europe, Africa, Asia and Southeast Asia.

This decade was also important for starting the dialogue activities. As Gulen witnessed the division conflict in Turkey some decades ago, he emerged the necessity of dialogue activities with many different religions, ethnic groups, public intellectuals where he sees many countless misconceptions among others.

The first accomplishment in the dialogue era had been occurred by the establishment of Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) in 1994 as Gulen is the honorary president of the foundation. The main purpose of this foundation is to set up a forum by calling people from all segments of society with mutual understanding and respect to discuss about global issues. This peaceful gathering produced an atmosphere that people all around the world are able to come and live together to solve the global issues to establish sustainable peace and dialog in the world.

There are six sub units in JWF, which are Abant Paltform, the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, the Dialogue Eurasia Platform, the Medialog Platform, women Platform and the Research Center. Each has different projects; conferences and seminars arranged related to their fields of working towards the solving the humanities problems.

As JWF became one of the most visible institutions of the movement, it gave the participant an idea about setting up the dialog and cultural centers around the world as in the case of the Hizmet affiliated schools. And today, there are many dialog and cultural centers around the world that follow the local law and requirements and also hire local people in the host countries. The activities by providing lectures series, organizing intercultural trips and offering intercultural friendship dinners during the special months and days of those institutions are managed and done according to the need of the host countries. Therefore, the community hopes to bridge the boundaries of religion and culture and build friendship and unity.5

The outstanding works and projects of JWF brought the institution to gain ‘General Consultative Status in Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN) in 2012. Consequently, JWF is the first and only organization in

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Turkey to gain this status.

**The Years 2000- present**

This time period has experienced another remarkable project called in Turkish ‘Kimse Yok Mu? (Is anybody out there?). The Hizmet affiliated relief organization is the largest and the most effective in Turkey and abroad. It developed in the right after the earthquake in Turkey. Its main goal is to provide aid to the needy people in around the world. The organization assisted raising great funds for the victims of Tsunami in Southeast Asia like Philippines, and Aceh, the floods in Bangladesh, the earthquake in Pakistan, Peru and Haiti. Hospitals were built by the movement to provide affordable access to the health care and also volunteer doctors have arrived as giving free medical care in the needy desperate areas. Later on, the organization built around twenty schools in those countries in long term.⁶

In the following years, there have been many projects conducted to make women’s issues visible to the policy makers to take effective steps. Journalist and Writers Foundation (JWF) in cooperating with its partners around the world regularly arrange international conferences, seminars and events related to empowering women in society. The most famous one is ‘Istanbul Summit’.⁷ JWF with its Women Platform and worldwide partners hold this conference in 2014 was held in Istanbul, Turkey with the title of “Women’s Perspective on UN Post-2015 Development Agenda”. And in next year, again the Istanbul Summit was held in Istanbul the title “Women as the Beneficiaries and Actors of Humanitarian Action. In 2016, the Istanbul Summit was held in Bangkok, Thailand with its title “Reconsidering Gender Equality and Peaceful Societies”. The main objective of those Summits was raising the awareness of international community, NGOs, parliamentarians and policy makers by addressing women’s issues related to education, peace, security, and gender equality.

Another conference done biennially by JWF, its Women platform and

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⁷ The Istanbul Summit is an international, non-governmental, multi-sector forum provides a setting for networking and experience sharing among members of civil society organizations, state institutions, intergovernmental organizations, academia, and private sector, to encourage and increase women’s role in sustainable development, peace & security, with the idea that gender equality is a prerequisite to these aims. http://istanbulsummit.org/about/istanbul-summit
global partners is “International Family Conference”. Its main objective is to stimulate interdisciplinary and cross-cultural collaboration and approach to various family issues.  

In addition to the conferences, JWF with its global partners annually arrange Side and Parallel events on the occasion of Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in every March at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. The themes are annually varying from education to violence on women’s issues to review, evaluate and implement the agreed conclusions.

### 3.5 Funding the Activities and Project of the Hizmet Movement

#### 3.5.1 Financial Resources

In order to build and sustain the various projects associated with the Hizmet movement, financial resources are essential says Ebaugh. According to Ebaugh and Koc, the system and the structure of funding of the works and projects of the Hizmet movement generally create suspicions and misunderstandings. Therefore, Gulen has continuously advised the participants and supporters of these projects to prioritize the financial transparency.  

The donations and funding is further explained by Polat as follows:

The realization of Gulen’s projects of sound education, which will result in equity, democracy, social justice, respect, and peace in individual societies and around the world required financial commitments. Gulen has addressed people from all walks of life, through audio and videocassettes, public lectures and gatherings, about the significance of altruism in investing in sound education. …Turkish people who believe in this worthwhile project have established business circles and charitable trusts to financially support schools and other affiliated institutions in around the world. Those philanthropists people around the world are businessmen, professionals, blue-collar workers, teachers, university students,

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8 International Family Conference: http://jwffamilyconference.org  
housewives and leaders with a strong positive vision of the projects and schools.\textsuperscript{10}

At the beginning, the movement was sustained by the private contributions by those philanthropist people. But today the financial resources of the movement got captured an attention by people since the number of educational institutions and global dialog activities of the movement increased. Ergil explains this as follows:

Every school is financed by individuals in a city or a town in Turkey and abroad by wealthy businessmen. More accurately, those members of the community who take responsibility for the schools keep in touch with the directorate general of the schools in those foreign countries and send money that they collected from the wealthy merchants and members of the community.\textsuperscript{11} As there is no government support of Turkey for the building, renovation or maintenance of the schools, financial support comes initially from the local sponsors until the time when tuition and fees from the students can make the schools self-supportive.

In addition to this explanation in terms of sustaining the financial resources, the schools have also its own funding by having independent accounting systems. Some schools have their own private funding like school fees, and fund raised by Parents and Friends Associations of each school whereas some schools are provided fund by the governments of the host countries.

Ebaugh mentions the motivation driven in contributing the movement financially after she had conducted the interviews with several businessmen in Turkey as follows:

\ldots to make better human beings as Gulen encourages; to educate youth; to please God; to earn a reward in the next life; to be part of a bigger


movement for better world; to provide hope to people in Turkey and around the world. …God wants people to be vehicles for the sharing as giver is seen as a transfer agent for God rather than as a beneficent provider.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to this, Ebaugh further explains another motive driven behind this generous action of giving as because of cultural religious practices of Islamic concepts related to the charity in Turkish history, which shed light on the movement’s activities. Therefore, it is impossible to analyze what motives Turkish people to give so generously to the activities of the movement without understanding the concepts of giving and hospitality that are inherent in Turkish culture.\textsuperscript{13}

\subsection*{3.5.2 Human Resources}

Not only financial but also human resources, which is the major element of the Hizmet movement says Fuller. And Ebaugh continues on

Many people contribute to the movement in various ways. The most important one is the desire of its participants to give their time; effort and energy without expecting any material gain in return.\textsuperscript{14}

The belief in and practice of virtues like self-sacrifice, philanthropy are the examples of the characters of the participants. For the movement, regardless of religion, gender, race, and ethnic groups, people from all walks of life with the acknowledgement of global human issues, gather around the universal human values to work for the betterment of society. Therefore, volunteer teachers have met around those values to set up educational and dialogue institutions in needy countries around the world where Turkey did not have an embassy yet.\textsuperscript{15}

There is no headquarter, central organization or formal structure that administers the schools and Hizmet inspired institutions. As the Hizmet movement deals with human needs at the cultural a spiritual level, each of the institutions started by a group of businessmen who have observed the need for such institutions in the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{12} Ebaugh, “The Gulen Movement,” 59-60. \\
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 65. \\
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 66. \\
\end{flushright}
local areas.

Here the questions come up to dig more about autonomous character of the the Hizmet movement that if there is decentralization in the movement, how those institutions keep themselves on the same track as they are having the similar methods to run the Hizmet affiliated institutions? Muhammed Cetin explains this as follow

The institutions and service projects are formally independent of another; however, they are informed of each other's activities through networks of volunteers and professionals. They all set good examples for one another, and provide alternative perspectives and forums that can be improved by each other’s. Participants and networks use their cumulative experience to adapt, negotiate and devise strategies.\(^{16}\)

3.6 A Core of the Movement: Education

3.6.1 Marriage of Heart and Mind

For Gulen, the absence of education is a great loss for the improvement of the individuals and secondly development of nations. He observed the need of education is a cure for the long lasting socio-economic problems such as poverty, ignorance and internal division. Cetin further explains this

Gulen believes that the main problem in the world is lack of knowledge, and related problems concerning the production and control of knowledge. Producing, maintaining and disseminating knowledge can only be truly achieved through education, but not party politics. Education, therefore, is the key to becoming a better, productive and beneficial individual, whether one is Muslim or not.\(^{17}\)

Gulen supports the idea that education should be based on the awareness of pluralism of cultures; faith and mutual understanding where as a result ignorance will not be seen in society.

As Gulen has a positive approach towards science, he offered by introducing the value-oriented model of education. The crisis in modern societies


\(^{17}\) Cetin, “Hizmet: Questions and Answers,” 45.
schooling produced as he indicates ‘generation with no ideals’ and on the other hand, he thinks criticism on the traditional madrasas (religious schools) that they are not enough to meet the needs of modern life which individuals live in. Therefore, he advised his participants to open educational institutions, which based on the combination of modern scientific and spiritual knowledge. Hence, the students would be given an opportunity to equipped with both knowledge by enlighten the mind with science, and enlighten the heart with morals ethics and love for humanity. This he called as “marriage of heart and mind”.

In the age of modernization through globalization, nations and people become more closely linked by interacting each other. Gulen mentions this

The West cannot wipe out Islam or its territory and Muslim armies can no longer march on the West. In this global era ‘both sides feel the need for a give and take relationships’. The West has scientific, technological and economic advancement where Islam has the freshness of its beliefs, good works, and morality.18

Ergil also raises up this combination as follow

In many countries modernization or westernization seen as the result of colonization which this resulted in the underdevelopment of the nations. But Gulen has an idea to clear up this negative perception by stating that “A healthy blend of faith and science that would meet the needs of mind and soul.”

3.6.2 Gulen’s Views on the Status of Women and Women’s Education

Gulen’s notion of commitments is based on Qur’an and Sunnah. From this point of departure, for Gulen Islam recognizes the rights of women from legal to economic, from politics to education and elevates the status of women. Before Islam was emerged and spread in Arab society, women’s right were not considered and even having a birth of girl in the house was a shame for the family in ‘dark age’ (Jahiliyyah). In Qur’an, the rights of women are secured as “Women have rights

19 Ergil, “Fethullah Gulen,” xii.
similar to those against them.”

Therefore, the rights and the status of women do not depend on the men’s decisions and there is no priority for one gender over another. And Islam encourages education of women in both religious and science as indicating that seeking knowledge is regarded as a duty of both men and women to develop the intellectual skills, nurturing the talents and use the potential to be benefitted for their soul and for the society. For Gulen:

Islam does not confine women into home. As long as physical aspect of women is taken into consideration and their special situation is protected, it is not prohibited in Islam for them to contribute in some fields of life. Women had contributed in every aspect of life according to their capacity all along. Education was approved and encouraged. Nothing can be demonstrated from Islam, which prevents women from working. But in the issue of giving her load of work, which is beyond her capacity, the Messenger of God had opposed it.

For women’s issues related to their rights, Gulen argues that some part of the world especially Muslim world, Islam has been surrounded by local customs and traditions which put women in backward position in every field. And this causes a widespread belief among Westerners that women are isolated from social life in Islam. He even mentioned that there was no reason to keep women not being in administrative positions and in addition to this, in Hanefi jurisprudence women were allowed to be judges where they could understand better and be more effective in solving the female issues.

For Maha Azzam:

The impact of Westernization on the laws and culture of the different societies has contributed to a breakdown of traditional definitions and understanding of what is “right and wrong”. The absence of an alternative value-system on to manage social relations, has left room open the distortion of traditional modes of behavior. …Confusion over old and new values and what constitutes them has contributed to appeal of more strict

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20 Surah Al Baqarah 2:228.
21 Ergil, “Fethullah Gulen,” 114, 121.
and puritanical reading of Islam.  

Gulen is against the extremism and fanaticism, which result in intolerance, lack of love, and lack of empathy. He strongly advises people to keep the values, which produce a good human being with positive actions. Therefore, as keeping the core principle of Islam preserve, reinterpretations on some issues which entail a lot of discrimination and inequalities are necessary where the conditions require.

His ideas on education of women is a must as firstly because they are the nurturers of the generations and secondly her extensive capacity should not be restricted only for domestic chores but also she should be provided a space in the public that her potential will be flourished. Since the birth of Hizmet movement, Gulen calls for and encourages people to educate their children regardless of gender. And today there are many girls especially in higher education who study abroad to be committed to the society where they live by hoping to be productive individuals.

According to the observation of Sanaa El-Banna has point out the topic as follows:

A general strength of the Hizmet movement is that a great many female participants are university students and graduates, and many of them pursue their careers in relevant workplaces. They openly interact and socialize within the study and work environments. The movement empowers female students from rural and culturally conservative regions of Turkey to pursue higher studies internationally through applying for universities where the Hizmet affiliated student dormitories and houses are available.

As a result, the movement provides opportunities for female participants to realize their capabilities and potentials to be useful for the society where they engage their services.

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3.7 Concluding Points

As it has been summarized briefly, the main characteristic of the Hizmet movement is focusing on the individual to make the better person for himself/herself and better citizen for his/her nations. To accomplish this, the movement uses the tool of education and dialogue.

Although there have been many obstacles and barriers noted in some part of the world, the Hizmet movement is trying to reach out there by establishing educational institutions and dialog centers to decrease the level of misunderstanding and conflicts. And this cannot be fully achieved if there is no involvement of women in the development process of each segment of life.

Consequently, the Hizmet movement raises the awareness of the rights of women and creates a space for women to make them more visible to participate by enjoying their economic and political freedom through providing good quality of education in especially supporting them for the higher level.
CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION ON VIEWPOINTS AND ANALYZING THE OUTCOMES OF THE COMMITMENTS OF WOMEN IN HIZMET MOVEMENT

4.1 Overview

This chapter begins with firstly focuses on to analyze and answer the second research question about the encouragement of women to study their further education in the university level as the Hizmet Movement greatly supports them. Here, the main goal is to understand the importance of the role and the contributions of the Hizmet movement on the improvement of the status of women and also higher education for women as it has greatly emphasize that education, which is one of the human rights, is a tool to eliminate the discrimination in each society by strengthening the respect, promote understanding among all nations, religious groups and races to the full development of society from the every aspect of life. When this main idea and the mission of education applied to women, it becomes more important as women are the nurturers of young generations for future development. By using the technique and the method of in-depth individual interviews, it is possible to think and discover the experiences and ideas of those women informants from the gender perspectives on how the Hizmet movement helps, encourages and creates opportunities for them to open their mind to make them visible actors and “regain” their status back in society.

Therefore, to address the points mentioned above, the notion of liberal feminism which its argument points are mainly gender equality ranging from the angles of the status of women in society to the legal forms in the states and women empowerment through education meet at the point where the ideas and the visions of the Hizmet movement carries for women. That approach enables to make women possible to identify and analyze the factors behind of their involvements in the Hizmet movement’s activities and projects and also extend their participations in Turkey and in other countries around the world.

The last part of this chapter is designed to find the answer to the last research question to focus on the positive outcomes and achievements of educational
and dialog activities, and projects related to overcoming of women’s issues solved by the Hizmet movement nationally and internationally occur as a result of women’s extensive commitments to the Hizmet movement’s works.

From this point of departure, based on the organizational commitment theory, which was mentioned in the first chapter, determines the positive correlation between where there is an awareness of the visions of the movement increases by women, the commitments of women to the movement increases. For Kanter, the commitment theory refers to the willingness of social actors to give their time, effort, energy and loyalty to the organization as because they see their successes or achievements are indistinguishable from the organization’s success that they are involved. Therefore, this approach provides a lens to my thesis to view why the Hizmet movement has got attracted by many women, especially for educational institutions around the world is as a result of the commitments of women participants to the movement’s ideas and visions on supporting women’s status and education.

The Hizmet movement creates a demanding path in higher education of education for women participants by observing the current situations of women problems that the governments have in common. The current situations of women’s issues that the globe has witnessed today in some countries of the regions are of mainly MENA, Sub-Saharan, and SouthAsia, which have been explained in the chapter 2, and they have already been taken into consideration by the Hizmet movement as wanting to be involved and being able to provide assistance to the issues as trying to be the part of solutions.

### 4.2 Discussion on the Views of Informants in the Hizmet Movement

In order to provide a clear understanding of the ideas and the interpretations of the interviews that I conducted from between February to August 2016, additional data was also used from secondary sources. What I mean from the secondary sources is they are consisted of extensive books and articles of Gulen, and his videos/ audio recordings from the websites which shed light on my research to provide and support the idea of improving the status of women for the better through the philosophy of his model of education.
According to the continuous increase in demand shown by women participants for higher level of education, the Hizmet Movement has become an important actor by providing a great support on women’s education materially and played a crucial role by instilling the universal human values morally and spiritually for the advancement of women. Therefore, as there has been seen a progressive growth, no exact number of women volunteers known which the movement supports.

As I conducted and analyzed my interviews, there were 17 women interviewees had been contacted for this research. I have reached my interviewees in two different ways. Those are face to face and over Skype application. The number of interviewees whom I talked to face to face was 15, while 2 was for Skype meeting. The interviews was held in two different locations in terms of countries. Those are Thailand and United States of America. I got contacted only 4 women in the USA in March, 2016 and the rest done in Thailand. In the following, data is provided to give information about the background of my interviewees.

The average age of women was 26 years old. The youngest respondents were 19 years old while the oldest women were 39 years old. The number of respondents whom were in the age of 19 were 2, while 11 respondents were in their 20s. And there were 4 who were in their 30s. The majority of my respondents were single in the number of 10 and 7 were married.

Another analyze came for educational background of my informants. All women that I interviewed reached the university level by holding the bachelor, master or PhD degrees in various fields as they graduated from and some still continue doing their studying in various universities. Out of all informants only 1 of them was graduated from PhD degree in Economics while 3 informants were holding the master degrees. And 3 finished their bachelor degrees. The rest, 10, was still studying in their bachelor degree programs in the fields of ranging from Business English to Computer Science in Thailand, Turkey and the USA. Among all, only 2 informants were having their bachelor degrees in Turkey who were also regarded as foreigners whom were from another nationality. And the rest, 15, were having, or completed bachelor degrees in any other countries around the world.

Informants were also asked about their work experiences. 3 of them were working in educational institutions affiliated by the Hizmet movement in Thailand.
and Laos. And 3 of them were working in Dialog Institutions, which also affiliated by the movement in Nigeria and Japan. Only 1 of them was working in private business in the sector of Biotechnology in the USA. The rest number, 10, have never been employed as because they were trying to complete bachelor degrees.

It can be clearly understood from information that my respondents had given during the interviews; they all had international experiences in terms of getting interact with any other people around the world whose backgrounds were not as same as they had; like nationality, religion, ethnicity and race. They have chosen to live, study and work in any countries that the Hizmet movement provides and supports as creating firstly educational and secondly employment opportunities for their further development in society. This enables us to realize that the experiences by exploring the new faces along with cultures and readiness to move another countries whether they were developed or developing can partially assist to find the answer to my research question about how and what extent women volunteers were encouraged to take these opportunities provided by the Hizmet movement.

Informants were requested to explain about their ideas and viewpoints on the Hizmet movement all over. All women felt very positive about the movement’s vision, perspectives, works and projects done nationally and internationally to promote peace and dialog among all nations. All women also mentioned that the priority of the Hizmet movement is education since the only solution to society problems can be eliminated by providing education to all citizens. My informants also impressed by the movement's progressive projects and its supportive characteristics on improving women’s status in society by focusing on the importance of women’s education.

My informants' backgrounds in the Hizmet movement were also important information to analyze for this research. Therefore, the question related on how they met the Hizmet movement were asked. My informants responded this question with a great enthusiasm. Generally they got to know the Hizmet movement during their attendances to university preparation course centers. These course centers have been opened and operated in every cities in Turkey by the movement to help students prepare for the entrance examinations. The subjects were taught by the good quality of teachers. For some women among those responded this question had different
stories of how they have met the movement and with its volunteer participants as a result of their parents' active role in the movement or parent's willing to support the movement financially.

When the informants were asked about what the Hizmet meant to them, the frequent answer given by almost all women was that the Hizmet means working together to promote peace as we have only one place 'the world' to live in. The informants extended their wide variety of answers by saying that the Hizmet is a movement of love, love for all creations, being tolerant of others as accepting the way they are, working towards peace and harmony to the betterment of the people by using the extensive knowledge and skills to help and produce good deeds to be a role model for young generations by carrying out the works and activities sincerely.

In order to find out what main reasons made them so much liked and involved the Hizmet movement was because of their teachers either in the movement's affiliated schools or in the university preparation course centers. They continued to give explanations on how their subject teachers there showed the outstanding performances on sacrificing their personal time, effort and energy on my informants for the entrance exam preparation which inspired them a lot. They impressively said that their teachers dedicated themselves on teaching for their best and had no expectation of any material in turn as they were just to provide and sustain good quality of education combined with moral values like; teaching respect, teaching love to all creations, develop empathy and showing altruistic behaviours to them. One who studies her bachelor degree, major in Business English in one of the universities of Thailand said:

I came to know the Hizmet Movement while I was studying at the center of university preparation courses in Turkey. Teachers there were very sacrificed. They sacrificed anything like their times, and money just for our progress and wanting us to enter to good universities.

Informants were also asked about how they spent their leisure times to know whether they engaged any activities of the Hizmet movement arranged. I got captured quite interesting answers. Majority of my informants mentioned that in during their semester breaks or in long vacations, teachers were holding many activities balancing the reading and studying sessions to outdoor physical activities.
like picnics, cycling, hiking and swimming which they had enjoyed and spent great time with their female classmates. This is a clear example of showing that learning is not only was held in the classroom, but also was held outside of the classroom. Therefore, my informants indicated that reading sessions including moral teaching designed by their teachers according to the level of students were so much helpful to improve their personality developments. And participating in outdoor activities also provided social benefits to my informants like what they have learnt by reading enabled them to practice in the outside. That’s why the activities arranged for training the social skills like building relationships, form the long lasting friendships, sharing the moments and caring one another during in their happy or sad times.

As there have been extensive wide variety of activities arranged by the schools of the Hizmet movements mentioned by my informants, I also intended to raise the question about how parents of my informants observed and felt about the ongoing activities that their daughters joined. According to the age, regions where my 14 Turkish informants came from and listening to my informants’ family backgrounds, the majority of the parents were seemed showing a little conservative behavior on their daughters. Therefore, it seemed this would create little obstacle for their daughters to join projects and activities of their teachers arranged in outdoor during long vacations. But the answers that I got, took my attention to the characteristics of the movement that made the movement as it is. Informants responded this questions as saying that traditions, cultures, environmental social factors are the driven forces that misshapes the ideas about women’s position in domestic and public life. As a result of families’ too much ‘protective’ (himayah) behaviors and the dispositions of women in society create less interactions and mobility of women in the public spheres. But, with the Hizmet movement as a result of its credible and successful educational and dialog activities and stories that spread in every corner of Turkey made their parents to think and search about it to let their daughters involved and be educated through the support of the Hizmet movement. Parents strongly believed and witnessed that the movement’s teachers took care of their daughters assuming that they are as their daughters. As a result of altruistic character of the movement’s volunteers, the Hizmet movement has created a trustable
image by emphasizing the importance of women’s education in society, as women are the source of new generations.

One of my informants who studies at the same university with her friend explained in previous paragraph mentioned her experience as follow

My parents were little conservative. When I went to another city to visit my relatives in Turkey, they gave me calls morning and evening to know how I was. But when I came here in Bangkok by the support of the Hizmet movement, I talk to them twice a week. I asked them why they call me rare than before and they said that they were sure of me by being taken care of the Hizmet movement's volunteers. So, I understand that this was a result of the Hizmet movement's activities which has built trust in Turkey and abroad.

Another girl who studies in Computer Science in another university of Thailand expresses her feelings:

My parents and I did not know where Thailand was in the map. The only we knew was there were some of the Hizmet Movement’s schools and dedicated teachers working together. And although my parents did not know those movement’s school teachers in person and I am only one girl in the family, they have sent me here in Bangkok to do my bachelor degree. They trust people in the Hizmet movement alot because they have created good image in Turkey and in other 160 countries by doing successful work and activities for the betterment of the humanity.

Informants were asked another questions about why women should be educated and what they think about the perspectives and ideas of the Hizmet movement on the improvement of status of women and promoting women’s education. Majority of women greatly emphasized about the misinterpretation of religion, effect of cultural variations and traditions, discriminative political and economic environment which greatly affects the less access educational institutions are seen as the obstacles for women to achieve gender equality for further development of the nations. Therefore, as a result of realization and the importance of women’s education today, those women with the desire of spreading the message of
the Hizmet movement’s universal values resulted my informants to move and study their higher level of education in abroad by the support of the movement. So, these women seemed to me feel as they have been working towards peace for a changing world for better future.

A related story comes from a woman that I have interviewed was Turkish and did her bachelor degree in Kazakhstan, and she worked in California, Yemen and recently have been working in a Dialogue Foundation in Nigeria brought up this topic as follows:

Projects and works of the Hizmet Movement are ‘recreating’, ‘regaining’ or ‘reviving’ the status of women to its own place where women should be in the social and economic field. And the movement is encouraging women to acquire knowledge. When we look at the sources to interpret, women are not discriminated by any religion or law in origin, but misinterpretations of those sources do. From my understanding of Gulen’s philosophy on women is that, women are family, women are community and women are nations. They are the backbones of the society as they are the creators of future generations. That’s how they are important and how women in the movement dedicated their lives serve for the best for all people in need.

Another aspects came from the other woman to the related question by saying:

Women should be educated as firstly it is because this is their main right to deserve, as they are human being, and regarding, as they are one of the genders in society. They need to be educated as they are the first teachers for their children. A good role mother, who is caring and more merciful, is important in the construction of society in long term. Therefore, the Hizmet movement is emphasizing this a lot by developing activities and projects related to education without any discrimination based on gender, religion and so on. That’s why the movements also educate men to make them aware of human rights that women should also benefit from.
The inequalities in gender that we have seen today partly can be explained, as there are fewer women participating in the decision-making mechanism of states to implement strategies and policies, which causes imbalance in the social order.

It is crucial to note that, overall my informants responded to the question of why women should be educated, only 2 among all interviewees had different perspectives than the rest. For them, women need to be educated and later need to be employed because being in financially free position to consume is important. On the other side, the majority answered this question as because women are teachers and nurturers of the next generations.

Another question was asked in related to informants’ past and current experiences, which they have faced during their studying or working as being in another foreign countries. As some of my informants were wearing headscarves, I asked whether they faced any difficulties or any different behaviors, actions they encountered which came from society that they live in. The majority of them responded this question by opening their eyes and giving smiles. The reason of that for example during they study, their new classmates, which generally changed in each terms according to the subjects’ designs of the curriculum, asked many questions to my informants about their dress, their religion, their daily life styles and also family lives. The most major common questions that they had were (1) marrying four wives in Islam, (2) the reason behind why pork and its products are not consumed by Muslim, (3) the reasons why they covered their hair and who are allowed and not allowed to see their hair, husband? male children?, (4) whether the Muslim females are allowed to go and study alone in another countries like especially in Thailand which is nearly 7000 km away from home. And other questions related to their nationality and country comes at second priority.

It is clearly understood from the experiences, which my informants had, wearing a headscarf represents the religion of Islam rather than a country itself and there are lots of questions that the other party wants to ask to know more and clarify the thoughts about gender issues in Islam. So, my informants with enough capacity of knowledge in Islam, which they already gained during the reading sessions, were willing to help their respondents to understand the true way of Islam.
One of women expressed her feelings about this topic as follows:

This was a great experience of me that the Hizmet movement has provided me and my friends to be here in studying, and gave us a chance to show that there are Muslim females participating like any other women in working towards wellbeing of society which is their right as humanbeing. For this reason, to be a useful person out there starts with the intention of improving myself in every aspect of life.

Gulen encourages people to serve humanity through education, intercultural and interfaith activities in formal where the activities are performed independently with having no central authority. These services can reduce the gaps between people and nations to establish bridges for the common good and peace.¹

My other interviewee was from USA. She is 39 years old and went to the United States of America long time ago to study her PhD with the support and encouragement of the Hizmet Movement. And now she is a senior director in a private Bio-Tech company and also a vice president of one of the Dialogue Institutes affiliated by the Hizmet movement. She does this job as voluntarily. What she said about intercultural and interfaith activities which Hizmet movement arranges were as follows:

First of all, for me hizmet (service) is to work together with diverse backgrounds of people in a peace and harmony for the betterment of the humanity. Diversity is the richness. It should not be seen as an obstacle to get along with people because everybody is unique in this world. And movement helps you understand the beauty of this diverse world and pushing you to become a much better person in your field. Therefore, the activities done by the Hizmet movement by arranging Friendship dinners, luncheons, conferences, seminars and workshops that create forums to discuss and hear about other people’s thoughts and ideas. So, the Hizmet movement is trying to eliminate the discrimination and separation done by using the word “other”, instead, it focuses “we all” by respecting one

another.

She further continued:

I am also raising my kids in this philosophy of the Hizmet. Social pressures, cultures and misinterpretation of religion may put women in back position. But the way and the cure to eliminate women’s issues is only educating them and opening their minds to this diverse world.

Another woman who works in women platform of one dialog institute touched upon the topic about being interested and involved in international development activities like Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) has continuously arranged globally, created positive impacts on the improvement of the status of women and women’s education. JWF, as it has been explained in the chapter 3, is the first and only organization in Turkey by holding the general consultative status of being ECOSOC’s member given by United Nations and Gulen is the honorary president of this organization. Therefore, JWF becomes a crucial vehicle to carry the global issues from economic to social, from political to women’s issues to be presented in the international scale and be reported to United Nations. She mentioned:

The Hizmet Movement creates many activities, which result in involvements of women followers with having different skills and capabilities from rich diverse background. So, the movement improves your capabilities by creating a space for you to interact with other people for a common goal. You assume the happiness of people comes the first priority. When you do the works with your whole heart (Ikhlas), it produces effective work as because you are doing this just for sake of God (Riza-I Ilahi).”

In addition, the informants, who currently studying in bachelor degree, were also asked what they would like to do after they graduated from. Most of them wanted to work in educational sectors as they had participated voluntarily in teaching positions of some public and private schools in Thailand considered as they were training programs. Training and workshops are regarded as opportunities to empower
my informants for advanced positions. While, the others would like to work in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), which focus on peace, equality, and empowerment of women through education, which carried by international cooperation activities that promote understanding and dialog between countries. And the other informants would like to work in business sector.

4.3 Concluding Points

Almost all of women interviewed emphasized that involvement in the the Hizmet Movement and engaging its educational and interfaith dialog activities have shown positive results as they are considered being a part of it by trying to find solutions to the global issues including women’s issues. As structure of society changes with its value systems to be more diverse, people get become more interested in the international volunteer activities done for the humanity. In general, my informants shared the view that the Hizmet movement’s activities and projects are considered as a path to carry them to the future career. In this regard, I have found that women here are greatly encouraged by the movement to study further, interact and socialize within their environments to improve their self-capabilities. Margaret Rausch, a professor in the University of Kansas, USA states that there is a strong connection between the involvement and their sense of self-improvement. To put this result to explain further under the light of the theoretical framework of organizational commitment theory that a sense of commitment to any organization only appears when individuals see the fulfilment of organizational goals as part of their self-fulfillment and a committed person is loyal and involved alot, he or she has a sense of belonging, a feeling that the group is an extention of himself or herself. Therefore, my women informants “feel a sense of belonging” to the movement that

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protects and supports them through mutual educational and economic enterprise; they help each other by engaging in common venture.\textsuperscript{5}

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research was to create an inquiry, which focuses on the role and the contributions of the Hizmet movement on women’s education along with their status in society. More significantly, the commitment and roles of women participants in the Hizmet movement have been observed and analyzed as a result of their attachments to the mission of the movement, which mainly are human rights, equality, and peace.

To address the designed research questions for my thesis, the liberal feminist approach and organizational commitment theory shed light on my analyses to assist to support my hypothesis. From this point of departure, the approach of liberal feminism, whose central argument is women and men are equal and both should have equal conditions and opportunities rather than focusing in biological differences provides a lens to understand the vision of the Hizmet movement and analyze the supportive activities and projects done for the empowerment of women in every aspect of life especially for the improvement of the condition of women’s education.

On the other hand, as human rights, equality and peace have been set to be the priority concerns of the Hizmet movement through using tool of education and dialogue activities, it has captured an enormous attention by the people especially women participants in Turkey. With the successful achievements and its credibility in Turkey; the Hizmet movement has been expanded by its women and men participants as putting the movement in the global platform. Therefore, according to my analyses from the results of my in depth interviews with women participants, it is very vivid to understand that women participants have been so much attached to the movement’s mission and goal. This loyal attachment can be explained under the light of the organizational commitment theory that women participants deeply impressed by the ideas and thought of Gulen on women’s status and women’s education and as a result they become willingly to exert extra effort by continuing their further education in the universities with the support of the movement for the better future of the society.

As we have been witnessing today, most of women are suffering from
some problems, which are especially related to their lower status and lack of accessing education in different corners of the world. As women have been challenged by some traditional norms, values, religion, economic and politics factors in their societies, which partly explained in chapter 2, the improvement of women’s status and providing access to education in all countries should be the priority concern. It is also important to note that those issues got captured by international organizations and some NGOs to work for a better that the Hizmet movement is also regarded as NGO which provides assistance by setting up private primary and secondary schools, university preparation courses, and private universities with its unique model of education by establishing in each country. This clearly indicates that the Hizmet movement give a lot importance on education and especially women’s education where women seen as the nurturers of the young generations. In addition to this, the movement’s continuous national and international projects related to those issues give women participants of the movement high motivation to be a part of solutions to the issues. Therefore, the Hizmet movement provides a life of purpose with a sense of belonging, responsibility, and commitment as making the woman participants active individuals to be beneficial to the society where there is seen no discrimination regardless of gender, religion and nationality.

The chapters, which have been designed systematically to find the answers to my research questions clearly show that women is regarded as valuable in the perspective of the Hizmet movement where there should not be any comparison or priority seen between women and men as they both are having and sharing the same human rights. According to the result of my interviews with women participants, I came up with the conclusion that women become more productive when they are involving in to the finding solutions to the global problems which especially women’s issues. Therefore, the Hizmet movement provides opportunities to women and creates a space for them in society by firstly providing a good quality of education and then encouraging them to build a healthy social relationships in her private and public lives. These are the positive steps where women feel confident and responsible to carry their societies/countries to the best positions in global level.

Every individual has potential capability in contributing to the society and this is also his or her right. Women have right to education, not for eliminating the
societal or global problems, but this is their main right as they are human beings. Therefore, if education has been distributed equally, there would not be any societal or global problems occurred.

In shortly, I can say that this movement’s efforts are always goes towards for serving common good of humanity and building a better, more peaceful future for all.
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