Women's Lifetime Experiences with Induced Abortion in Turkey and Its Relationship to Contraceptive Use and Women's Empowerment

Background:
Turkey is a middle-income country situated between Asia and Europe with a predominantly Muslim population. The country has one of the highest contraceptive prevalence rates at 71 %, yet the single most common method reported is withdrawal (26.2%) followed by intrauterine device (20.2%). Moreover abortion has been legal since 1983. The abortion ratio per 100 women has continued to decline from 4.5 in 1988 to 2.5 in 1998. It is one of the very few Muslim countries allowing abortion for all grounds in the first trimester. Turkey is a mainly patriarchal society; however the roles of women in the society are continually changing influencing the reproductive behavior and decision-making.

Hypothesis Tested:
Women have ever had an abortion in Turkey are more likely to be empowered and less traditional.

Methodology:
We used the latest 2003 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data from Turkey. The data includes 8075 ever married women. We examine the relationship between women's of abortion and whether women who have experienced an abortion are more empowered and less traditional.

We created three scores to determine women's empowerment and level of traditionality. For the women's empowerment score, we examined*) 1) Justification of beating* (Justified if she neglects the children, if she argues with him, if she refuses to have sex with him, if she burns the food, if she wastes the money*) 2) Women's mobility* (Engages in sports regularly, participates in any society/club, goes on holiday other than homeland/town, goes outside for a meal with her family, goes for a picnic, puts on make-up, and wears headscarf when going out). The *traditionality score* uses items that measure payment of bride's money and type of marriage -religious/civil-, kinship between husband and wife, arranged marriage). Our main outcome is ever having an induced abortion. We have used bivariate descriptive analyses and also multiple logistic regression models.

Findings:
Overall 23% (n=1826) of our sample ever had an abortion. More than half of these women had only one abortion (58.7%) and private doctors performed 63% of these abortions. Modern methods (38.7%) were the highest reported among Turkish women, followed by no method use (33.5%) and traditional methods (27.7%) (Table 1).

We have found that all three of our scores were positively associated with having an abortion (p=0.001). The associations with age, women's education, women's current work status, men's education, # of living children, current contraceptive use and residence were all statistically significant (p=0.001). Women ever had an abortion were 1.7 times more likely to be currently using an IUD. Women who ever had an abortion were 1.5 times more likely to be currently using withdrawal rather than no method.

After multivariate adjustment, the relationships between the empowerment scores and abortion were attenuated, except the social mobility score. The women who had scored higher in social mobility measure were more likely to have had an abortion even after controlling for all the other variables in

our models. Older age, greater wealth, higher number of living children, urban residence and current use of withdrawal and IUD were still significantly associated with ever having had an abortion. The only exception was the relationship of women's education and abortion in the social mobility score; it was statistically significant in all of the other multivariate analyses (Tables 2-4).

Discussion:
In Turkey, induced abortion occurs across a wide range of socioeconomic strata and is perhaps considered a method of contraception amongst women who have contraceptive failure, given the high levels of use of withdrawal as a method of contraception. Our data suggest that wealthier and more educated women who do not want a pregnancy resort to abortion, or have better access to abortion services than other segments of the population. History of abortion is neither empowering nor disempowering for women in Turkey, based on our measures.

Table 1: Characteristics of the population and the association between these and abortion experience for women.

	Number (%)	Ever Had An Abortion (%)	Odds Ratio (Unadjusted)
Ever having an abortion (N=8,073)		-	-
No	6,247 (77.4)		
Yes	1,826 (22.6)		
Individual Characteristics			
Age (years)　(N=7,521)		-	1.62 **
Mean (SD)	33.7 (8.4)		
Women's Highest Education (N=8,075)			1.13 **
No Education/Incomplete Primary	2,032 (25.2)	19.3	
Complete Primary	3,915 (48.5)	23.7	
Secondary Education/Higher	2,218 (26.3)	23.7	
Employment (N=8,073)			1.14*
Currently not employed	5,983 (74.1)	22	
Currently employed	2,090 (25.9)	24.4	
Household and Partner Characteristics			
Wealth Index (N=8,075)			1.32 **
Poorest	1,298 (16.1)	10.7	
Poorer	1,507 (18.7)	19.3	
Middle	1,618 (20)	23	
Richer	1,842 (22.8)	24.4	
Richest	1,810 (22.4)	31.8	
Husband's Highest Education (N=8,075)			1.2 **
No Education/Incomplete Primary	663　(8.2)	8.2	
Complete Primary	3,473 (43)	43	
Secondary Education/Higher	3,939 (48.8)	48.8	
Main Source of Income (N=8,075)			1.08
Husband's Earnings	5,463 (67.6)	22.2	
Other than Husband's	2,612 (32.4)	23.5	
Residence (N=8,075)			1.65 **
Rural	2,099 (26)	16.6	
Urban	5,976 (74)	24.7	
Fertility-Related			
# of living children (N=8,075)			1.30 **
0-1	2,268 (28.1)	8.5	
2	2,477 (30.7)	25.6	
3	1,550 (19.2)	32.3	
4	786　(9.7)	33.2	
5+	994　(12.3)	23.9	
Current Contraceptive Use (N=8,075)			
No Contraceptive Use	2,707 (33.5)	17.7	Ref
Withdrawal	2,057 (25.5)	24.5	1.51 **
IUD	1,467 (18.2)	27.3	1.74 **
Other methods	1,844 (22.8)	24	1.47 **
Women's Empowerment Scores, Mean (SD)			
Wife Beating Score	3.99 (1.4)	-	1.11 **
Traditionality Score	2.87 (0.9)	-	1.09 *
Social Mobility Score	2.19 (1.8)	-	1.14 **

    * p level <0.05; ** p level = 0.001

Table 2: Odds of ever having an abortion and justification of wife beating (N=7483)

	Wife Beating Score		
	Model 1: Individual	Model 2: Household	Model 3: Fertility related
Wife Beating Score	1.09**	1.03	1.04
Individual Characteristics			
Age (years)	1.66**	1.62**	1.57**
Women's Education	1.29**	1.05	1.17*
Women's Employment	1.06	1.18*	1.15
Household and Partner Characteristics			
Wealth Index	-	1.18**	1.20**
Husband's Education	-	1.06	1.09
Main Source of Income (other than husband)	-	0.97	1.11
Urban	-	1.36**	1.36**
Fertility-Related			
# of living children	-	-	1.21**
Current Contraceptive Use	-	-	
Withdrawal			1.59**
IUD			1.86**
Other methods			1.39**

   * p level <0.05; ** p level = 0.001

Table 3: Odds of having an abortion and traditionality score

	Traditionality Score		
	Model 1: Individual	Model 2: Household	Model 3: Fertility related
Traditionality Score	1.05	0.98	1.03
Individual Characteristics			
Age (years)	1.67**	1.63**	1.57**
Women's Education	1.33**	1.08	1.17*
Women's Employment	1.04	1.17*	1.14
Household and Partner Characteristics			
Wealth Index	-	1.19**	1.20**
Husband's Education	-	1.07	1.09
Main Source of Income (other than husband)	-	0.97	1.11
Urban	-	1.37**	1.37**
Fertility-Related			
# of living children	-	-	1.22**
Current Contraceptive Use	-	-	
Withdrawal			1.59**
IUD			1.86**
Other methods			1.39**

   * p level <0.05; ** p level = 0.001

Table 4: Odds of having an abortion and social mobility score

	Social Mobility Score		
	Model 1: Individual	Model 2: Household	Model 3: Fertility related
Social Mobility Score	1.16**	1.08**	1.11**
Individual Characteristics			
Age (years)	1.65**	1.62**	1.56**
Women's Education	1.10	1.00	1.10
Women's Employment	1.05	1.16*	1.12
Household and Partner Characteristics			
Wealth Index	-	1.15**	1.15**
Husband's Education	-	1.04	1.06
Main Source of Income (other than husband)	-	0.96	1.10
Urban	-	1.32**	1.31**
Fertility-Related			
# of living children	-	-	1.24**
Current Contraceptive Use Withdrawal IUD Other methods	-	-	1.60** 1.84** 1.37**