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## **Who are the targets of familial electoral coercion? Evidence from Turkey**

**ABSTRACT:** The unfettered expression of electoral choice is an important democratic right; however in many contexts voters are pressured by others to cast their votes in certain ways. Electoral coercion is a topic that has received increased attention from researchers in recent years as part of the wave of research on electoral violence, yet there is little consensus in the literature as to who the targets of coercion are most likely to be. This paper uses a list experiment embedded in a survey fielded following the Turkish general election of 2018 to identify the targets of coercive electoral practices within families and among close friends. The analysis reveals familial electoral coercion to be strongly conditioned by partisanship and disadvantaged demographic characteristics, but finds no evidence that women are more likely than men to be coerced.

Freedom of electoral expression and ballot secrecy are fundamental requirements of electoral integrity; only when voters are able to express their genuine electoral preferences safe from outside influence can their votes be said to be cast in a truly democratic manner. Yet too commonly the free expression of electoral preferences is undermined by coercive practices through which voters are pressured to opt for particular electoral choices, on pain of sanctions specified or imagined. Electoral intimidation is a phenomenon that has gained increasing attention from researchers in recent years; however most studies of this topic rely on macro-level data to discern overall causal patterns. Analysis of the micro-dynamics of electoral coercion is an important research objective, as the fear or experience of unwanted pressure can fundamentally alter voter orientation toward electoral processes.

Electoral coercion is often described as ‘undue influence’. There are numerous ways in which the voter’s choice can be influenced. Some of these are perfectly legitimate, as, for

example, when a voter learns about a candidate's position on an issue through a campaign advertisement or a conversation at the family dinner table and decides to vote for the candidate on this basis. Influences that are 'undue' include a range of particularistic practices: vote-buying, violence and coercion. There has been extensive recent research on vote-buying,<sup>i</sup> but only a limited amount on voter coercion, which is the focus of this paper.

Pressure exercised by family members and close friends is undeniably a violation of freedom of expression. Though there is nothing problematic in one family member seeking electoral advice from another,<sup>ii</sup> active efforts by family members or friends to induce others to falsify their true preferences are another matter. Sometimes, such pressure can even be accomplished by violations of ballot secrecy in which polling officials collude. The *Guidelines for Reviewing a Legal Framework for Elections* published by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) details the problem in these terms: "The principle of secrecy of the vote requires that election regulations underline that secret voting is not only a right on the part of the voter but an absolute obligation. In this regard the most frequent abuse is 'family voting', which is still a relatively common practice in many OSCE countries. The legislation should make clear that every voter's ballot must be marked and cast secretly. Election officials should under no circumstances accept deviations from the principle of secrecy of the vote".<sup>iii</sup> When pressure is used to try to sway the vote of fellow family members or close friends, that choice can no longer be considered to be free. We term this phenomenon 'familial electoral coercion'.

Growing concern in the international electoral assistance community about violence against women during elections has led to an increased interest in familial electoral coercion and the related phenomena of family and proxy voting.<sup>iv</sup> Coercion within the family has been identified by practitioners in a wide variety of contexts. Collating election observer reports and ethnographic evidence, Schaffer presents evidence of family voting from 46 countries,

including new and established democracies as well as electoral authoritarian states.<sup>v</sup> Though the material collected by Schaffer does not for the most part include concrete evidence of coercion, the prevalence of collective voting in violation of the legal and normative requirements of democracy does suggest that this practice serves a specific political function rather than simply being the result of ignorance or negligence.<sup>vi</sup> In contexts as diverse as Niger, Gabon, Macedonia, Israel, China, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Papua New Guinea, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guatemala, India, Pakistan, South Africa, South Korea, Uganda, Greece, France and Turkey, the evidence assembled by Schaffer suggests a clear intent by the head of family to usurp the vote choice of other family members.<sup>vii</sup> Recent identification of familial electoral coercion as a problem among Bangladeshi- and Pakistani-heritage communities in the UK indicates that it is not a practice that is confined to less democratic states.<sup>viii</sup>

Despite abundant anecdotal evidence of familial voter coercion from election monitoring reports and other practitioner documents, there has to date been little systematic empirical research on the correlates of this practice. In this study we employ data from a list experiment embedded in a survey carried out by the authors at the time of the 2018 Turkish elections to refine our understanding of which sectors of the electorate are vulnerable to electoral coercion by family members and close friends. The Turkish elections of 2018 are an ideal context in which to examine this phenomenon, as these were high-stakes contests in a clientelistic political setting where traditional family structures are still common and electoral violence of various types is on the rise as democratic norms erode. The experimental evidence points to partisanship and disadvantaged status as being core drivers of vulnerability to familial electoral coercion. Interestingly, gender is not a correlate of susceptibility to coercion, once other factors are controlled.

This analysis makes important contributions to several areas of political science. Most obviously it helps develop the emerging sub-fields of electoral malpractice and electoral violence by identifying and characterizing an important but previously understudied type of coercive malpractice. The investigation undertaken here is also relevant to the study of electoral behaviour, and the role of social context in conditioning vote choice. Finally, the findings will be of interest to students of Turkish and Middle Eastern politics, as they contribute a piece to the puzzle of electoral competition in semi-authoritarian contexts.

The following section draws on the literatures on clientelism and electoral violence to set out theoretical expectations about the drivers of familial electoral coercion. The next section details the data we employ and the methods we use. The third section of the paper presents and analyses our results, while a final section discusses the results and concludes.

### **1. Theoretical perspectives on familial electoral coercion**

Voter coercion is a common form of electoral manipulation that can be understood in terms of broad tendencies in particularistic vote mobilization, including clientelism which often takes coercive forms.<sup>ix</sup> Although the literatures on electoral violence and coercion detail the various ways in which political actors seek to manipulate voters,<sup>x</sup> research on electoral coercion within the household has been scarce. In a rare example of academic work in this area, Schaffer proposes a classification that conceptualized two types of familial voter coercion: “controlled voting” (the dictating of women’s and younger men’s vote choices by senior male household members) and “split voting” (the deliberate allocation of a family’s votes across two or more candidates).<sup>xi</sup> Though the Schaffer article breaks new ground in establishing familial voter coercion as a topic of scholarly enquiry, the author admits that the dearth of systematic empirical evidence of the phenomenon precludes detailed analysis, and he calls for “more focused and systematic attention” to be devoted to the topic.<sup>xii</sup> This paper

responds to Schaffer's call by seeking to theorize and assess the types of voters most likely to be vulnerable to familial voter coercion.

The importance of free, secret and uncoerced electoral choice is set out clearly in international law, which establishes the basic requisites of democratic elections. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, elections must be (1) held periodically, (2) by secret ballot, (3) under universal and equal suffrage, (4) in a non-discriminatory manner, (5) allowing direct choice and (6) free expression.<sup>xiii</sup> These requirements can be divided into those that pertain to the electoral process (periodic, direct elections), who is allowed to vote and how electoral procedures are administered (equal suffrage and non-discrimination), and the conditions under which individual vote choice is made. Ballot secrecy and free expression are aspects of the final category.

In order to explore the dynamics of voter coercion, we can draw on the findings of research on particularistic electoral strategies. Several studies show that 'positive' and 'negative' particularism have many similarities<sup>xiv</sup> and there is considerable evidence from the study of clientelism that parties engaging in targeted appeals of this nature focus on specific types of voter.

There are two principal dimensions of voter targeting: political and demographic. The political character of targeted voters is not well established in previous research. In a review of the literature on clientelism, Stokes finds that for the most part, swing voters are targeted by clientelist appeals.<sup>xv</sup> In as much as the threat of violent coercion is, like the positive inducement of vote-buying, a particularistic approach, we may expect swing voters to be the target of coercion also. Papers by Robinson and Torvik and Collier and Vicente employ formal modelling techniques to predict that swing and weakly-aligned voters should be more susceptible to coercion.<sup>xvi</sup> Chaturvedi, however, uses formal modelling to argue that the high

numbers of undecided voters should be associated with *less* pre-electoral violence.<sup>xvii</sup> These contrary predictions have been tested in a limited number of empirical studies, some of which suggest that solid party supporters are likely to be the targets of violence, designed either to suppress voting or to alter vote choice,<sup>xviii</sup> and some of which indicate that swing and weakly-aligned voters are more likely to be targeted.<sup>xix</sup> Thus, like the theoretical literature, the empirical literature yields inconclusive results on the political correlates of vote targeting.

The demographics of voter coercion have also been the subject of several previous studies. Some comparative research suggests that the least privileged in society are most likely to be the targets of coercive strategies. In the African context, Mares and Young find that the poor are more likely to be victims of electoral intimidation.<sup>xx</sup> Bratton finds that in Nigeria the least educated are most commonly affected by voter intimidation.<sup>xxi</sup> González Ocantos and colleagues find that poor and rural voters are more likely to be targeted with intimidation than with vote buying in Guatemala.<sup>xxii</sup> However, Dercon and Gutiérrez-Romero find that urban voters in Kenyan are more frequently victims of electoral violence than their rural counterparts.<sup>xxiii</sup> As with the literature on the political complexion of targeted voters, research on their demographic characteristics offers inconclusive results.

There is also a small body of work on workplace coercion, which is typically economic rather than physical.<sup>xxiv</sup> Though coercion by employers can be expected to operate through channels that differ from those of coercion by family members and close friends with whom one is linked by emotional bonds, both take place in a context that is not overtly electoral. This literature also finds economically vulnerable voters to be more often targeted<sup>xxv</sup> but finds no gender effect.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Despite the conflicting findings from existing studies of the targets of electoral violence and coercion, existing studies provide hints that can help us to develop hypotheses about familial voter coercion. With regard to the role of partisanship, one might expect it to

be more difficult to convince strong partisans to alter their preferred vote; if a person does not have a strong electoral preference – or potentially has never even developed electoral preferences at all, given the absence of need in the presence of strong patriarchal electoral pressure – it stands to reason that the vote choice of such an individual will be more labile than that of a staunch party supporter. Though some studies of electoral violence have found strong partisans to be more likely targets, this is generally because (a) they are less susceptible to alternative vote-altering techniques such as vote-buying, and (b) physical violence is typically employed to keep them from voting altogether. There are reasons to believe that both causal mechanisms will be weaker within households. In as much as intra-family transfers of money and other objects of value have little meaning in the context of shared household budgets, vote-buying within the family is an unlikely strategy. Moreover, within the home there are typically limits to the level of coercive force that is likely to be employed against fellow family members for electoral ends, and outright physical attacks are typically less common than the deployment of emotional and psychological pressure.

A further factor worth considering is that known partisans are more likely to come under pressure from political elites to ‘deliver’ the votes of family members. Anecdotal evidence indicates that there can in some contexts be a strong link between coercive clientelism within the family and clientelism that operates between family units and political parties;<sup>xxvii</sup> in other words, heads of household first secure guarantees that family members will vote in a particular manner, and they then deliver those votes *en bloc* to the party of their choice (or the party that is most threatening). Family voting and familial voter coercion can thus be expected to form part of a larger economy of clientelism that is most likely to engage partisans.

Gathering these considerations together, we can then anticipate that:



*H1: Voters with weak party identification will be more likely to experience familial voter coercion.*

The literature cited above strongly suggests that economic insecurity should make a person more susceptible to electoral coercion. In the household context there are two aspects to this: economic dependence *within* the family unit and the economic dependence *of* the family. Within the family, lack of economic independence often leads subordinate family members with little choice but to bow to electoral pressure in exchange for ongoing economic security; faced with the choice of expressing their true partisan pressure at the ballot box and continuing to enjoy the economic benefits of full family membership, it is not difficult to deduce that many electors will opt for the former.<sup>xxviii</sup> It follows that the more economically dependent family members are on other members of the same family unit, the more likely they are to fall victim to familial electoral coercion. Furthermore, women are more likely than men to be in subordinate economic positions. For this reason, women and less educated family members can be expected to be more vulnerable to familial electoral coercion.

At the level of the family, poorer and less educated families are generally more likely to be dependent on clientelist ties due to need and lack of alternative income sources.<sup>xxix</sup> This means that heads of poorer and less educated families are more likely to feel pressure to deliver votes *en bloc* and therefore have greater incentive to employ familial electoral coercion.

Taken together, these aspects of family and social organization suggest that:

*Hypothesis 2: Respondents with disadvantaged demographic characteristics will be more likely to experience familial voter coercion, specifically:*

*H2a: Respondents with lower education levels will be more likely to experience coercion*

*H2b: Women will be more likely to experience coercion*

*H2c: People with lower household income levels will be more likely to experience coercion*

*H2d: People from less developed regions will be more likely to experience coercion*

## **2. The 2018 Turkish Context**

For several reasons, Schaffer's category of "controlled voting" fits the Turkish case of familial electoral coercion well. Since the establishment of the Turkish multiparty system in 1946, kinship and family background have been decisive factors in shaping vote choice; moreover, Turkish household members in rural areas have historically tended to act as instructed by the head of the family, seldom making their own decisions.<sup>xxx</sup> Tradition-oriented families led by patriarchs were typically rewarded in return for their support with a wide range of administrative positions where they could sustain and reproduce traditional power relations within the new multiparty system.<sup>xxxi</sup>

In more recent years, this rural type of clientelism has been transformed into an urban form where political parties and party leaders are motivated by the desire for the power, income, and prestige that accrue to those who gain and hold political office.<sup>xxxii</sup> In this context, material inducements and preferential administrative treatment are exchanged for votes.<sup>xxxiii</sup> As political institutionalization and democratic consolidation faltered in Turkey, political patronage and clientelism became integral components of Turkish politics.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

In all such clientelist practices, it is possible to see potential coercive motives, particularly at the family level. Recent research on the subject has demonstrated that the 35 percent of voters were targets of vote buying,<sup>xxxv</sup> and family leaders play a key role in the negotiation of exchanges of goods and services for votes. These findings are also supported by several other reports of incidents of electoral violence at the household level. For example, the OSCE report on the 2007 Turkish elections stated that: "In rural areas, and some urban

areas, women's dependency on male family members is often high. This can at times be reflected in the manner of voting, in particular where women are challenged by high levels of illiteracy, and family voting reportedly remains a common practice in some areas".<sup>xxxvi</sup> The OSCE's report on the June 2015 parliamentary elections notes "alleged offences, including related to photographing filled in ballots, family voting, directed voting, multiple voting [...]" that were condoned by polling officials.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Efforts have been made by state authorities to curb this practice. In 2008, the Turkish Constitutional Court annulled a provision that would have allowed postal voting on the grounds that the secrecy of voting via postal ballot could not be guaranteed, and violations of secrecy could leave voters vulnerable to undue influence by family members.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence suggests that the problem persists. In recent years there have been reports of women who were forced to take pictures of their votes to prove that they had voted for particular candidates/parties;<sup>xxxix</sup> elderly male family members voting on behalf of other members of the family;<sup>xl</sup> and the obstruction of voting by women.<sup>xli</sup>

Turkish voters have recently had ample opportunity to experience electoral coercion. By the end of 2018, Turkey had held a total of seven elections in five years, including three parliamentary elections (two in 2015 and one in 2018), two presidential elections (2014 and 2018) a constitutional referendum (2017) and local elections (2014). Over the course of this 'electoral storm', electoral integrity came under the spotlight. Though the country has regularly held competitive multiparty elections for several decades, concerns about the quality of elections have increased; these include allegations of fraud, undue influence and violence that cast doubt on Turkey's claim to be an established democracy;<sup>xlii</sup> These concerns reached a climax at the time of the 2018 combined presidential and parliamentary election, which the *Economist* described as "the most unfair election in Turkey in decades".<sup>xliii</sup> The 2018 elections took place after a short but tense campaigning period, but more importantly,

under the state of emergency (SoE) rule, which was set after the July 2016 coup attempt. This situation raised serious concerns about the integrity of the 2018 elections, since the SoE measures affected the judiciary, the police, the military, the civil service, local authorities, academia, the media and the business community, shutting down over 1,000 institutions and private companies and seizing their assets.<sup>xliv</sup> The United Nations (UN) raised similar concerns noting that “protracted restrictions on the human rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association are incompatible with the conduct of a credible electoral process”.<sup>xlv</sup> While the government maintained that the election was transparent, the atmosphere was hardly conducive to a level playing field, considering the opposition’s limited access to the media and state resources.<sup>xlvi</sup> Confirming these concerns, the 2018 OSCE election observation mission recorded evidence of violations of electoral procedure, limitations on media freedom, intimidation and numerous violent attacks on candidates and partisans.<sup>xlvii</sup> All of these developments follow from the *state of exception* which appears as “a threshold of indeterminacy between democracy and absolutism”<sup>xlviii</sup> and which makes the Turkish context an ideal one in which to probe the correlates of familial voter coercion.

### **3. Data and Methods**

The contrary findings on the correlates of electoral coercion noted above may well be partly accounted for by contextual variation, but they may also be due to the fact that many of the studies cited rely on direct reports by citizens to survey researchers, and answers to direct questions about experience of coercion may themselves be affected by distrust and fear. It is for this reason that we employed a list experiment to tap concerns about electoral coercion, as list experiments enable researchers to gauge respondent concern indirectly.

For this purpose, data was collected via a nationwide representative face-to-face sample survey in July 2018, immediately following the June 2018 presidential and

parliamentary elections. The achieved sample was 1,232 with a response rate of 24 percent. Embedded in this survey was a list experiment designed to measure personal respondent experiences of familial voter coercion. List experiments, where respondents respond with the number of items on a list that corresponds to their experience but refrain from identifying specific items, are unobtrusive methods that are often used to measure participation in or experience of sensitive topics<sup>xlix</sup> including voter coercion in Russia<sup>l</sup> and vote-buying in Turkey.<sup>li</sup> Accordingly, our unobtrusive measure of familial voter coercion is based on the random assignment of respondents to different groups. In our survey, one group of respondents is randomly assigned to the control condition in which they are presented with a list of factors that shape the voting decision and asked to indicate how many have been influential in the voting decision, but not which, of the items shape their decision. Another randomly selected group of respondents is given the same list of items, but with the addition of one item measuring the familial electoral coercion, forming the treatment group. Again, the respondents are asked to indicate how many, but not which, of the items shape their voting decision. Because the respondents are instructed not to disclose the items shape their voting decision, the interviewer has no way of knowing whether any particular respondent is facing familial electoral coercion. In that structure, even though, there is no way of knowing whether an individual is subjected to familial electoral coercion, the same is not true for the respondents as a group. Indeed, by comparing the average number of voting decision items in the control and treatment groups, we can ascertain the proportion of respondents who experienced coercion. For example, if the average number items in the control group is 1, and the average number in the treatment condition is 1.5, then the estimate for the proportion of respondents that face familial electoral coercion would be 50 per cent. Going one step further, we also employ the technique offered by Blair and Imai in order to explore the relationships between respondents' characteristics and their answers to our sensitive item.<sup>lii</sup> Their method

moves beyond the above-mentioned difference-in-means analysis by developing new multivariate regression estimators under various designs of list experiments. Hence their methodology provides researchers with essential tools to efficiently examine who is more likely to answer sensitive items affirmatively and which respondents are likely to answer sensitive questions differently, depending on whether asked directly or indirectly through a list experiment.

The wording of our list experiment is as follows:

Q: The choices of voters for voting a particular party or candidate are shaped by a number of factors. Now I will read some of these factors. We are curious about which factors actually shaped your decision. Please do not tell me which ones, just tell me only how many.

I voted for the particular party or candidate because ...

*Control group:*

- 1 It is time to change the administration
- 2 I liked the pledges of party and/or candidate
- 3 I want stability in administration

*Treatment group:*

- 1 It is time to change the administration
- 2 I liked the pledges of party and/or candidate
- 3 I want stability in administration
- 4 Someone close forced me to vote for that specific party or candidate (sensitive item)

All respondents also answered the following direct question about personal experiences of electoral coercion: “Did someone close, like somebody from work or family, force you to vote for a specific party or candidate?” Respondents were also asked a range of questions designed to tap partisanship and demographic characteristics. The question wording for relevant survey items is included in Appendix 1 in the Supplementary Materials.

## 1. Results

The results of the list experiment indicate that voter coercion is relatively common in Turkey, and that list experiments are a useful way of measuring it.

Table 1: About here

The first two rows in Table 1 show the difference in the number of items identified by the control group, who were not shown a list with coercion on it, and the treatment group, who were presented with a list including coercion. As the first column of Table 1 suggests, when asked directly, 7.22 percent of the respondents stated that they have been forced to vote for a specific party or candidate. Then we have calculated the mean for responses in the control and treatment groups which are 1.78 and 1.98 respectively. The difference in group averages falls between zero and one, and it represents the proportion of treatment group respondents who (indirectly) answered affirmatively to the sensitive familial voter coercion question. Thus, the estimated proportion of voters who have been subjected to familial voter coercion according to the list experiment is 20 percent, and the difference between control and treatment groups is significant at the .01 level. The figures in the final row of Table 1 indicate that there is a 12.78 percent difference in experience of voter coercion between those in the first group who were given the direct question and those in the second group who were given the list experiment, confirming that the list experiment was in this context an effective means of revealing sensitive information. This is an important finding for those who use survey research to probe electoral integrity, as it suggests that direct questions will not always result in accurate responses, and it confirms the utility of list experiments in this context. Figure 1 presents this difference graphically.

Figure 1 About Here

The hypotheses set out above delineate two sets of expectations about the factors that might make an individual likely to experience voter coercion: strength of partisanship and disadvantaged demographic characteristics. The strong and weak party identification variables are coded as dummy variables by recoding a four-point closeness thermometer: responses of 1 or 2 on this scale are coded as 1 while responses 3 and 4 are coded as 0, representing strong and weak party identifications respectively. These hypotheses are tested by means of logistic regression analysis, with vulnerability to familial electoral coercion as the dependent variable.<sup>liii</sup>

Recall that our first hypothesis is that voters with weaker partisanship levels are more likely to experience coercion designed to make them vote for a particular party. Given that the role of partisanship may be expected to vary by party, the analysis is broken down into two component parts. Figure 2 presents the coefficient plots of a regression models of partisans of the ruling Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party, AKP) party (coefficients for weak and strong partisans are shown here; the baseline category is non-support for this party); the model designated by solid lines is that based on the list experiment results; the model designated with dashed lines is based on the results of the direct question. Figure 3 presents analogous coefficient plots for the models of partisanship for the main opposition party, the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican Peoples Party, CHP).<sup>liv</sup> In the AKP models, the coefficient for weak partisanship is positive and highly significant in the list experiment model (though not the direct question model), indicating that weak AKP partisans were especially vulnerable to familial electoral coercion (controlling for education, income, region and strong partisanship). The coefficients for strong AKP partisanship are not significant in either model. In the CHP models, the partisanship coefficients are not significant at all. These results provide partial support for H1. They indicate that familial



electoral coercion is most pronounced among partisans of the ruling AKP party, and that its strongest effects are exerted on weak partisans, as expected. Consideration of the current political context in Turkey can help us to make sense of these findings. The AKP's tight grip on power affords it with political leverage not available to the CHP (or other political parties). In the current context of rising competitive authoritarianism in Turkey,<sup>lv</sup> party pressure of this type plays a plausible role in elections; this interpretation is commensurate with literature that views authoritarian backsliding in Turkey and elsewhere in terms of subtle manipulation by elites of electoral and other democratic institutions.<sup>lvi</sup> If the AKP puts pressure on known supporters to vote by intimidating them or otherwise signaling expectations to heads of family, the threat of consequences for non-compliance may well be perceived as being serious. The perceived danger of not delivering votes in the requested manner may well induce heads of household to pressure family members and close friends into voting for the party. That the effect should be more pronounced for weak partisans accords with the expectation that those with weaker partisan links should be more vulnerable to targeting. Previous research has shown strong AKP supporters to be more susceptible than adherents of other parties to vote-buying;<sup>lvii</sup> it could be that this party employs a carrot-and-stick approach found elsewhere,<sup>lviii</sup> using the carrot of vote-buying with strong supporters and the stick of coercion with those more weakly aligned to its core aims.

Figure 2 About Here

Figure 3 About Here

Our second hypothesis was that respondents with disadvantaged demographic characteristics should be more likely to experience familial voter coercion. In the Turkish context, this includes those with lower education levels, women, people in households with

lower incomes and those living in the less developed regions of East and South-east Anatolia. The models presented in Figures 2 and 3 provide evidence of the expected effect of education and region, but not income or gender. Those with lower education levels and those living in East and South East Anatolia are more vulnerable than others to familial electoral coercion; both coefficients are highly significant in the more robust list experiment models. Moreover, partisanship does not appear to affect the role of these variables, which are significant in both the AKP and the CHP models. However, it could be that demographic effects are to some extent obscured by partisanship, which is closer in the funnel of causality to the dependent variable. We therefore ran a set of models with partisanship omitted (see Figure 4). Again, education and region are significant, but gender and household income are not.

Figure 4 About Here

As noted above, we expect to observe different causal pathways in relation to different party identifications, such that the effects will be brought most clearly into relief in models focusing on the impact of adherence to the different parties separately. As a robustness check, we have presented combined models including identifications with all parties (Appendix 2 in the Supplementary Material). As might be expected, the effects are weaker in these models, but still evident and significant at the .10 level.

Given the emphasis in the practitioner literature on familial electoral coercion on women as victims, and the strong link in the clientelism literature on poverty and vulnerability to clientelist ties, these are interesting and somewhat unexpected findings.<sup>lix</sup> It could well be that familial electoral coercion affects less developed regions but not necessarily poorer households within those regions. If this is the case, regional culture may mediate propensity to engage in this practice rather than objective economic need. The strong

effect of education confirms the cultural interpretation; more educated individuals (and households) may be more likely to understand and to accept democratic norms of vote secrecy and independent choice; more educated individuals are also less likely to find themselves in need of electoral assistance due to illiteracy. It could thus be that the commonly-held vulnerability of women to familial electoral coercion is in fact due to their typically lower levels of education, rather than to their gender per se. An alternative explanation is that female family members may be less likely than male family members to experience directed voting as unwelcome pressure, as they may less often have formed autonomous electoral preferences due to lower levels of political engagement. Detailed consideration of these alternative explanations awaits future research.

## **2. Discussion and Conclusion**

Familial electoral coercion represents a substantial threat to free elections, and as such it touches on the core values of democracy. Though the broad outlines of familial electoral coercion have been known for some time, there has to date been scant systematic empirical analysis of this phenomenon, for the simple reason that the data to test it have not previously been available. Given that vulnerability to coercion is a sensitive question, and given that many survey respondents answer surveys in the presence of other family members (Schaffer, 2014), traditional survey items asking people directly about their experience of coercion in the home are unlikely to provide robust data. The list experiment technique employed here overcomes this problem by affording an unobtrusive means of measuring voter coercion within the home. The micro-data collected in the context of the fraught Turkish election of 2018 allow us to undertake the first systematic empirical analysis of this phenomenon. The findings indicate that this form of electoral misconduct is a major problem in Turkey: approximately one in five voters experience pressure to vote a certain way from other family

members or close friends. Vulnerability to this practice appears to be greatest among, weak partisans of the ruling AKP party, among less educated sectors of the electorate, and among those residing in the less developed regions of East and South-east Anatolia. Contrary to expectations, women and people living in poorer households are not more likely to experience this type of pressure, once other factors are controlled.

These findings have clear relevance to the international community of electoral practitioners. The prevalence of familial electoral coercion in Turkey should be a wake-up call to those seeking to secure democratic practices in the Turkish context. The lack of a distinct gender profile to those who experience electoral pressure from fellow family members should also make practitioners rethink the problem, which may be as much a function of education as it is of gender per se.<sup>ix</sup> Considering the broader clientelist context in which this phenomenon most commonly emerges, this stands to reason. If a head of household needs to deliver a certain number of votes to a given political party, it makes little difference if those votes come from male or female family members. This suggests that it may make more sense to view familial electoral coercion as an educational issue than a gender issue, a possibility that merits consideration in future analyses.

This paper also suggests a number of other avenues for future research. Familial voter coercion is a violation of the norms of democracy, including equal rights and autonomous decision-making. Practices such as this contribute to informal economies of clientelist vote mobilization. Future work could usefully explore in greater depth the link between coercion within the family and coercion of the family, in order to confirm (or disprove) the supposition that family members who engage in this practice are doing so at the behest of political patrons. Moreover, when the regional component is concerned, in line with the theoretical arguments we have presented above, the vulnerability of weakly aligned voters may also be fuelled with the severe SoE practices in the region, which may constitute an interesting

extension of this study. Relatedly, the identity of perpetrators of familial electoral coercion would be a useful topic on which to gather data, as the analysis of perpetrator-victim dyads would shed more light on the phenomenon than can be gleaned from consideration of victims alone. Finally, it would be of interest to know what practical measures are effective in intervening to prevent voter coercion within the family. This paper has gone some way toward opening up systematic empirical analysis of an understudied topic of investigation; it is hoped that future work will serve to develop our understanding of the phenomenon further.

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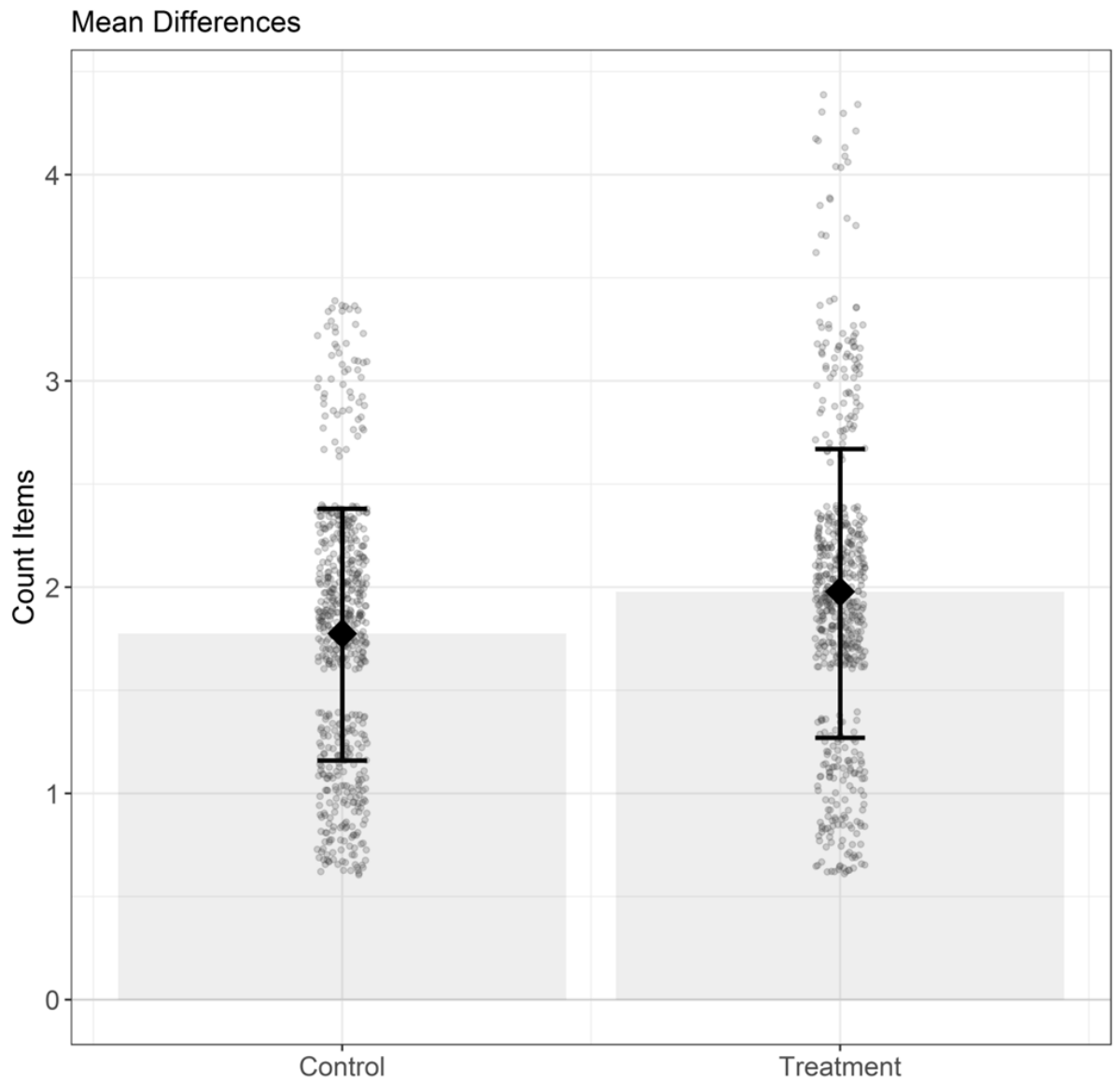
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**Table 1: Descriptive Results**

	<b>Asked Directly</b>	<b>List Experiment – items identified*</b>
Control	NA	1.78 (0.61)
Treatment	NA	1.98 (0.70)
Estimated %	7.22	20.00

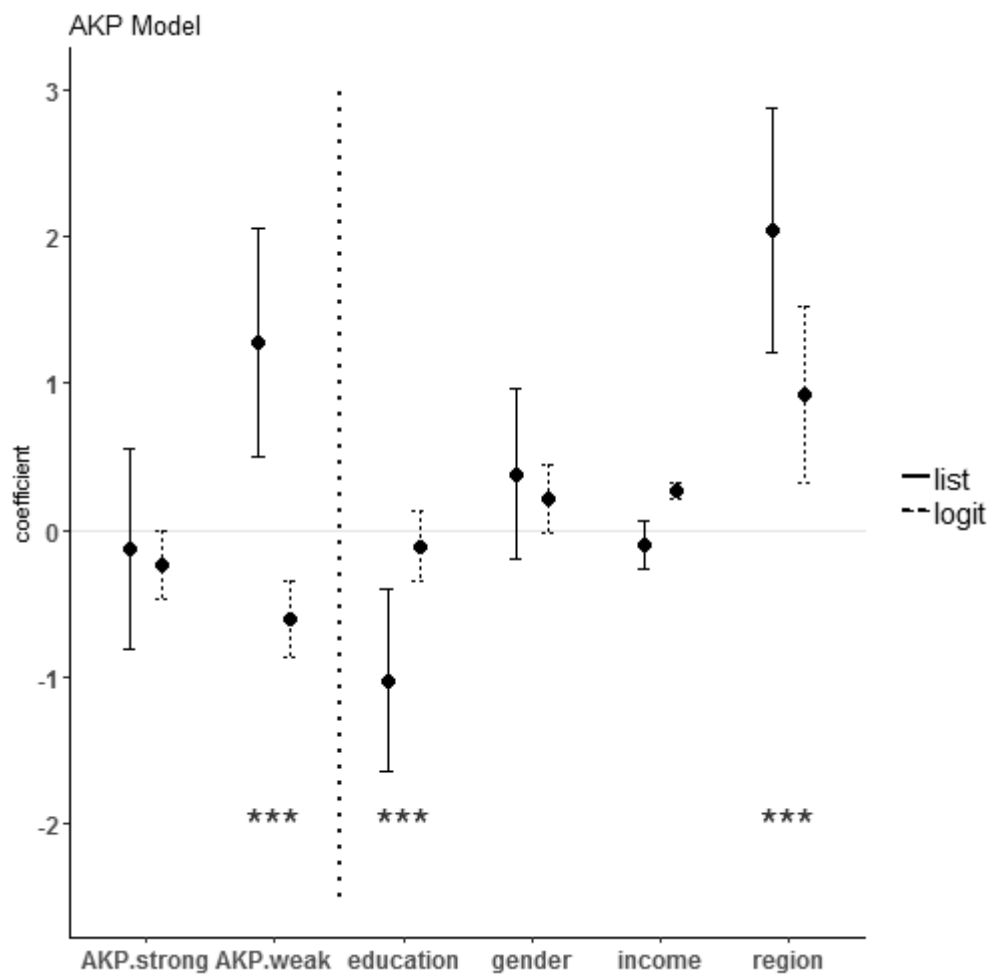
\*Means (standard errors)

**Figure 1: Difference between Treatment and Control Groups in Reported Vote-Influencing Factors**

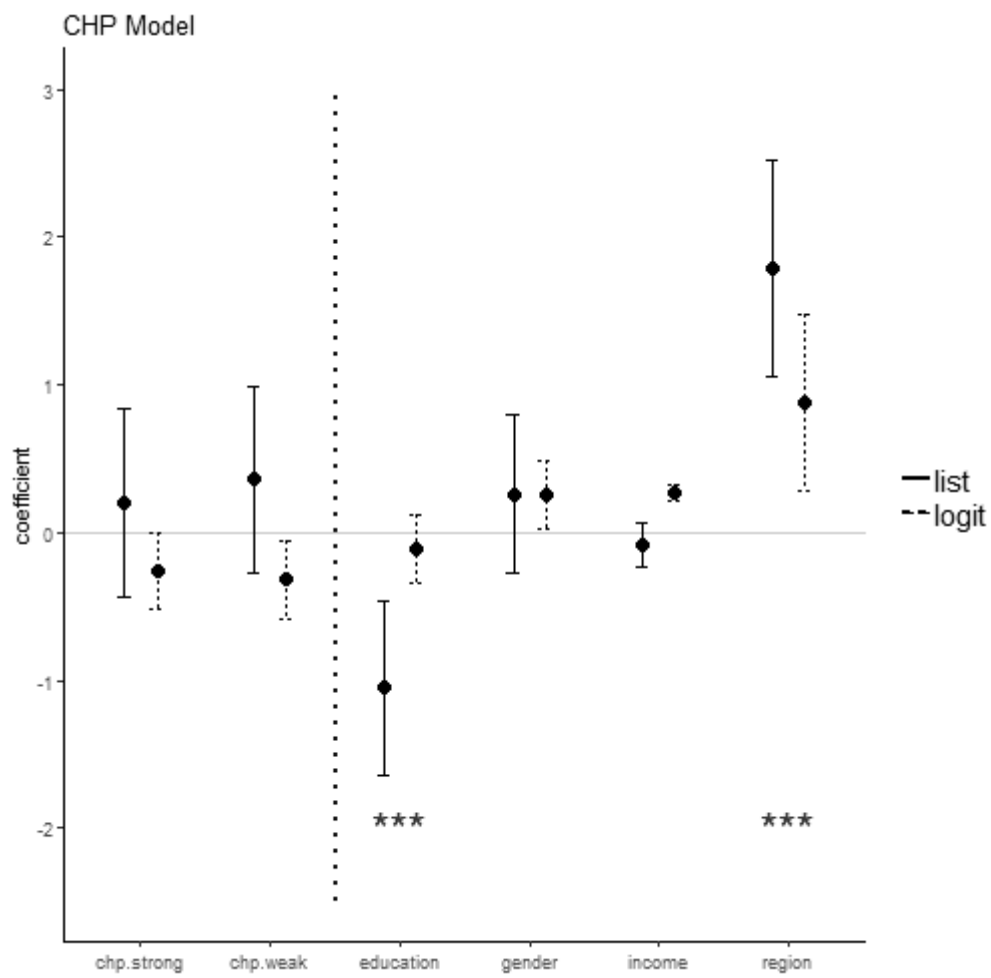




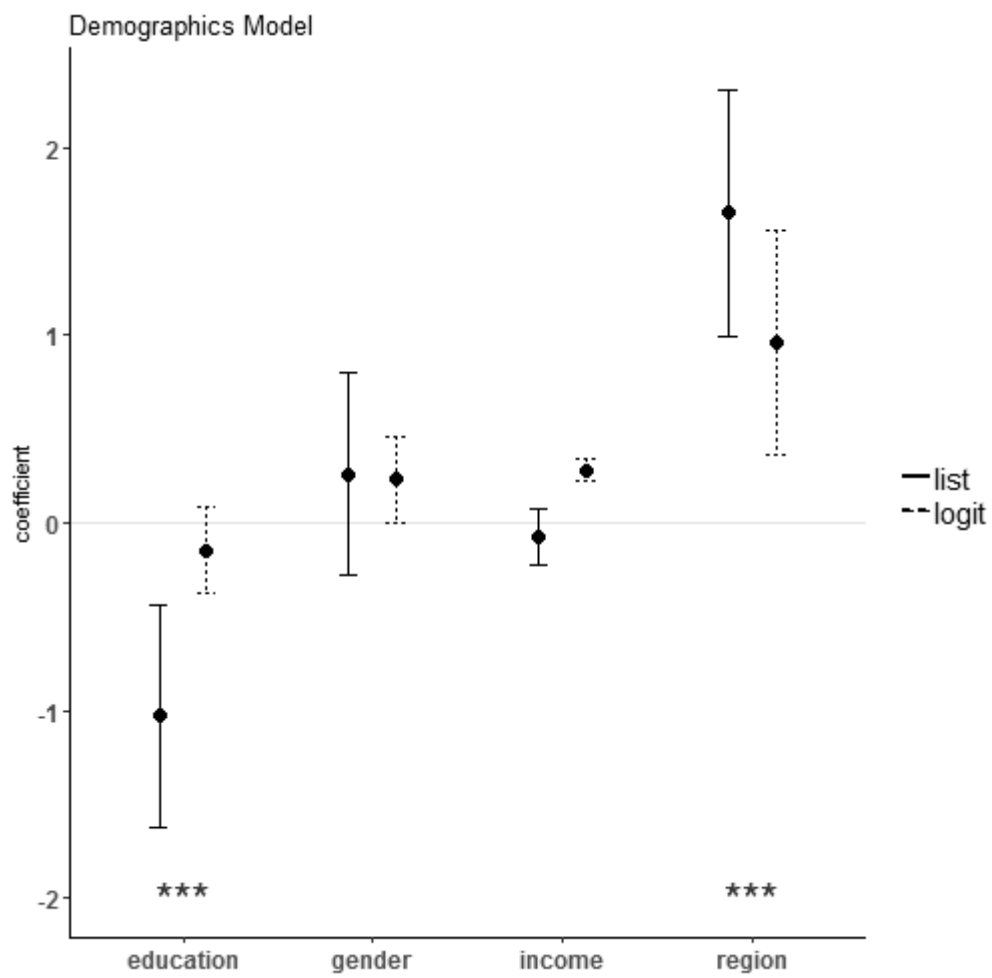
**Figure 2: Vulnerability to Familial Electoral Coercion and AKP Partisanship**



**Figure 3: Vulnerability to Familial Electoral Coercion and CHP Partisanship**



**Figure 4: Demographic Model of Vulnerability to Familial Electoral Coercion**



## Supplementary Material [online]

### Appendix 1: Survey Question Wording and Variable Construction

#### *Dependent variables:*

Experience of familial electoral coercion: direct question:

Did someone close, like somebody from work or family, force you to vote for a specific party or candidate?

Experience of familial electoral coercion: list experiment question:

The choices of voters for voting a particular party or candidate are shaped by a number of factors. Now I will read some of these factors. We are curious about which factors actually shaped your decision. Please do not tell me which ones, just tell me only how many.

I voted for the particular party or candidate because ...

Control group:

1. It is time to change the administration
2. I liked the pledges of party and/or candidate
3. I want stability in administration

Treatment group:

1. It is time to change the administration
2. I liked the pledges of party and/or candidate
3. I want stability in administration
4. Someone close forced me to vote for that specific party or candidate

#### *Independent variables:*

##### *Partisanship:*

Which political party do you feel most close?

1. Justice and Development Party (AKP)
  2. Republican People's Party (CHP)
  3. People's Democracy Party (HDP)
  4. Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)
  5. IYI Party
- 90-Other  
99-Do not know/No answer

How close do you feel to the each of the following political parties? Please indicate under the options of

- 1- Not at all close
- 2- Not quite close

- 3- A bit close
- 4- Very close
- 90-Other
- 99-Do not know/No answer

*Education:*

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- 1- Illiterate
- 2- Literate, not graduated from a school
- 3- Primary school (5 years)
- 4- Middle school (or Primary Education School – 8 years)
- 5- High school or equivalent
- 6- School of higher education (2 years)
- 7- University (at least 4 years)
- 8- Graduate school
- 9- Other
- 10- No answer

*Income*

Can you please tell me which range best describes your total monthly household income?

- 1 0 - 500 TL
- 2 501 - 1.000 TL
- 3 1.001 - 1.500 TL
- 4 1.501 - 2.000 TL
- 5 2.001 – 2.500 TL
- 6 2.501- 3.000 TL
- 7 3.001- 3.500 TL
- 8 3.501 - 4.000 TL
- 9 4.001 TL and higher
- 99 No answer

The construction of the partisanship variable was a two-step process. First the respondents were asked if they have any party that they feel close to. Then as the second step the indicator for partisanship variable was constructed based on combining the middle two levels of the following survey item “How close do you feel to this party?” by excluding strong (full alignment) and no-relationship (full dealignment) categories. The final variable codes weak alignment as “1” and others as “0”. The region variable was constructed by combining East, South East and North East Anatolian and the remaining regions under the codes of “1” and “0” respectively. Education variable is created by rearranging the original education question into the two levels of high (1) and low (0), using the secondary education level as the threshold. Similarly, the income variable was constructed by regrouping the intervals of income as high (1) and low (0), using the middle category as the threshold.

## Appendix: Regression Tables

### Party Based Models

#### Vulnerability to Familial Electoral Coercion: Coefficients of ICT/List Experiment Models

AKP Model	Est	S.E	Sig	CHP Model	Est	S.E	Sig	Demographic Model	Est	S.E	Sig
(Intercept)	-1.86	1.22	p < 0.05	(Intercept)	-1.47	1.22	-	(Intercept)	-1.45	1.19	-
AKP.stro ng	-0.13	0.68	-	CHP.stro ng	0.27	0.71	-				
AKP.wea k	1.28	0.78	p < 0.05	CHP.wea k	0.34	0.65	-				
Education	-1.02	0.62	p < 0.05	Education	-1.03	0.62	p < 0.05	Education	-1.03	0.62	p < 0.05
Gender	0.38	0.58	-	Gender	0.28	0.67	-	Gender	0.19	0.66	-
Income	-0.10	0.16	-	Income	-0.03	0.11	-	Income	-0.04	0.09	-
Region	2.04	0.83	p < 0.05	Region	1.77	0.76	p < 0.05	Region	1.64	0.63	p < 0.05
Observations				1114				1114			
Log-likelihood: -1219.094				Log-likelihood: -1217.171				Log-likelihood: -1221.728			

#### Vulnerability to Familial Electoral Coercion: Logistic Models

AKP Model	Est	S.E	Sig	CHP Model	Est	S.E	Sig	Demographic Model	Est	S.E	Sig
(Intercept)	0.42	0.52	-	(Intercept)	0.50	0.49	-	(Intercept)	0.57	0.49	-
AKP.stro ng	0.24	0.25	-	CHP.stro ng	0.34	0.36	-				
AKP.wea k	0.60	0.26	p < 0.05	CHP.wea k	0.36	0.34	-				
Educatio n	0.11	0.24	-	Educatio n	0.05	0.11	-	Education	0.19	0.22	-
Gender	0.21	0.23	-	Gender	0.29	0.28	-	Gender	1.24	0.23	-

Income	0.27	0.06	p < 0.01	Income	0.31	0.06	p < 0.01	Income	1.28	0.08	p < 0.01
Region	0.92	0.53	p < 0.05	Region	1.89	0.52	p < 0.01	Region	0.98	0.61	p < 0.05
Observations	1139			1139			1139				
Cox & Snell's R <sup>2</sup> / Nagelkerke's R <sup>2</sup>	0.035 / 0.087			0.034 / 0.084			0.031 / 0.077				

### Pooled Model

	Party ID			Demography			Combined		
	Est	S.E.	p	Est	S.E.	p	Est	S.E.	p
List Model (Intercept)	2.58	1.26	< 0.03	1.45	1.20	< 0.11	0.19	1.69	0.91
akp weak	1.17	0.68	< 0.08				1.19	0.67	< 0.08
akp strong	0.56	1.30	0.66				1.21	1.35	0.37
chp weak	0.24	0.67	0.71				0.13	0.68	0.84
chp strong	0.15	1.28	0.91				1.65	1.32	0.21
mhp weak	0.08	0.54	0.88				0.06	0.56	0.91
mhp strong	0.46	1.47	0.75				1.90	1.48	0.20
hdp weak	0.32	1.15	0.77				1.07	1.19	0.37
hdp.strong	0.03	1.62	0.98				1.90	1.73	0.27

Education				-	0.5	0.11	-	0.6	<
				0.8	7		0.9	1	<b>0.10</b>
Gender				0.1	0.5	0.40	0.2	0.5	0.65
				4	3		5	5	
Income				-	0.1	0.24	-	0.1	0.26
				0.1	5		0.1	5	
Region				0.7	0.6	<	0.9	0.6	0.16
				9	1	<b>0.09</b>	1	6	
Log-likelihood -1298.005, N: 1114									
Logit Model	0.0	0.3		0.5	0.4		0.3	0.6	
(Intercept)	5	9	< <b>0.001</b>	7	9	0.25	0	4	0.06
akp weak	1.6	0.2					1.5	0.3	
	6	8	< <b>0.071</b>				3	0	0.16
akp strong	1.3	0.4					1.3	0.4	
	2	0	0.48				4	4	0.50
chp weak	1.0	0.2					1.0	0.3	
	6	9	0.84				3	1	0.92
chp strong	1.0	0.4					1.1	0.4	
	1	3	0.98				4	6	0.78
mhp weak	0.9	0.2					1.0	0.2	
	7	4	0.90				0	6	0.99
mhp strong	0.7	0.6					0.8	0.6	
	5	0	0.64				0	3	0.73
hdp weak	4.7	0.2					3.8	0.3	< <b>0.0</b>
	9	8	< <b>0.001</b>				9	1	<b>01</b>
hdp strong	0.4	0.7					0.6	0.7	
	0	0	0.19				2	5	0.52
Education				1.1	0.2		0.9	0.2	
				1	4	0.66	2	5	0.73
Gender				0.8	0.2		0.7	0.2	
				0	4	0.34	9	4	0.34
Income				0.7	0.0	< <b>0.0</b>	0.7	0.0	< <b>0.0</b>
				3	7	<b>01</b>	7	7	<b>01</b>
Region				0.2	0.4	< <b>0.0</b>	0.2	0.4	< <b>0.0</b>
				4	4	<b>01</b>	6	6	<b>04</b>
Observations	1218			1139			1139		
Cox & Snell's R2 / Nagelkerke's R2	0.035 / 0.086			0.031 / 0.077			0.055 / 0.136		



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Notes

- i. Roniger, “The Comparative Study of Clientelism”; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, “Citizen-Politician Linkages”; Schaffer, “Why Study Vote Buying?”; Stokes, “Political Clientelism”; Stokes et al., *Brokers Voters and Clientelism*; Hidalgo and Nichter, “Voter Buying”; Mares and Young, “Buying, Expropriating, and Stealing Votes.”
- ii. Indeed, it is well known that family members often have an impact on each other’s voting decision through legitimate avenues of debate and persuasion. See de Graaf, Nieuwbeerta and Heath, “Class Mobility and Political Preference”; Zuckerman and Kolter-Berkowitz, “Politics and Society”; Brynin, “Political Values.”
- iii. OSCE, *Guidelines for Reviewing*, 25.
- iv. Council of Europe, *Women’s Individual Voting Rights*; International Foundation for Electoral Systems, *Violence against Women in Elections*; UN Women, *Violence Against Women in Politics*; US Civil Society Working Group on Women, *Violence Against Women in Politics*.
- v. Schaffer, “Not-So-Individual Voting,” 354.
- vi. Schaffer, “Not-So-Individual Voting,” 367.
- vii. Schaffer, “Not-So-Individual Voting,” 357-8.
- viii. Hill et al, “Explaining Electoral Fraud.”
- ix. Staniland, “Armed Groups and Militarized Elections”; Mares and Young, “Buying, Expropriating and Stealing Votes.”
- x. Burchard, *Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa*; Collier and Vicente, “Violence, Bribery, and Fraud”; Collier and Vicente, “Votes and Violence”; Fjelde and Höglund, “Electoral Institutions and Electoral Violence”; Hafner-Burton, Hyde and Jablonski, “When Do Governments Resort to Electoral Violence”; Klaus and Mitchell, “Land Grievances and the

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Mobilization of Electoral Violence”; Mares and Young “Buying, Expropriating and Stealing Votes”; Norris, Frank and Martínez i Coma, “The Risks of Contentious Elections”; Schaffer, “Why Study Vote-Buying?”

xi. Schaffer, “Not-So-Individual Voting.”

xii. Schaffer, “Not-So-Individual Voting,” 350.

xiii. Universal Declaration on Human Rights, General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III) (10 December 1948), Article 21:1: “Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. [...] 3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) (16 December 1966), Article 25: Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; [...]”

xiv. Van Ham and Lindberg, “From Sticks to Carrots”; Mares and Young, “Buying, Expropriating and Stealing Votes.”

xv. Stokes, “Political Clientelism.”

xvi. Robinson and Torvik, “The Real Swing Voter’s Curse”; Collier and Vicente, “Violence, Bribery and Fraud.”

xvii. Chaturvedi, “Rigging Elections with Violence.”

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- xviii. Höglund and Piyarathne, “Paying the Price for Patronage”; Gutiérrez-Romero, “An Inquiry into the Use of Illegal Electoral Practices”; Gutierrez-Romero and LeBas, “Does Electoral Violence Affect Voting Choice.”
- xix. Bratton, “Vote Buying and Violence in Nigerian Election Campaigns.”
- xx. Mares and Young, “Buying, Expropriating and Stealing Votes,” 282.
- xxi. Bratton, “Vote Buying and Violence in Nigerian Election Campaigns,” 624.
- xxii. González Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge, Meléndez, “Carrots and Sticks.”
- xxiii. Dercon and Gutiérrez-Romero, “Triggers and Characteristics.”
- xxiv. Frye, Reuter and Szakonyi, “Political Machines at Work”; Frye, Reuter and Szakonyi, “Hitting Them with Carrots”; Mares, *From Open Secrets to Secret Votes*.
- xxv. Frye, Reuter and Szakonyi, “Political Machines at Work”; Mares, *From Open Secrets to Secret Votes*.
- xxvi. Frye, Reuter and Szakonyi, “Hitting Them with Carrots.”
- xxvii. State Election Commission of Macedonia, *Strategy Against Family and Proxy Voting*; Hill et al., “Explaining Electoral Fraud in an Advanced Democracy.”
- xxviii. Birch and Watt, “Remote Electronic Voting.”
- xxix. Dixit and Londregan, “The Determinants of Success”; Stokes et al., *Brokers, Voters and Clientelism*; Çarkoğlu and Aytaç, “Who Gets Targetted at the Level of Vote-Buying?”; Mares and Young, “Buying, Expropriating and Stealing Votes.”
- xxx. Szyliowicz, “The Political Dynamics of Rural Turkey.”
- xxxi. Weber, “Traditional Authority.”
- xxxii. Cinar, “A Comparative Analysis of Clientelism in Greece, Spain and Turkey.”
- xxxiii. Keiser, “Political Machines.”

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- xxxiv. Güneş-Ayata, “Roots and Trends of Clientelism in Turkey”; Hale, “Turkey’s Domestic Political Landscape”; Heper, “Turkey: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”; Toros, “Mapping a Multifaceted Relationship.”
- xxxv. Çarkoğlu and Aytaç, “Who Gets Targetted for Vote-Buying?”
- xxxvi. OSCE, “Republic of Turkey Early Parliamentary Elections 22 July 2007,” 22.
- xxxvii. OSCE, “Republic of Turkey Parliamentary Elections 7 June 2015,” 22.
- xxxviii. OSCE, “Republic of Turkey Parliamentary Elections 12 June 2011,” 12.
- xxxix. *Hürriyet*, “Verdiğin oyun fotoğrafını çekeceksin baskısı.”
- xl. Sever et al., *30 Mart 2014*.
- xli. *Cumhuriyet*, “Tüm Kadınların.”
- xlii. Akkoyunlu, “Electoral Integrity in Turkey”; Toros and Birch, “Framing Electoral Impropriety.”
- xliii. *Economist*, “Recep Tayyip the First.”
- xliv. PACE Monitoring Committee, *Statement on the Proposed Constitutional Reform in Turkey*.
- xlv. UN News, “State of Elections Must Be Lifted.”
- xlvi. Kirişçi, “How To Read Turkey’s Election Results.”
- xlvii. OSCE, OSCE, “Republic of Turkey Early Parliamentary Elections 24 June 2018.”
- xlviii. Agamben, *State of Exception*, 3; cf Öktem and Akkoyunlu, “Exit from Democracy.”
- xlix. Gilens, Sniderman and Kuklinski, “Affirmative Action and the Politics of Realignment”; Blair and Imai, “List: Statistical Methods for the Item Count Technique”; Imai et al., “Unpacking the Black Box of Causality”; Imai and Tingley, “A Statistical Method for Empirical Testing of Competing Theories.”
- l. Frye, Reuter and Szakonyi, “Hitting Them with Carrots.”
- li. Çarkoğlu and Aytaç, “Who Gets Targetted for Vote Buying?”

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- lii. Blair and Imai, “List: Statistical Methods for the Item Count Technique.”
- liii. The analysis is carried out using the R package “List: Multivariate Statistical Analysis for the Item Count Technique”, Blair and Imai, “List: Statistical Methods for the Item Count Technique”.
- liv. The full regression tables for these models are included in Appendix 2 in the Supplementary Materials.
- lv. Esen and Gumuscu, “Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey”; Öktem and Akkoyunlu, “Exit from Democracy.”
- lvi. Bermeo, “On Democratic Backsliding”; Birch, *Electoral Malpractice*; Seeberg, “State Capacity and the Paradox of Authoritarian Elections.”
- lvii. Çarkoğlu and Aytaç, “Who Gets Targetted for Vote Buying?”
- lviii. Dal Bó, Dal Bó and Di Tella, “Plata o Plomo?”; Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*; Staniland, “Armed Groups and Militarized Elections”; Sundström, “Violence and the Costs of Honesty.”
- lix. Though they chime with the findings of Çarkoğlu and Aytaç, “Who Gets Targetted for Vote Buying?” in the context of vote-buying in Turkey that education is more important than income.
- lx. The Council of Europe goes so far as to define ‘family voting’ in terms of men voting on behalf of women, and views the democratic deficit arising from this practice in distinctly gendered terms: “Family voting describes voting practices that disenfranchise women. It occurs in three ways: in group voting, where a male family member accompanies one or more women relatives into a polling booth; in open voting, when family groups vote together in the open; and in proxy voting, where a male family member collects ballot papers that rightfully belong to one or more women relatives and marks those papers as he sees fit”, Council of Europe, *Women’s Individual Voting Rights: A Democratic Requirement*.