

BEARING OUT ROBERT MICHELS: A RESEARCH ABOUT INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY AND OLIGARCHY IN THE TURKISH REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (THE RPP)¹

ROBERT MICHELS'İ DOĞRULAMAK: CUMHURİYET HALK PARTİSİNDE PARTİ İÇİ DEMOKRASİ VE OLİGARŞİ ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

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ABSTRACT

Robert Michels identified in his book "Political Parties" written in 1911 that German Social Democrat Party promised democracy to people at election campaigns but it failed to maintain democracy within its own organizational structure. And he resulted that real democracy is improbable and oligarchy is inevitable exceptionally in all organizations (especially socialist/social democrat parties) with his say "who says organization, says oligarchy" in his theory defined as "the Iron Law of Oligarchy". Within this study, a pool was carried out with 1.204 Republican People's Party's members at Antalya scale, their opinions has been revealed about intra-party democracy and oligarchy. It is resulted that, according to the members, Michels' opinion of "inevitability of oligarchy and improbability of real democracy is exceptionally valid in all organizations" is valid in the Republican People's Party at Antalya scale.

Keywords: Robert Michels, the Iron Law of Oligarchy, the Republican People's Party, Intra-Party Democracy, Oligarchy

ÖZ

Robert Michels 1911 yılında yazdığı "Siyasal Partiler" eserinde Alman Sosyal Demokrat Parti'nin seçim kampanyalarında halka demokrasi vaat ettiğini, ancak parti içinde demokrasinin geçerli kılınmadığını tespit etmiş, Oligarşinin Demir Kanunu olarak tanımladığı kuramında "kim örgütten bahsediyorsa, oligarşiden bahsediyordur" sözü ile istisnasız tüm örgütlerde (özellikle sosyalist/sosyal demokrat partilerde) gerçek demokrasinin imkansız, oligarşinin kaçınılmaz olduğu sonucuna varmıştır. Bu çalışma ile Antalya ölçeğinde 1.204 CHP üyesi ile anket yapılmış, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'nde parti içi demokrasi ve oligarşiye ilişkin görüşleri ortaya çıkarılmaya çalışılmıştır. Michels'in "istisnasız tüm örgütlerde oligarşinin kaçınılmaz ve gerçek demokrasinin imkansız olduğu" görüşünün üyeler nezdinde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi açısından Antalya ölçeğinde geçerli olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Robert Michels, Oligarşinin Demir Kanunu, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Parti İçi Demokrasi, Oligarşi

1. INTRODUCTION

In his book, *Political Parties*, Robert Michels conducted a sociological and psychological analysis of leaders and masses within the context of different historical eras and of different geographical areas. Michels who reached the conclusion that the establishment of an oligarchical administration system is inevitable in all kinds of organizations (especially in social democratic/socialist parties) with his statement "Who says organization, says oligarchy (Michels, 2001:241)" defined this argument as "The Iron Law of Oligarchy" in the synthesis chapter of his book.

¹ This study is based on a doctorate thesis written in Akdeniz University and this is English version of the article "Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'nin Antalya Üyelerinin Parti İçi Demokrasi ve Oligarşiye Bakış Açısı" published in Turkish in Akdeniz Üniversitesi İİBF Dergisi, 18(37), May 2018, p. 63-87.

Michels who, from a historical, ideological and spatial perspective, expressed his opinions on a wide variety of matters from the French Revolution to the Revolution of 1830, from the Hohenzollern Dynasty to the 2nd Reich; from Moliere to Rousseau, from Tocqueville to Proudhon; from Prussia to Italy, Brazil, Russia and North America; from the German socialists to the French, Italian, Russian and Danish socialists, from King Louis XIV to Frederick William IV, carried out deep analyses of many organizations and leaders, the primary of them being the German Social Democratic Party. Michels who determined that the German Social Democratic Party, which promised democracy to people during the elections, failed to maintain democracy within its own organizational structure (Michels, 2001:13,16-17), argued that a contradictory situation occurs when a party, the organizational structure of which is undemocratic, promises democracy.

Michels who, aside from carrying out an analysis of German Social Democratic Party, carried out thorough historical, social analyses of different events which took place in times until the beginning of the 20th century and regions varying from the Ancient Greece to South America and from South America to Continental Europe and the Far East, argued that the decision making and ruling processes of the parties which promises democracy are guided by the ruling minority which consists of the leader and those who are with him, rather than the ruled majority (Michels, 2001:26; May, 1965:420; Slattery, 2003:53) and therefore he concluded that an oligarchical structure is inevitable.

Within the social sciences area, the Iron Law of Oligarchy presented itself as a concept which affects the arguments concerning the political organizations, is used as a reference in studies concerning this matter and is still up to date. In the following years, many analyses concerning several political parties, unions, professional organizations and non-governmental organizations were carried out, some of them supporting Michel's views and some of them not.

Even though Michels argued that the hypotheses he used for the Iron Law of Oligarchy are valid for all organizations, he described a certain type of political organization which promises people democracy and possesses a social democrat ideology, a certain extent and complexity, delegacy system, bureaucratic and centralist structure (Erdoğan, 2018: 180). Michels who excluded the conservative parties which didn't promise people democracy (Michels, 2001:13), argued that the Iron Law of Oligarchy is especially valid for social democrat/socialist parties, unions and professional organizations. When this is taken into consideration, The Republican People's Party (the RPP) presents itself as the most suitable organization in Turkey for a study concerning the Iron Law of Oligarchy, which promises the masses democracy with its Social Democrat Identity and manifests the qualities of a massive political organization with an approximate number of 1 million and 200 thousand members.

This study aims to reflect the opinions of the members of the Republican People's Party in Antalya about intra-party democracy and the existence of oligarchy by referring to the opinions expressed by Michels about the Iron Law of Oligarchy.

2. INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY AND THE CONCEPTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF OLIGARCHY

Robert Michels did not provide any descriptions for the concepts of democracy and oligarchy. But, it is clear that Michels, who argued "the inevitability of oligarchy" and "the improbability of democracy," used the concept of democracy in a way which would suggest the modern concept of democracy concerning "intra-party/intra-organization democracy" and used the concept of oligarchy in a way which would suggest "leader oligarchy." Michels who present oligarchy and democracy as two conflicting concepts, argued that the formation of oligarchy is an inevitable process. Even though many studies concerning the Iron Law of Oligarchy which were conducted after Michel's time did not support his idea, studies about the question of oligarchy were shaped around the points of view presented by the Iron Law of Oligarchy.

Michels attributed a meaning to the concept of democracy, promoting a Rousseauistic "real (direct) democracy" which people/the masses had equal rights over the process of governing (Michels 2001:28; Hands, 1971:158; Rapaport, 1982:355; Mommsen, 1981:112; Cook; 1971;786). For Michels, democracy "is a regime which provides the equal contribution of all the people or the members of the party to the processes of decision-making and governing" (Michels, 2001:21-23; May, 1965:419). In this sense, in our present day, the concept of "representative democracy" which utilizes delegacy system as a basis in organizations with thousands, tens of thousands and even millions of members, is not compliant with Michel's understanding of democracy.

In his work *Political Parties*, Michels discussed the regimes of aristocracy, monarchy, bourgeoisie, bonapartism, caesarism and autocracy as oligarchic regimes and argued that within the historical process, (representative) democracy is in fact oligarchical regime as being a new form of aristocracy (Michels, 2001: 6). Considering Michel's opinion, oligarchy can be described as "a regime in which the leader and the well-organized minority made up of those who are close to the leader have the authority in the processes of decision-making and producing policy." This means the foundations of the concepts of intra-party democracy and intra-party oligarchy are in connection with the question of which person or persons has/have the say in the processes of decision-making and government (administration) or which person or persons has/have the intra-party power. Taking the above-stated remarks into consideration, it can be said that intra-party democracy exists if the processes of decision-making and ruling are open to the members, and it can be said that oligarchy exists if the above-stated processes are closed to the members and are open only to the minority which consists of the leader and those who are close to him/her.

3. THE MAIN HYPOTHESES OF THE IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY

Concerning his hypothesis, the Iron Law of Oligarchy, Michels related the inevitability of oligarchy to three main reasons: The nature of the organization, the psychological tendencies of the leader and the psychological tendencies of the masses/members. According to Michels, considering the nature of any organization, it is technically and mechanically impossible for all the members of the organization to be a part of the processes of decision-making and ruling processes (Michels 2001:21,23,28; Wolfe, 1985:373). Because of this reason "the delegation (representation) system" becomes compulsory within the organization (Michels 2001:21; Wolfe, 1985:373). On the other hand, in complex structured organizations which possess a certain magnitude, the need for technical wisdom and expertise may bring with itself a bureaucratic structure aside from distribution of work and professionalization (Michels 2001: 25,27,65,117,243; Rapaport, 1982:356; Lenski, 1980:7), and this bureaucratic structure causes the centralization of power and authority within the organization (Lipset, 1961:15). Michels argued that the delegacy system and centralization strengthen oligarchy.

According to Michels, the leader tends to do everything necessary to keep the position that he/she has achieved. Because the leader is aware that when he/she loses the position, he/she will also lose the status entitled to the position and all the benefits entitled to that status (Michels 2001:128; Lipset 1961:16). Because of the stated reason, the leader may not refrain from committing undemocratic or unethical acts to eliminate threats in his/her dealings against those who oppose him/her (Lipset: 1961:17; Leach: 2005:313; Michels: 2001:33). After some time, in compliance with his/her new the leader finds new ways of benefitting from the position for him/herself (Lipset, 1961:16), and neglects the benefits for the members and starts utilizing the goals of the organization for him/herself, in other words starts to show tendency towards distorting the original goals of the organization (Nyden, 1985:1180; Schwartz et al., 1981:22; Hands, 1971:167; Latham, 2006:4; Leach, 2005:313). The leader who resists against change and shows tendency to organizational conservatization to protect his/her current position (Lipset, 1961:16; Martin, 2007:1414), shows tendency to make decisions without consulting the members of the party or to the bodies which were directly or indirectly elected by the members (Michels 2001:27). This reaches to such a point that the leader perceives his/her position as rightful and wants to confer this right upon a family member (nepotism) (Michels, 2001:68).

According to Michels these oligarchical tendencies displayed by the leader causes the oligarchy in the party to be strengthened. Indeed, as the person who controls the media and public relations units which collect information flow within the organization, and as the person who has control over the financial resources of the party, the leader has access to assets which cannot be accessed by his opponents (Lipset, 1961:15; Katovich et al.,1981:432; Hands, 1971: 162; Michels 2001: 68-83). Moreover, certain skills which the leader possesses like (rhetoric/oratory skills, writing skills) strengthens his/her position within the organization. (Michels, 2001:45-51). When the leader starts feeling that his position in organization is being threatened he/she will try to reinforce his/her credibility by resorting to tactics like "the restoring trust (vote of confidence) and "the resignation tactic" (Michels, 2001:34,35; Hands, 1971:162). According to Michels the leader's oligarchic tendencies increase as the time of his/her term of office increases (Michels, 2001:61). Michels, who drew attention to the fact that the members who do not possess the necessary knowledge and education to understand and monitor the activities of an organization with a rational and complicated structure are left out of the activities of that organization, observed that the members who have to work to supply their and their family's economic needs, who prefer to pass their free times with social activities and resting instead of conducting activities for the party, start to think that they

have authorized the leaders (the delegates and administrators whom they have elected themselves) to manage the activities of the party in their stead and that they have conferred their own responsibilities upon the leaders. This situation called “the incompetence and the apathy of the members” creates an absence of supervision and serves to strengthen the leader and the ruling minority which act with him (Rapaport, 1982:355; Cohn, 1993:156; Wolfe, 1985:372; Slattery, 2003:53; Michels, 2001:52-58, 245; Lipset, 1961:15; Shafer, 1991:189; Lenski, 1980:7). Michels argued that the members, because of their human nature, are in a constant search for a leader who will guide them (Casinelli, 1953:781, Michels, 2001:38,39,56; Lenski, 1980:8; Rapoport, 1982:356; Lipset 1961:16; Wolfe, 1985:373) and they fell gratitude for their leaders who spend all their time for party activities and devote their lives to the party (Michels, 2001:40). According to him, these tendencies of the members cause a strong oligarchical structure to be formed within the organization.

4. THE RESEARCH OF THE RPP'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY AND OLIGARCHY

4.1. Research Method

Between the dates of June 2015- July 2016, “a Research of the RPP's Organizational Structure, Intra-Party Democracy and Oligarchy” has been carried out in Antalya to determine the validity of intra-party democracy and the existence of oligarchical tendencies in the decision making and ruling processes. A survey involving the party members who are living in Antalya has been carried out for the research.

The main aim of “the Research of the RPP's Organizational Structure, Intra-Party Democracy and Oligarchy” was to determine the validity of Michel's arguments about intra-party democracy and oligarchy which he presented in his book *Political Parties* for the RPP². One of the most effective methods for this aim is, without a doubt, taking the opinions of the members of the party into consideration. This is one of the best methods considering that even though sometimes their existence is determinable through concrete data, the existence of intra-party democracy and oligarchy is mostly of an intuitional and perceptual nature in an abstract manner. The main reason for this, as Michels has also stated, is the tendency of the organized ruling minority (the leader and his/her team) to hide the magnitude of the power it holds against the ruled majority behind discourses of democracy (Michels, 2001:8). Considering this, the perception, intuition and thoughts of the individuals of the ruled majority based on their concrete experiences are as instructive as a study involving the articles of the regulations of the party which may strengthen oligarchy.

It has been concluded that it would be very hard to reflect the opinions of 1 million and 200 thousand members due to the limitations like the lack of time, workforce and finances and it has been decided that the research is to be conducted in Antalya. The reasons for the choice of the city can be stated as follows:

- ✓ The researcher resides in Antalya and the Akdeniz University, via which the study was carried out, is located in Antalya and this made the carrying out of the research easier in terms of getting in contact with the members.
- ✓ As Antalya is the hometown of the former leader (Deniz Baykal) of the RPP, Antalya branch of the RPP has a strong organizational and cultural background which has been developing since the 1970s.
- ✓ The Antalya branch of the RPP has members from different socio-cultural and socio-psychological classes of Turkey, thanks to the immense immigration from different cities to Antalya.

The target population of this research consists of the 42.590 members of the RPP Antalya^{3 4}. The science of statistics was utilized to determine the sample population size (the minimum number of surveys which must be conducted). The statistical calculations showed that a survey involving 1.041 participants would be enough to represent a target population of 42.590 with ± 0.03 sampling error and 95 % confidence interval. But, the number of participants was increased to 1.204 to enhance the quality of the results.

To receive the most correct results, qualifications/characteristics of the participants are as important as the calculation of the sample population size (the number of participants) of the survey. It is known that due to

² For the study of the validity of the arguments of the Iron Law of Oligarchy for the RPP, see Erdoğan, 2018: 195-277.

³ Acquired from the intranet system of the RPP Antalya, 17 June 2016.

⁴ 60,3 % of the members of the Antalya branch of the RPP are from the central sub-provinces (Muratpaşa, Kepez, Konyaaltı, Döşemealtı, Aksu), 13,7 % of them are from western sub-provinces (Kaş, Demre, Finike, Kumluca, Kemer, Korkuteli, Elmalı) and 26,1 % of the members are from Eastern sub-provinces (Serik, Manavgat, Alanya, Gazipaşa, Akseki, İbradı, Gündoğmuş). The age ranges of the members of the RPP Antalya are as follows: 7,4 %: 18-29, 18,4 %: 30-39, 21,6 %: 40-49, 25,1 %: 50-59, 19,6 %: 60-69, 7,8 %: 70 or older. 67,2 % of the members are male and 32,8 % of the members are female.

the lack of profound member registry and member information upgrade systems and due to the ease of becoming a member, a considerable amount of the members of the RPP is made up of members (passive members) who do not feel related to the party, do not participate in party activities, have a questionably weak level of ideological relation to the party and it is even doubted that if some member vote for the party or not. The above-mentioned situation is evident in the fact that only 23.053 members out of 42.590 members registered in the database of the RPP's Antalya branch have up-to-date phone numbers and are in touch with the party via SMS messages. In other words, 54,1 % of the members of this branch are provided with information while 45,9 % of the members are not in connection with the party. These members who are cannot be reached, have not demanded the update of their contact information.

On the other hand, the number of members who have voted in the primary elections which took place on 29 March 2015 is also important for determining the member profile (especially the difference between active and passive members) of Antalya. For the primaries concerning the candidacies of members of the parliament, 21.837 members out of 39.735 registered members (54,9 %) have voted. Considering the increase of the number of the members of the RPP's Antalya branch between the dates March 2015 and June 2016 and the rate of sub-provincial contribution to the elections, it is hypothesized that the number of the members who have voted would be 23.369 if the elections were to take place in June 2016. Considering the number of members (23.053) who are in connection with the party via SMS messages and the ratio of the number of the members who participated in the 2015 elections to the up-to date number of the members in 2016, it can be concluded that the number of active members the Antalya branch of the RPP is somewhere between 23.053 and 23.369.

The differentiation of active and passive members is very important in determining the sample size and the target group of the survey, because the opinions of the members who do not feel related to the party, do not participate in party activities, have a questionably weak level of ideological relation to the party will not reflect the truth as well as the opinions of the members who show concern for the party and who participate in the activities of the party on the matters of intra-party democracy and oligarchy. Because of these reasons, the participants of the survey were selected from the members the number of who differ from 23.053 to 23.369 when the matter is approached with the accidental sampling method (Arlı & Nazik, 2001:75) In other words, the survey involved "the active members". This leads to the conclusion that the results of the survey reflect not the opinions of all the members but the opinions of the active members, as it was considered to be more rational.

The answers to the survey were provided through the filling of online forms and face to face question & answer interviews. 19.868 members, whose phone numbers were available in the member database, were sent SMS messages, asking them to answer the survey questions located on <http://chpantalyaanket.questionpro.com> "and "www.chpanket.com."

After the SMS messages were sent it was observed that 500 members answered the survey questions. 481 out of 500 survey forms were filled through the usage of different IP addresses⁵. 495 survey forms, each of which were filled within 3 minutes and by a single person, and were considered to be valid for this research.

The filling and the evaluation of the survey forms which were filled through face to face interviews, were carried out with care. As it was stated before the filling of the survey forms by "active members" was seen as an important matter. To achieve success concerning this matter, the participants were selected from among the members who participated in election campaigns, rallies, delegate elections, breakfast and dinner activities of the party. 709 survey forms which had been filled through interviews were considered valid. A total of 1.204 surveys were filled, 495 of them through the internet and 709 of them through face to face interviews.

Cronbach's Alpha type ratio of the "reliability degree (the consistency of the survey)" of the likert-type questions⁶, has been calculated as "0,818" for 1.159 surveys⁷ (96,3 %). When the average acceptable Cronbach Alpha values in the field of social sciences are considered, it can be concluded that the level of reliability (the consistency) of the results of this survey is quite high.

⁵ The same IP address is used by the devices which make use of the same internet connection

⁶ The questions 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29 were taken into evaluation while the question 27 and 28 were cancelled out.

⁷ The SPSS program requires all questions to be answered to calculate the Cronbach Alfa value. 45 surveys were not evaluated because parts of them were left empty.

4.2. The Personal Characteristics of the Participants (Members)

It was stated before that the participants were selected from among the members, whose number differ from 23.053 to 23.369 with accidental sampling, and not from among all the members to reflect the opinions of the active members in a more rational manner. When this matter is considered, it is especially important that the opinions of the members of the Antalya branch of the RPP on intra-party democracy and oligarchy are reflected.

Within the research, the personal characteristics of the participants (members) are as following:

- ✓ The ages of 1199 active members who answered the question about their age are as follows: 17,8 %: 18-29, 15,4 %: 30-39, 16,5 %: 40-49, 28,2 %: 50-59, 19 %: 60-69, 2,9 %: 70 or older.
- ✓ 64,9 % of the 1119 active members who answered the question about their gender are male while 35,1 % of them are female.
- ✓ The levels of education of the 1201 active members who have answered the question about their level of education are as follows: 9,7 % of them are primary school graduates, 10,3 % of them are secondary school graduates, 29,6 % of them are high school graduates, 18,8 % of them have associate degree diplomas, 28,8 % of them have bachelor's degree and 2,7 % of them have master's degree.
- ✓ The professions of the 1.202 active members who have answered the question about their profession are as follows: 17,9 % of them are workers/laborers, 10,8 % of them are freelancers, 2,2 % of them are farmers, 6,2 % of them are businessmen/businesswomen, 39 % of them are retired, 4,9 % of them are students, 0,4 % of them are academics, 6,7 % of them are homemakers, 2,1 % of them are unemployed and 9,8 % of them have different professions.
- ✓ 1.201 members have answered the question concerning sub-province branches of the Antalya branch of the RPP, stating which sub-province branch they are a member of. The results are as follows: 0,1 % Akseki, 1,7 % Aksu, 3,6 % Alanya, 0,2 % Demre, 5,1% Döşemealtı, 0,8 % Elmalı, 0,5 % Finike, 2,3 % Gazipaşa, 0,1 % Gündoğmuş, 0,1 % İbradı, 1,2 % Kaş, 2,1 % Kemer, 13,7 % Konyaaltı, 0,7 % Korkuteli, 13,1 % Konyaaltı, 1,4 % Kumluca, 8,9 % Manavgat, 44,4 % Muratpaşa, 0,2 % Serik.
- ✓ The answers provided by 1.173 concerning their duration of memberships are as follows: 32,3 %: 1 day-3 years, 24,8 %: 4-7 years, 14,5 %: 8-11 years, 7,5 %: 12-15 years, 3,8 %: 16-19 years, 6,1 %: 20-23 years, 10,6 %: 24 or more years⁸.
- ✓ 1.176 members answered the question concerning how they ideologically identified themselves. The results are as follows: 69,6 %: social democrats, 22,3 % socialists, 6,5 % nationalists, 0,7 % liberals, 0,9 % conservatives.

4.3. The Findings: Opinions of the Members About Intra-Party Democracy and Oligarchy

- ✓ The responses of the participants to the survey article/statement "A plain member has no say in the processes of decision making and policy-determining (ruling)" were as follows: 36,9 % - I completely agree, 31,1 % - I agree, 11,1 % - I neither agree nor disagree, 15,8 % - I disagree, 5,1 % - I completely disagree. It can be concluded from these results that 68 % of the active members think that a plain member has no say in the processes of decision making and ruling/administration.

Table 1. Answers/Reactions to the article/statement "A plain member has no say in the processes of decision making and policy determining (ruling)"

	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
I completely agree	439	36,9
I agree	370	31,1
I neither agree nor disagree	132	11,1
I disagree	188	15,8
I completely disagree	61	5,1
Total	1.190	100,0

When the response "I neither agree nor disagree" is not considered as an evaluable attitude and the ones provided this response are considered as indecisive and when their responses (132 participants - 11,1 %)

⁸ The members of the Social Democratic People's Party and the members of the RPP before 1980 were also counted as the members of the RPP

are not taken into evaluation along with the responses of the participants who chose the other responses (1.058 participants), it can be concluded that **76,4 % of the active members of the RPP think that a plain member has no say in the processes of decision making and policy determining (ruling).**

- ✓ The responses of the participants to the survey article/statement “I think that the decision making and ruling processes within the RPP is being guided by oligarchic groups, both on an overall and local scale,” were as follows: 29,5 % - I completely agree, 39,2 % - I agree, 10,9 % - I neither agree nor disagree, 14,9 % - I disagree, 5,7 % - I completely disagree. It can be concluded from this that 68,7 % of the active members of the RPP think that the decision making and ruling processes within the RPP is being guided by oligarchic groups, both on an overall and local scale.

Table 2. Answers/Reactions to the article/statement “I think that the decision making and ruling processes within the RPP is being guided by oligarchic groups, both on an overall and local scale.”

	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
I completely agree	349	29,5
I agree	464	39,2
I neither agree nor disagree	129	10,9
I disagree	176	14,9
I completely disagree	67	5,7
Total	1.185	100,0
Total	1.190	100,0

When the response “I neither agree nor disagree” is not considered as an evaluable attitude and the ones provided this response are considered as indecisive and when their responses (129 participants - 10,9 %) are not taken into evaluation along with the responses of the participants who chose the other responses (1.056 participants), it can be concluded that **76,4 % of the active members think that the decision making and ruling processes within the RPP is being guided by oligarchic groups, both on an overall and local scale.**

- ✓ The responses of the participants to the survey article/statement “I think that the efforts of young members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchs who want to hold the power in their hands,” were as follows: 34,6 % - I completely agree, 36,8 % - I agree, 8,9 % - I neither agree nor disagree, 14,2 % - I disagree, 5,5 % - I completely disagree. It can be concluded from this 71,4 % of the members of the active members think that the efforts of young members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchs who want to hold the power in their hands.

Table 3. Answers/Reactions to the article/statement ““I think that the efforts of young members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchs who want to hold the power in their hands.”

	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
I completely agree	413	34,6
I agree	439	36,8
I neither agree nor disagree	106	8,9
I disagree	169	14,2
I completely disagree	66	5,5
Total	1.193	100,0

When the response “I neither agree nor disagree” is not considered as an evaluable attitude and the ones provided this response are considered as indecisive and when their responses (106 participants - 8,9 %) are not taken into evaluation along with the responses of the participants who chose the other responses (1.087 participants), it can be concluded that **78,4 % of the active members think that the efforts of young members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchs who want to hold the power in their hands.**

- ✓ The responses of the participants to the survey article/statement “I think that the efforts of female members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchs who want to hold the power in their hands,” were as follows: 30,1 % - I completely agree, 31 % - I agree, 12,4 % - I neither agree nor disagree, 20,4 % - I disagree, 6,3 % - I completely disagree. It can be concluded from this that 61,1 % of the active members think that the efforts of female members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchs who want to hold the power in their hands.

Table 4. Answers/Reactions to the article/statement “I think that the efforts of female members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchs who want to hold the power in their hands.”

	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
I completely agree	360	30,1
I agree	371	31,0
I neither agree nor disagree	148	12,4
I disagree	244	20,4
I completely disagree	75	6,3
Total	1.198	100,0

When the response “I neither agree nor disagree” is not considered as an evaluable attitude and the ones provided this response are considered as indecisive and when their responses (148 participants - 12,4 %) are not taken into evaluation along with the responses of the participants who chose the other responses (1.050 participants), it can be concluded that **69,6 % of the active members think that the efforts of female members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchs who want to hold the power in their hands.**

- ✓ The responses of the participants to the survey article/statement “I think that the members and groups within the RPP, once they gain a place in the party’s administration, will display or already display oligarchic tendencies to keep hold of their power, even if they utilized a democratic and liberal rhetoric in the beginning of their existence in the party,” were as follows: 23,5 % - I completely agree, 41,1 % - I agree, 14,8 % - I neither agree nor disagree, 17,1 % - I disagree, 3,4 % - I completely disagree. It can be concluded from this that 64,6 % of the active members think that the members and groups within the RPP will display or already display oligarchic tendencies to keep hold of their power, even if they utilized a democratic and liberal rhetoric in the beginning of their existence in the party.

Table 5. Answers/Reactions to the article/statement “I think that the members and groups within the RPP, once they gain a place in the party’s administration, will display or already display oligarchic tendencies to keep hold of their power, even if they utilized a democratic and liberal rhetoric in the beginning of their existence in the party.”

	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
I completely agree	280	23,5
I agree	489	41,1
I neither agree nor disagree	176	14,8
I disagree	203	17,1
I completely disagree	41	3,4
Total	1.189	100,0

When the response “I neither agree nor disagree” is not considered as an evaluable attitude and the ones provided this response are considered as indecisive and when their responses (176 participants - 12,4 %) are not taken into evaluation along with the responses of the participants who chose the other responses (1.050 participants), it can be concluded that **69,6 % of the active members think that the members and groups within the RPP, once they gain a place in the party’s administration, will display or already display oligarchic tendencies to keep hold of their power, even if they utilized a democratic and liberal rhetoric in the beginning of their existence in the party.**

- ✓ The responses of the participants to the survey article/statement “I think that the oligarchical groups in the center and the local branches of the party sometimes see their own political interests above the interests of the party,” were as follows: 27,5 % - I completely agree, 35,9 % - I agree, 16,3 % - I neither agree nor disagree, 15,2 % - I disagree, 5,1 % - I completely disagree. It can be concluded from this that 63,4 % of the active members think that the oligarchical groups in the center and the local branches of the party sometimes see their own political interests above the interests of the party.

Table 6. Answers/Reactions to the article/statement “I think that the oligarchical groups in the center and the local branches of the party sometimes see their own political interests above the interests of the party.”

	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
I completely agree	330	27,5
I agree	431	35,9
I neither agree nor disagree	195	16,3
I disagree	182	15,2
I completely disagree	61	5,1
Total	1.1199	100,0

When the response “I neither agree nor disagree” is not considered as an evaluable attitude and the ones provided this response are considered as indecisive and when their responses (195 participants - 16,3 %) are not taken into evaluation along with the responses of the participants who chose the other responses (1.004 participants), it can be concluded that **75,8 % of the active members think that the oligarchical groups in the center and the local branches of the party sometimes see their own political interests above the interests of the party.**

- ✓ The participants were asked to evaluate the validity of intra-party democracy of the RPP by giving points out of 10. The results were as the following: 7,6 % - 10, 6,4 % - 9, 17,7 % - 8, 18,1 % - 7, 13,4 % - 6, 17,2 % - 5, 8,3 % - 4, 5,4 % - 3, 1,5 % - 2, 4,3 % - 1. When the arithmetic means of the points of are calculated, the overall evaluation performed by the members yielded a result with the overall point of 6,25 %.

Table 16. The points given by the members for the evaluation of the validity of the intra-party democracy of the RPP

Point	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
1	50	4,3
2	18	1,5
3	63	5,4
4	97	8,3
5	200	17,2
6	156	13,4
7	210	18,1
8	206	17,7
9	75	6,4
10	88	7,6
Total	1.163	100,0
Average Points	6,25	

3.4. Interpretation of the Data

%68 of the active members (76,4 % when the indecisive evaluations are distributed) think that plain members have no say in the processes of decision making and ruling. 68,7 % (76,9 % when the indecisive evaluations are distributed) think that oligarchy is the dominant element in the processes of decision making and ruling. Even though enough detail has not been provided on the matter of the ideas of the members on the formation of the oligarchy, these results are important for the expression of the opinions of the members.

Concerning the opinions of the members, it can be concluded from the answers/responses provided for the first two questions/articles that there is a correlation between “the members having a say in the processes of decision making and ruling” and “the dominancy of oligarchic groups concerning the processes of decision making and ruling, both within the central and local administrations.” In other words, the relation formed by Michels (more democracy-less oligarchy, more oligarchy-less democracy) concerning the Iron Law of Oligarchy was verified by the participants.

It can be concluded from the fact that the majority of the active members think that the oligarchical groups, and not plain members, have the most say in the processes of decision making and ruling, that the oligarchy exists within the RPP, both on a central/overall and on a local scale. It is therefore possible to accept that the opinions of the active members on this matter support the ideas of Michels concerning “the inevitability of oligarchy.”

The ratios of the members who think that the efforts of young and female members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchs who want to hold the power in their hands are 71 % and 61,1 % (78,4 % and 69,6 % when the indecisive evaluations are distributed)⁹. The conflict between the role of young and female members as promoters of change and the tendency of the oligarchical groups towards organizational conservatism was tried to be understood and resolved by the asking of these two questions¹⁰. The opinions of the members concerning those two articles/questions suggest that the oligarchical structure (the ruling minority) within the party see the promotion of change by the young and female members as a threat to their own interests. In other words, the interests of young and female members contradict the interests of oligarchical groups which display tendencies towards organizational conservatism to keep a hold on

⁹ 10 % proportional difference between the female and male members is due to the % 33 gender limit of the RPP.

¹⁰ The role of the young and female members as the promoters of change is a reality. For a further analysis of the matter see Erdoğan, 2018.

their power and status. This shows that the opinions of the members are in compliance with Michels opinions which suggest that “as they tend to keep a hold on their power after acquiring it, the leader and the ruling minority will not hesitate to utilize undemocratic means to eliminate all the opposition that may pose a threat against them.”

Concerning the “Iron Law of Oligarchy” Michels argued that “after reaching a certain status, even a plain member will develop interests in accordance with his new status and will also develop a new attitude towards protecting his new status. In this process which Michels calls “deproletarianisation” (Michels, 2001:170,240), the democratic and liberal discourses will leave their places to tendencies towards conservatism within the oligarchical structure. Indeed, the results of the survey suggest that the opinions of Michels are in compliance with the opinions of the members who suggest that the members and groups within the RPP, once they gain a place in the party’s administration, will display or already display oligarchic tendencies to keep hold of their power, even if they utilized a democratic and liberal rhetoric in the beginning of their existence in the party.

Michels argued that the oligarchical structure, which moves with the drive to protect the power and the status it possesses, sees its own interests as more important than the interests of the party and therefore may use the power it possesses in a way which may cause the party to be led astray from its original goals. According to Michels the tendency of the leaders to see their own interests more important than the interests of the members and to disregard the interests of the members during the development process of the party causes oligarchy to be strengthened. In such a situation the ruled majority starts, on a certain level, to serve the interests of the ruling minority instead of the party. Indeed, this idea of Michels is in accordance with the survey result which suggest that 63,4 % (75,8 % when the indecisive evaluations are distributed) of the active members think that the oligarchical groups in the center and the local branches of the party sometimes see their own political interests above the interests of the party.

The participants were asked to evaluate the validity of intra-party democracy by giving a point out of 10. Even though improvements were made concerning the party regulations in the years 2012 and 2014, and even though the primary elections in March 2015 were carried out in the presence of the members and judges, an average point was 6,25 given. The results show that for the active members of the RPP has not reached a sufficient level in terms of intra-party democracy¹¹.

5. CONCLUSION

According to the “Research of the RPP’s Organizational Structure, Intra-Party Democracy and Oligarchy,” opinions of 1.204 active members of the RPP Antalya Branch are as follows:

- ✓ 68 % of the members think that a plain member has no say in the processes of decision making and ruling.
- ✓ 68,7 % of the members think that the decision making and ruling processes of the RPP is under the guidance of oligarchical groups, both on an over-all(central) and local level.
- ✓ 71,4 % of the members think that the efforts of the young members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchic groups which want to keep their power in their hands.
- ✓ 61,1 % of the members think that the efforts of the female members who promote change are being disregarded by oligarchic groups which want to keep their power in their hands.
- ✓ 64,6 % of the members think that the members and groups within the RPP, once they gain a place in the party’s administration, will display or already display oligarchic tendencies to keep hold of their power, even if they utilized a democratic and liberal rhetoric in the beginning of their existence in the party.
- ✓ 63,4 % of the members think that the oligarchical groups in the center and the local branches of the party sometimes see their own political interests above the interests of the party.
- ✓ The participants gave 6,25 out of 10 points while evaluating the validity of intra-party democracy.

¹¹ In point of being addition information: The answers for the question “Do you believe that fair and equal competition were carried out between the 96 nominees on 29 of March 2015 Pre-Election? are as follows: 46,8 % - Yes, 46,8 % - No, 6,4 % - I have no idea. The answers for the question “Do you believe that the results of the Pre-Election reflect the will of the plain members?” are as follows: 41,7 % - Yes, 51,8 % - No, 6,6 % - I have no idea. For the details see Erdoğan, 2018: 267.

As a result, with this survey, the opinions of the active members of the RPP Antalya branch about intra-party democracy and oligarchy were reflected and it was seen that Michel's argument "oligarchy is inevitable and real (direct) democracy is improbable in all organizations" is valid for the RPP.

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