

Missing Subjects of Social and Economic Development: Women with Headscarves

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Abstract

In Türkiye, mandatory education is provided by the state, and therefore, individuals with fragile socioeconomic indicators do not experience barriers of inequality to inclusion to education. However, in about 1997, the women with headscarves also acquired visibility in education and this led to certain social events in Türkiye. The practice widely known as "headscarf ban" that began in 1997 decreed the expulsion of women with headscarves from the higher education process. When it is considered that the mandatory education in Türkiye is 12 years and that the undergraduate education takes 4 years, the headscarf ban during the 1997-2013 corresponds to a period in which a person accumulates her human capital. This study is on how women who have been systematically cast out from education and employment perceive: a) their forfeited role in the development of Türkiye's economy; b) their own assessment of their lack of employment due to the headscarf ban; and c) being barred from education, their individual losses and Türkiye's economic prosperity.

Keywords: Headscarf Ban, Human Capital, Social And Economic Development, Inequality, Individual Loss.

Öz

Zorunlu eğitim Türkiye'de devlet tarafından verildiği için kırılğan sosyoekonomik özelliklere sahip olan bireyler eğitime erişimde eşitsizlikle karşılaşmamaktadır. Ancak 1997 yılında başörtülü kadınların eğitimde görünür olmaları, toplumsal olaylara yol açmıştır. 1997 yılında başlayan ve "başörtüsü yasağı" olarak bilinen uygulama, başörtülü kadınların yükseköğretim sürecinin dışarıda bırakılmasını içermektedir. Türkiye'de zorunlu eğitimin 12 yıl, lisans eğitiminin ise 4 yıl olduğu düşünüldüğünde 1997-2013 dönemindeki başörtüsü yasağı bireyin beşeri sermayesine yatırım yaptığı uzun bir döneme tekabül etmektedir. Bu çalışma, sistematik olarak eğitim ve istihdamdan dışlanan kadınların: a) Türkiye ekonomisinin gelişmesinde kaybedilen rollerini; b) başörtüsü yasağı nedeniyle istihdam edilmediklerine ilişkin kendi değerlendirmelerini ve c) eğitimden dışlanmaları sonucunda bireysel kayıplarını ve Türkiye'nin ekonomik refahını nasıl değerlendirdiklerini anlamaya çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Başörtüsü Yasağı, Beşeri Sermaye, Sosyal Ve Ekonomik Gelişme, Eşitsizlik, Bireysel Kayıp.

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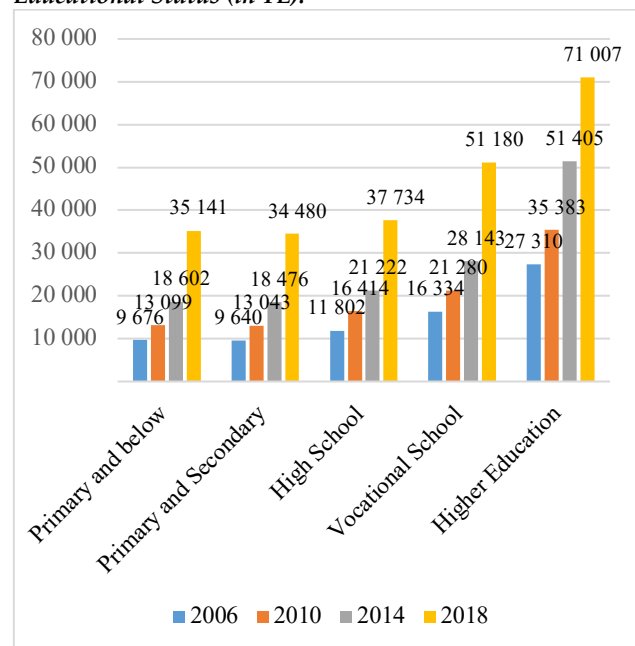
Introduction

In the classification of a country's development, economic growth is the most commonly used indicator. Using this indicator, according to the World Bank classification, countries are categorized as low-income, medium-income and high-income economies, and are also declared as developed, developing and underdeveloped economies. The defining features of economic growth, for which the economic revenue is the main criterion, are inputs such as physical capital, labor, technology and savings. Whereas the traditional economic growth theories give importance to the rise of physical capital and the increase in savings, endogenous growth theories prioritize the value of technology. The inputs in different economic growth theories vary according to the country's economic characteristics and the conditions of the global economy. However, in traditional and endogenous economic growth theories, the labor force variable has an increasing impact on both input variables and economic growth output. Given that technology changed the entire economic production process in the 2000s, the quality of the labor force that will lead this process gains even more importance. The knowledge, experience and skill of the labor force are defined as human capital. The quality of human capital also shows the nature of a country's economic production process. The value of the product increases when information and skills acquired earlier on are included into the labor force. Based on this premise, the inclusion of each individual into employment and education for employment is of significance.

The education, skill and the educational attainment of the workers that form the labor force also determine the nature of the output in economic production. By being classified as blue and white collar, based on the education level required, the categories of jobs increase the significance of education in shaping the socioeconomic status in Türkiye. The increased income level obtained by being a higher education graduate, consequently improved social status and perceived value of higher education in the society

rendered university education a threshold of socioeconomic ranking. The Graph 1 shows the average annual gross earnings based on educational status. According to this graph, in 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018, the annual average earnings increase as the education level increases. Since income level increases are among the key variables that affect social and economic status, the value attributed to being a higher education graduate increases more. Given the inflation between 2006-2018, which is %167, there is no significant increase in the annual gross earnings. Yet it is observed that the positive correlation between higher education and higher annual gross earnings.

Graph 1. Average Annual Gross Earnings Based on Educational Status (in TL).

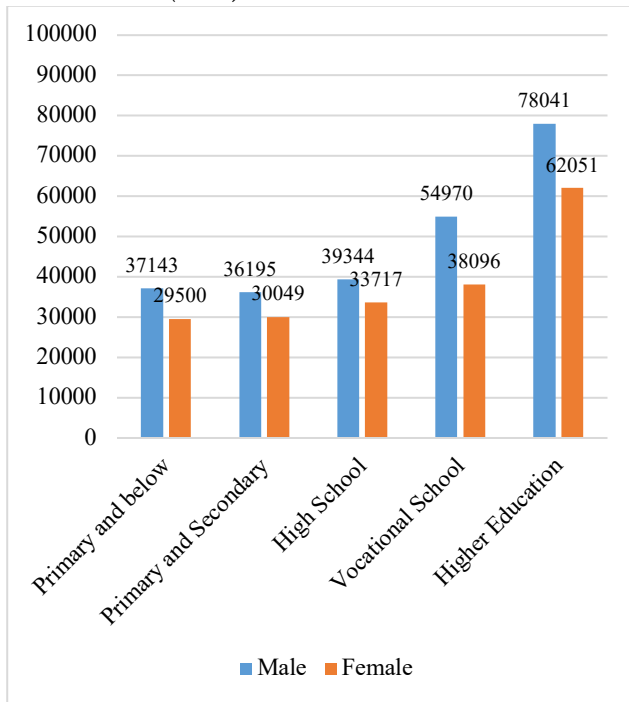


Source: TUIK, Structure of Earnings Survey, 2020.

When annual average earnings based on educational status is examined according to gender, it can be seen that women's average earnings increase as their education levels rise (Graph 2). In 2018, while for a male with primary school education and below, annual earnings were 37,143 TL, they were 78,041 TL for a higher education graduate male. Whereas for a female with primary school education and below, annual earnings were 29,500 TL, they were 62,051 TL for a higher education graduate female. The annual

difference in earnings between men and women is seen at every level of education. The common point is the higher the level of education, the higher the annual profits for both genders.

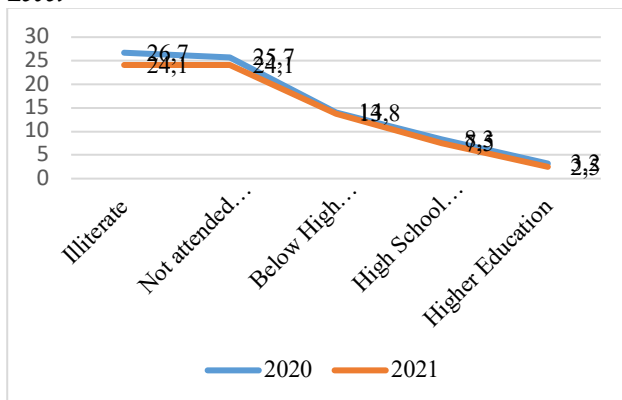
Graph 2. Average Annual Gross Earnings Based on Gender and Education (in TL).



Source: TUIK, Structure of Earnings Survey, 2020.

It is seen that there is a negative correlation between education level and poverty. The poverty rate decreases as the education level increases. Preventing participation in education indirectly means an increase in the risk of poverty (Graph 3).

Graph 3. Relative Poverty Rate Based on Equivalent Household Individual Disposable Earnings and Education Level



Source: TUIK, Income and Living Conditions Research, 2021.

While education level increases, earnings increase; yet, the rate of poverty has a negative correlation with the education level. Education at all levels in Türkiye is provided as a public service, free of charge. The 12-year term basic education is compulsory, independent of socioeconomic properties. When income levels and poverty rates are examined, the distinguishing threshold appears to be the higher education. Education is a variable that determines socioeconomic status. Women's exclusion from higher education due to the headscarf ban indirectly determines their status.

The headscarf ban in Turkey began in the 1980s. This ban is recognized as an imposition of Turkish secularism. The first headscarf ban was imposed on university students in 1981. On September 12, 1980, a coup took place in Turkey. In 1981, Kenan Evren banned students from wearing headscarves by decree of the National Security Council (Göle, 2012). In 1983, Turgut Özal's prime ministerial government liberalized the headscarf in universities. However, since then, between 1983 and 2013, the headscarf has been one of the most controversial issues in Turkey. After 1998, the ban was strictly implemented. The beginning of the headscarf ban at universities negatively affected the career process for headscarved women. Higher education determines socioeconomic status.

Literature

The headscarf ban is discussed in literature (Barras, 2009; Kılıçbay & Binark, 2002; Pfister, 2000; Cindioğlu, 2011; Guveli, 2011; Gökırsel, 2012; Akboğa, 2014; Akbulut, 2015; Çörekcioğlu, 2021) as the formation of an unsafe environment due to discrimination, in general, by workforce, education, sports and the entire public area, and in particular, as well as fashions and forms of veiling for women with headscarves. The headscarf ban has been assessed solely from the aspect of women with headscarves, regarding the perception of safety and satisfaction of men and women who do not wear headscarves. It is argued that the ban exists as a form of gender inequality against women. Therefore, it can be argued that women's rights can be actually studied as a subject of human rights with ontological and methodological

consistency. Within this scope, it can be argued that the economic field is not independent of the developments and events in other areas.

Genç and İlhan (2012) underscore that the headscarf ban was not limited only to universities. They draw attention to the varying experiences and discriminatory dimensions created by the headscarf ban on politics, public sector, private sector and everyday life. Using the case of Middle East Technical University (METU) as an example, they also state that the headscarf ban is devoid of a political basis as it was argued by the university administrations. Especially in politics, Genç and İlhan consider the headscarf ban as a form of sexist discrimination, pointing out that a similar situation was experienced in the public sector. And they argued that bans on clothing must be lifted so the women with headscarves can achieve equal conditions with men in the private sector. They also argue that the preferences of women who are discriminated against over their headscarf lead to living spaces being necessarily divided in everyday life, thereby forming a socially insecure environment.

Employing feminist terminology, Azak (2008) draws attention to the discrimination experienced by women with headscarves in public space. Within this scope, she argues that women, with or without headscarves, fight against the same patriarchal order. Therefore, she suggests that other than Muslims, the headscarf ban constitutes an issue only for the feminists. Further criticizing stereotyping of women with religious impetus, Azak states that women were subject to headscarf ban, not just in state institutions, but also in the private sector, despite the fact that the private sector lacked any obligation to do so. In a study on the woman's visibility in the workforce (Karaca, 2013), the subject is discussed in terms of conservative employers and professions that require expertise. Conservative employer determines the visibility of a woman with headscarf according to customer type and profile. This study also states that the women with headscarves would not be promoted, that they were underpaid, that the risks of layoff were high, and that they were never the face of the company.

Furthermore, the study mentions that due to the headscarf ban, it is difficult to find an expert professional woman with headscarf.

Çayır (2012) points out that the number of women exposed to discrimination has increased. He stresses that independent of (conservative, left, liberal, and so on) ideologies, there are shared experiences of discrimination. He also adds that this discrimination also legitimizes violence. The lynching attempts against the Kurds in the Western cities of Turkey have been shown as an example. This attempt proves that discrimination can turn into an act of mass violence. Başak (2009) draws attention to discrimination by using "glass ceiling" metaphor. In her study, she focuses on the barriers that women face, especially in business life. Furthermore, there are studies that explain the discriminatory context of headscarf ban and the deprivation of women from their right to higher education, not just within the social context, but also as a form of gender discrimination within the legal procedures (Süral, 2013). Başkan (2009) highlights the social and political sources of the headscarf ban. According to this study, regarding headscarf ban, the debates on secularism, the self-centered backlashes, the tendency to evaluate headscarf as a political symbol and the arguments that the headscarf is worn only as a result of family pressure are in actuality contrary to the human right that creates the free society.

It can be argued that the discrimination revealed by the research that focuses on women and headscarves also has an impact on the country's economy. Doğan (2005) reviews the arguments that democracy is the prerequisite for economic development. Although there are studies that argue that there is no meaningful relation between democracy and economic growth, there are factors such as political instability, corruption in governance, deviation of public spending from rationality, underdevelopment of human capital and disparity of income that negatively affect economic growth. From the aspect of headscarf and women studies, when democratic rights are not distributed equally, human capital comes to harm and income is distributed unequally. The economic

consequences of discrimination –in general, the gender discrimination, and in particular, the discrimination against headscarf– causes negative results not just for women with headscarves, but also for national economy, due to uncertainty and distrust (Doğan, 2005). Alongside the dimensions of freedom of women and faith, it is also necessary to face the consequences of headscarf ban in the economic field.

While conceptually analyzing the headscarf ban and human capital loss, which is the focus of this study, studies centered on discrimination and human capital have been investigated. In this context, it has been found that the careers of individuals subjected to racial discrimination suffer. With interviews with 224 African men in the United States, almost all of the participants stated that they were subjected to racism and could not obtain a job position according to their qualifications. Accordingly, although blacks are qualified in terms of occupation and education, they are not able to assign senior positions (Jollevet, 2008). Gender-based discrimination is embodied in the world of work. Despite having the same education and work experience, women are paid less than men. This is explained by human capital and discrimination. That is, female workers invest less in their human capital because women expect to stay in the labor force for a shorter period of time. According to this view, women are paid less than male workers because they invest less in their human capital. The discrimination approach argues that gender discrimination in the labor market is reflected in wages (Madden, 1987).

Women with headscarves cannot find a job in the public sector due to the ban. Therefore, headscarved women are employed in the private sector. However, they work in low-status jobs with low wages in the private sector. They face problems in the promotion process and headscarved women are the first to be dismissed from their jobs (Cindioğlu, 2011). The difficulties faced by headscarved women in the labor market are not limited to Turkey. In Australia, Muslim women are less likely to participate in the labor market. Muslim women are also less likely to find administrative employment (Khattab, Daoud, Qaysiya & Shaath, 2020). A study analysing the change in the gender wage gap reveals that access

to education reduces the wage gap. In Bangladesh, the wage gap between men and women decreased by 31 per cent between 1999 and 2009. The reason for this decrease is explained by women's equal access to education (Ahmed & McGillivray, 2015). Therefore, the exclusion of women from education determines their status in the labor market.

Human capital theorists argue that the wage gap between men and women in the labor market is related to supply-side factors (Mincer, 1962; Becker, 1981). Accordingly, women invest less in their human capital because they assume lower expected earnings. However, demand-side discrimination is ignored. Researchers (England, 1992; Harding, 1995; Ferber & Nelson, 2009), on the other hand, argue that there is demand-side discrimination. In other words, discrimination against women leads to unequal practices in the labor market. Therefore, the discrimination women face before entering the labor market also determines their subsequent economic and social indicators. It is also argued that racial and gender discrimination has social costs (Sedgley & Elmslie, 2018). Discrimination is deepened when discrimination is centred first on gender and then on religion. Women who are discriminated against on grounds of gender may also be subjected to unequal treatment because of their headscarf.

A study conducted in Sweden found that ethnic discrimination is widespread in the labor market. The reasons for this discrimination were identified as statistical discrimination, ethnic discrimination, and institutional discrimination. Institutional discrimination is the difficulty of access to public services and practices for migrants (Rydgren, 2004). The headscarf ban in Turkey can be considered as an example of this institutional discrimination. Discrimination against headscarved women is not limited to Turkey. Women applying for jobs in Germany have been found to be more likely to be invited for an interview if they are Turkish immigrants. The level of discrimination increases significantly if the applicant wears a headscarf. Women with headscarves are subjected to discrimination based on stigmatisation because of their ethnic origin and religious beliefs (Weichselbaumer, 2020). As a result, headscarved women are excluded from the

labor market and their socioeconomic status remains low.

Moreover, data collected in 2007 on 1206 women revealed that women are negatively affected by the headscarf ban in Turkey. Women with headscarves have significantly lower levels of education and are more likely to be unemployed than women without headscarves. Women wearing headscarves face serious difficulties in the labor market (Guveli, 2011). Additionally, since the ban is women-focused, it reproduces gender inequality. People invest in academic and vocational training in order to maximize individual benefits. This will increase their wages and productivity (Hurst, 1997). However, practices that exclude people from education, such as the headscarf ban, prevent people from investing in human capital.

Method

Since the 1990s, women's net schooling rate in higher education began to increase in Türkiye. While between 1983 and 1992, the number of female students in higher education (e.g., associate, undergraduate, master's degrees and PhD) was nearly half the number of male students, in the 1990s this difference declined. However, there is no data on how many students dropped out of school due to the headscarf ban that began in 1997 and continued until 2013. This lack of data is one of the reasons why this study was conducted using a qualitative method.

This study uses the qualitative research method that employs a process addressing social or human problems with a survey carried out in the natural settings of the participants, containing detailed opinions of participants (Creswell, 2015). The qualitative research method, which allows us to study events in context, is applied in interpretation and making sense of the network of relationships that dominate the situation in question. To understand how events, experiences, situations and behaviors are interpreted by the participants within the scope of the research, the qualitative research method adopts phenomenological research design. A phenomenological study

attempts to reveal the experiences, perceptions and the meaning attributed to the phenomena, and explains the shared opinions and thoughts of the participants regarding the phenomena in question. The aim of this study is to understand how women, who had to give up their education and working life due to the headscarf ban, evaluate the reflection of the ban on their human capital. And as such, the purpose of this study is to understand how the women who had to forfeit their education and work life due to headscarf ban view the impact of the ban on human capital in Türkiye's economy.

The preferred sampling method in this study is snowball sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods in defining participants. Using this method, the women who have directly experienced the problematic of this research have been reached. The purposeful sampling allowed describing the perceptions of the women who have been withdrawn from education and work life due to headscarf ban regarding the human capital of Türkiye. Snowball sampling is achieved by reaching the other persons to be included through the existing participant, and thereby, growing the sample size like a snowball as the study progresses (Kümbetoğlu, 2005).

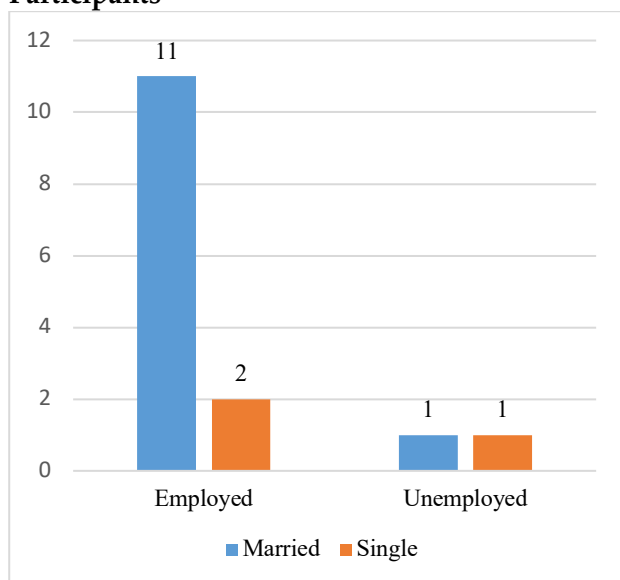
In this study, the data-gathering device was semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The data received by in-depth interviews were analyzed by content analysis method. The content analysis is the analysis that reveals patterns, themes and categories from the data obtained.

Research Findings

15 women were interviewed within the scope of the research. Since this is a study to understand how human capital of the women who have experienced the ban and who have left the school or work due to the ban have changed, the women who have been included into to the research sample are those who not just know the ban, but those who have experienced it first-hand. For this reason, the age range of the women interviewed is between 35 and 45. All 15 participants have completed their undergraduate degree, 2 have finished their schools abiding the headscarf ban,

and the other 13 suspended their education and work life. Whereas 3 of the participants are single, 12 are married; participants point out that the headscarf ban was a factor in their getting married earlier than planned. Graph 4 shows the marital status and employment status of the participants.

Graph 4. Marital Status and Employment of the Participants



The interview notes with the 15 respondents of the study were converted into 6 themes. These themes regarding headscarf ban are: its reflection on socioeconomic status, its reflection on the individualization process, headscarf ban as a threshold to building future, its impact on the position of women within the community and the family, its impact on the work life, and the loss of human capital.

i) Reflection on Socioeconomic Status

During the interviews, participants were asked to assess their current economic status. The shared opinion of the participants was that the barriers raised against participation to education during February 28th period that instigated the headscarf ban, and the barriers against the economic life in its aftermath, had a negative impact on income level. Participants state that the education they have received should have corresponded to a better income and that their socioeconomic statuses have been negatively affected by the conditions of the period in question. A participant, who said she turned down job offers during the ban,

emphasized that the ban directly affected her economic situation.

“My husband and I are civil servants. We live by normal standards. My husband is an imam hatip [religious vocational high school] graduate, he is an imam. I, too, am an imam hatip graduate. With our education in the imam hatip school, we could have been at better places and our economic situation could have been much better. Sure, we say alhamdulillah [thank Allah], but we’re in this situation because of what they did to us during February 28th period. We tried to do the best we could, and that’s what happened.” (A1, employed, married, 36 years)

In addition to the economic losses, 7 of the participants mentioned the loss of their professional status. Despite their professional skills, their late entry into the work life due to the ban has caused them not just loss of income, but also caused them to fall behind. One participant expressed this situation as such:

“I started as a civil servant when I was 29. Yet, I have graduated from the university when I was 21. I’ve lost eight years of work, rank and degree. I missed out on the opportunities I could have got in that period. I’m starting all over, from zero, right now. I’ve been working at the Ministry for seven and a half years, and I’m still working as a computer operator. We didn’t have much the notion of a specialist back then. There’s a difference between my time and the present. What I was aiming for was very different. Like I said, back then, we weren’t preparing for a specialty exam, since there was none. If I had entered then, I could have been at different places, in terms of self-education.” (A4, employed, single, 37 years)

In the socioeconomic status assessment, the peer comparison of participants came forth. While they compared their positions with those of the same age in education or work life, they stated that despite having the same world-view, their male friends were ahead of them in their career process. Defining headscarf ban as a sexist practice is justified with the argument that men of same status and position did not experience a problem with respect to women.

“Not the people with opposing view, but our own friends, our male friends, they finished their schools and started working in the government. Think about it. My friends are now governors, and I’m barely an officer. This ban was supposedly against an ideology, but the

ideology also had gender. It's okay if you're a man, but if you're a woman, you're out."(A3, employed, married, 41 years)

A participant who faced the ban during her work life expressed a differing view from other participants that being devoid of income and social security was much harder. The end of a regular income leads to a severe economic deprivation and loss of social status.

"We were forced to resign from the institution following an inspection conducted by the inspectors. Suddenly everything was taken away from us while we were working. Of course, this caused both psychological and economic problems. You felt the economic difficulties this way: you have a steady income, and suddenly, they take away it from your hands. Your social security is in trouble."(A7, employed, married, 42 years)

3 participants who could not start their work life due to the ban stated that despite their economic status is fine; they could not achieve their aimed social status. Saying that it is very special for them to start a family and to become a mother, but bearing only the "mother" identity was inadequate for them during their children's growth.

"I entered the university with a country-wide achievement degree, and if things went as they were, it was possible for me to attain a good place in the bureaucracy. However, suddenly you become someone who cannot express herself, or more precisely, someone who cannot realize what one can actually achieve. I've shut myself down. For so long, I only did handwork."(A9, unemployed, married, 39 years)

ii) Reflection on Individualization Process

While occupational skills are important when one enters work life, self-confidence, and the sense of competence are also decisive factors. Participants believe that in their current work life they are in a left-behind position when compared to their previous expectations. It can also be seen that the impact of the marginalization that they have experienced in the past still lingers. Despite the fact that the ban has been lifted, the justification of the headscarf ban –the opinion that "someone with headscarf cannot perform state business"– still has its reflections on the work life of women.

When the participants are asked about the reflection of the headscarf ban on their individualization process, they expressed a lack of self-confidence.

"It's still going on, like since I wear headscarf, no one says do it like this or that. I'm still in the background. I always think if there's someone with a headscarf, she should be in the foreground. It's not something I feel spontaneously, it's rather something imposed on me. If anyone was going to represent us, it shouldn't become me. Yes, it was such a lack of self-esteem." (A7, employed, married, 42 years)

They also underline that this lack of self-confidence is due not just to the headscarf ban that de facto began in 1998 and was lifted in 2013 gradually, but also to the psychological violence and pressure exerted by those in possession of state power.

"We were already secondary class citizens... No, saying 'secondary class citizens' is not enough. We were worse off than how black people were treated in the USA. I was ashamed to say that I have graduated from imam hatip [high school]. We've always been rendered outcasts and losers."(A4, unemployed, married, 39 years)

While amongst the women interviewed within the scope of the research who are in active work life feel the impact of economic loss more, women who have either cut short their education or have graduated but have not been able to participate in the work life gave more importance to the negative influence of ban on their social status. This situation, not being able to achieve self-realization, is described by these women as not being allowed to use their own potential and deprecation of their academic achievements.

"I've had a very successful student life, and later, I have graduated from one of Türkiye's best schools in those days. You have serious goals, you've entered university with a degree, and suddenly, they wanted you to go and stay at home. It's like your many talents in your core are left to rot. That's why, at that point, not being able to realize myself was the thing that hurt me the most." (A6, employed, married, 37 years)

Since being unable to work because of the headscarf ban caused economic dependency, the women who started to work after the ban

attempted to define their individualization process with their salaries.

"Having economic freedom, or being able to do good things for one's children with one's own means or when the time comes, being able to support your spouse are important, since they provide gratification. But you haven't had the confidence of having earned your own financial freedom. And maybe we didn't think about it, since it hurts, but we're left dependent. You realize it later: you take allowances from your partner, since you have to. But if you thought about how much it hurts you each and every time, it would be unbearable. That's why you went through with it without thinking, but then, like I said, after you start working, you realize that it was a really important obstacle."(A8, employed, married, 40 years)

In addition to the loss of labor, women who have been cut off from education and work life due to the headscarf ban seem to be basing their psychological disorders on the ban. Women who adhered to the ban at the time stated that neither they felt happy in their work life, nor felt their qualities were reflected in their work efficiency.

"I know that many of my friends also attribute their subsequent psychosomatic disorders to the pressures of that period. It was an economic challenge, of course. Society lost its workforce, too. Our seats were not left open, but our friends who opened their heads and worked were more depressed than we were. I don't think it's right to expect something good out of job done under oppression, unhappily."(A11, employed, married, 42 years)

The participants drew attention to the human capital loss, to the loss of motivation and desire to gain any skills or achievement in sciences, arts, sports and etc. since they lost time fighting against the headscarf ban. The ban happened during these women's most active time of their lives. In addition to being suspended from the education and work life, the women with headscarves were also forbidden to gain competencies, production skills and value because of this ban.

"At the age of 17-18, we were overwhelmed by great psychological pressures. We just fought with the headscarf ban, we didn't say whether we could be a scientist or we could produce anything. We couldn't. We didn't have to chance to think about these. My only ideal was that, since I've opened my head, I had to finish this school in 4 years. That's it. How sad. How sad for a

young woman in university."(A2, unemployed, married, 43 years)

All the women interviewed recounted their personal experiences during the headscarf ban as being shrugged away, ignored, and many times, being greeted with insults, humiliation and discrimination. Their examples, from many places and events, render concrete the discrimination, such as when they attempted to participate in university conferences, despite being unable to work at a university with a headscarf; or when they went shopping at a store; when they socialized with their families or when they were witnesses at a court of law. It has been observed that the process caused serious damage to women's individualization, self-esteem, and their ability to develop socioeconomic characteristics.

iii) As a Threshold to Building Future

When asked how the headscarf ban changed their plans for the future, it was observed that rather than the economic pressure, emotional pressure and violence had more impact on their plans. The ban as a threshold influencing their future lives was rendered concrete, when each recounted a specific experience regarding the event. The women who are exposed to the headscarf ban in education are between the ages of 18-25. This age range is a very important period in future planning. For women who were exposed to the ban during this period, the ban became a breaking point in building their future. In response to this question, the participants got emotional; pointing out that each personal experience of headscarf ban also set the threshold that determined the Türkiye's human capital.

"I mean, we wouldn't be seen as individuals, as employees, it was always a threat, always a pressure. Let's say we finished university, I would not be able to find a job with my headscarf. So getting the diploma was the only goal, I wasn't thinking about working." (A2, unemployed, married, 43 years)

The participants stated that their future planning has changed direction with the headscarf ban, and during the process the institution of marriage became one of the first choices to build a new life. Women's education level in Turkey is one of the most effective variables that impacts their entry to work life. Women having a higher

education degree is a sine qua non for them to be employed in white-collar jobs. According to the calculations of the Gender Inequality Index of the United Nations Development Programme in 2010, whereas the ratio of women with at least secondary education in Turkey is 50.2%, it is 72.2% in men. The high difference between men and women, even in the secondary school level, clearly shows that Turkey has certain issues in the process of schooling of women. In 2020, the labor force participation rate was 72.6 percent among men, while it was only 34 percent among women. Despite there is a need for education, employment and social policies to increase women's participation in education and work life, the removal of the women with headscarves from the system has led women to make different plans for future. The labor force participation rate of women is already quite low. With the ban, educated and qualified women were excluded from education. Therefore, it is considered rational for the labor force participation rate to remain low for a long time as the potential female labor force is not used.

"There is also this condition with the girls with headscarves: they would refrain from some social activities more than others to experience their religious values and their religious feelings. They were more focused on their personal achievements and their potential. And what happened when this was off the table? They withdrew to their homes. What's positive about it? We got married and had children. Perhaps, I wouldn't have got married or perhaps would have had at a much later age. Perhaps, I wouldn't have had kids or perhaps would have had them at a much later age."(A11, employed, married, 42 years)

The participants stated that their goals and their conditions at the time did not match with their future planning, and that oppression and ban prevented one from dreaming about future. With the acceptance that this environment will prevail as it is and so will the ban, it became obligatory to focus on the jobs that can be done with the headscarf.

"They told me you couldn't finish physics. It's very hard. So, I thought I'd graduate and stay at academy and achieve success. While I was dealing with these headscarf issues, I forgot my goals. Nothing left to aim

for. I lost the will to stay in the academy. I only learned I graduated with degree when I completed my undergraduate studies. My purpose was just to pass the courses and finish the school. But especially after these events, I told myself that you can't extend school after all this. You can't endure this torture anymore. Were we intimidated? Yes. There was nothing we could do. You know, when we're running away from those cops, when they were holding our friends and dragging them down..."(A4, unemployed, married, 33 years)

iv) Position in Society and Family

When asked about their views on how their position in society and family was affected, the participants stated that their roles were limited to motherhood and that this situation was scorned by society. Given the fact that they had a conservative family structure, it is observed that even in their environment, the concepts of "marriage" and "motherhood" do not hold any value socioeconomic status-wise. One of the participants' relative's comments about her suggest that the society considered them dysfunctional.

"I was a role model around here. Then the children came, and I gave up work life. Everyone was saying stuff like, "See, she was once riding a high horse, and now, she's but a mom."" (A2, unemployed, married, 43 years)

The women who were interviewed were constantly exposed to comments by their relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors regarding whether she should abide by the headscarf ban or not, and they stated that the only subject related to them was seen within the framework of the headscarf and the ban. While these women who were just in the prime of their youth have been physically exposed to the headscarf ban, as they were physically subjected to the headscarf ban, they were constantly lectured, talked about and objectified.

"People around you would give you ideas about that, as they did about many things. Actually, for a woman in her 20s, it's not exactly bearable psychologically for someone to interfere with her life. I can tell you that I really struggled with all of this. When I say struggle, of course, I've never openly clashed with the people in front

of me. Actually, it wasn't easy when I look back." (A11, employed, married, 42 years)

The women's attitudes towards the headscarf ban are different from that of their families. While some of the women's families supported their children who left school or work due to the ban, some took a stand against them so that they continue school or work. There were also some respondents who stated that their families did not interfere and allowed them to make their own choices regarding the headscarf ban. Despite the lack of a common attitude towards the ban amongst families, how the women were affected by the reaction from their environment varied according to their families' reactions. When their relatives or neighbors gave them advice to adhere the headscarf ban, the support of the family has either strengthened or weakened the women's positions in the community. And when their parents gave advice to these women to obey the headscarf ban, this has caused serious problems between parents and children.

"We two sisters were expelled from college, we went there until the last moment, each time knowing that we would be expelled any day. And then the envelopes came in from school, and my dad took them home and said, 'My girls have a degree, and I'm proud of you.' I felt so strong." (A4, employed, single, 37 years)

"My family was against me dropping out of school, they said, 'You will uncover your head, nothing will happen.' I was against it, my father didn't talk to me for a year, he said 'let her get married, if she won't study'. My mother tried to convince me, she said, 'Are you going to be dependent on the money your husband gives you at home like me?' In the meantime, my husband wanted to marry me, and to be honest, getting married was a solution for both my family and me." (A2, unemployed, married, 43 years)

Women not being able to participate into education, and indirectly, to participate in work life led them to become financially dependent on their fathers or husbands. Given that women's participation in the labor force in Türkiye was 32.8 percent in 2021, whereas men's participation was 70.3% (TUIK, 2021), so women's representation ratio in economic and social life is lower than men. Social policies for women must be designed to equalize the socioeconomic indicators of men and women. The headscarf ban in Türkiye, while

making women's representation equal to men in social and economic life even more difficult, also had an impact that forced women to get married, start a family and become mothers.

"I'm 40 years old, and I've only been working for 10 years. So, there's a ten-year loss. This 10 years of loss is also something that made me a consumer. It was a period in which I've been living off my spouse and family. So, of course, if I'd earned my own money, I'd perhaps have made my own enterprises more comfortably. Since I'm a bit of a free-spirited person, it's really uncomfortable for me to be dependent on someone." (A8, employed, married, 40 years)

Among the participants' response to how their position in the family has changed, their remark on how their children's perception changed and their commentaries are of significance. They state that when they warn their children or give any advice to them as a mother, their children's reactions are shaped according their mother's educational output. These children who are especially given advice on how to study their lessons, to read a book and similar activities, children, not desiring to participate in such activities, tend to hold their mother as an example –unemployed, despite being educated– and deprecate the worth of education. This proves that the ban affects not only women who have fallen behind in economic and social life, but also their children. This reaction, described as a devalued education, carries the risk of negatively impacting children's participation in the education process. The assumption that headscarf ban had an impact on just the women whose education and work lives were interrupted is incomplete. The impact of headscarf ban is imparted from one generation to the other, and emerges as a devaluation of education. The participants state that their children consider their mother being unemployed as a disadvantage and add that their children are happier when they work.

"Later I saw my children got happier. They considered saying 'My mother doesn't work, she's a housewife' as something to be ashamed. To the question, 'What is your mother's occupation?', they would respond 'A teacher, but she is a housewife now, she doesn't work.' It is as if being a housewife is not a nice occupation, so my children were pleased with me during the time I worked." (A9, unemployed, married, 39 years)

Due to the headscarf ban, the idea of marriage became a priority for women who were unable to participate in education/work life. However, 4 of the participants in the interviews declared that the ban affected not only themselves, but also their spouses. One participant underlined that her husband did not prefer a public office because she wore a headscarf, while the other 3 participants pointed out that their spouses faced discrimination in the public office because of them. The women who were unable to embody their individual competencies by being left out of education and work life also feel responsible for the problems that their spouses face. This could be interpreted as headscarf ban's negative impact on women's human capital extending to create a psychological and emotional burden.

"If it weren't for the ban at university, neither would I have married early, nor would I have even thought of it. Since I couldn't go to school, I began to think of marriage as an option." (A2, unemployed, married, 43 years)

One of the main issues that emerged from the interviews was changing perception in their community and in their family regarding the roles of the women who began to work. They stated that when they were unemployed, they were not valued as housewives and that they knew that this was not on purpose, yet their value in the family and society was reduced as long as there was no "employed person" identity.

"When I was employed, I realized that my husband's perception of me had changed, and so did the people's perception around me. I've always made that meal, but while employed, I've received more respect for the meal that I prepared, and I was seeing that how I was being perceived by the community was also changing. Neither my husband nor the society was doing it knowingly, the respect was involuntary. The primary school teacher kept saying, 'Because you're at home' or a housewife friend of mine built sentences like 'Because we're not working.'" (A1, employed, married, 36 years)

v) **Work Life**

The common opinion of the participants regarding the question on how the headscarf ban

affected the entry to work life could be grouped as such: they had low expectations and accepted this will entail a hard process due to the ban, and also, they accepted they will be in a position that requires lower qualifications, despite the level of quality they possess. This condition means that in addition to the fact that their existing potential would be unusable, they would be lacking self-improvement, promotion, etc., along with motivation.

"We took the KPSS test [public personnel selection examination] again, and we passed it, and then we were assigned to an institution. I was assigned in 2008. In 2008, of course, persecution continued. It was there in the workplace as well. At the entrance, they were checking our hair. You couldn't sit at your desk that way. No way. I mean, we couldn't with a headscarf." (A1, employed, married, 36 years)

One of the top priority problems for women who have been unable to participate in work life for a long time due to the ban was that they couldn't even enter the central university examination with a headscarf. The participants stated that alternatives have been developed based on the state of the area from which one has graduated. Yet, especially for those who have graduated from political sciences and law, it would have been impossible to work in the public sector. They have emphasized that the demand for jobs in the private sector had increased. Due to the fact that in Türkiye private sector had significant share in education services, women with headscarves swayed towards the teaching profession, regardless of their field of graduation. While this has increased the number of people who had a teaching profession in Turkey, it also increased the demand for teacher training.

"After finishing school, I couldn't enter any job exam. One of my goals was to be an academic, but you couldn't enter either YDS [foreign language exam] or ALES [academic personnel and postgraduate education entrance exam]. So, in the period before that... When February 28th came, and I came to realize that it would be very hard for me to become a district governor or an inspector, etc. So, I thought I could be a teacher then. I received pedagogic formation at the time, for about a year. I also got my certificates, but teaching wasn't

possible, so I never got into work life.” (A2, unemployed, married, 43 years)

When the interviewed women were asked to assess their current situation in work life, the dominant view amongst them was that they were not exactly able to realize what they want in their work life. While stressing the importance of their struggle during the headscarf ban that gave them the ability to face challenges, to create solutions, and to become people with strong wills, they also felt left behind. As they could realize their own potential, the development of this potential into gains and their transformation into skills was also inhibited. They defined themselves between the age ranges of 18 to 25 as successful; they were willing people with goals. However, their perceptions of their current state indicate that they have accepted their current socioeconomic status. While their late start to work life poses a disadvantage, the requirements and expectations of work life are also challenging for them. These women who have dropped out of their universities following the headscarf ban could only complete their formal training only by taking exams from outside, and thus, they could not experience the education and training environment at school. In addition, they mentioned the negative impact of this situation in their work life.

“I couldn’t fulfill my goals at that time, and now I can’t fulfill my potential. My current situation is that of acceptance.” (A3, employed, married, 41 years)

Similar to the theme of reflections on socioeconomic status, the participants assessed the work life through peer comparison. While their entry age into labor market was higher due to the ban, while they could only start working recently, their peers had advanced through many stages in their work life. This deepened the difference between them and their peers. The belief that the gap between them will not be closed resulted with the acceptance of the current situation. The competition in work life that eliminates monotony and creates dynamics to increase the gains cannot be the driving force for women who have earned the right to work only after the ban has been lifted.

“Right now, my friends whom I started university with are about to become associates and even professors. They have completed 18 to 19 years in their work life,

but I am just in my 7th year in my work life.” (A7, employed, married, 42 years)

It was observed that the women with headscarves tended to accept the situation and that they felt they are late to build a career. In addition, the women who completed their university education following the lifting of the ban were reluctant to work. They stated that the source of this reluctance was the lag they felt in their career stages, their responsibilities to their family and children, and the difficulty in adapting to a new order.

“Of course, I couldn’t do what I wanted in life when I finished the department, because first of all, they accepted few [teachers]. Second of all, I couldn’t work seriously for KPSS [necessary to become a teacher in a public school]. I don’t have the luxury of working in another city. I have two kids and I have a family life. I can’t disrupt it and start an adventure again. That’s why I couldn’t start teaching.”(A2, unemployed, married, 43 years)

The private sector has been seen as an area where they could work with their headscarves during the ban. Yet, the participants state that the ban was instrumentalized by the employees to employ workers illegally in jobs incompatible with human dignity by paying low wages, by forcing them to perform jobs that did not fit their qualifications and by employing them without social security and etc.:

“Unfortunately, from 1998 to 2002, I worked with no social security. I couldn’t earn much from that job either. But I earned enough for myself. So, we were able to work under whatever circumstances they offered, but it was not possible for us to make demands. And when we did, they would respond, ‘We’re already employing you with your headscarf.’” (A8, employed, married, 40 years)

vi) Human Capital Loss

As part of the study, participants were asked to assess the ban from the aspect of social and economic losses on their behalf as well as the country. This process can be described as voluntarily forfeiting a qualified labor force, by excluding a group out of education and work life. The participants render this process concrete by giving examples from their successful friends.

They mention the careers and achievements of women with headscarves living abroad and underline that this human capital flight is a serious loss for Türkiye.

“A serious loss to the country. Many students with headscarves went abroad at that time. When I say ‘abroad’, I mean countries from USA, Austria to Australia. Most of them are in Austria. Many of my friends have had to complete their education abroad. I believe they would have been the cornerstone of this country if they have stayed in Türkiye.” (A8, employed, married, 40 years)

One participant has expressed the common view among participants that due to headscarf ban Türkiye’s labor force was wounded by “a slaughter of youth”. Expelling a group from the educational center, who already has the potential and the will to participate into the workforce, one of the most important inputs in economic production, can be described as giving up on the workforce that will produce the added value needed for the country’s economy:

“The really bright brains disappeared during that period. Some of them were able to complete their studies. Likewise, I have friends who absolutely refused to go abroad and refused to open their head in Türkiye. They were in law school. A lot of people whom I believe would have been very successful, had been seriously injured by the process at that time.” (A9, unemployed, married, 39 years)

There were not just women who have quit education or who have never been able to attend higher education, but there were also women who withdrew from work life due to the ban. There were not just women who have quit education or who have never been able to attend higher education, but there were also women who withdrew from work life due to the ban.

Therefore, qualified human resource could not be used in economic production. Preventing women with headscarf from being employed in the fields of medicine, law and education has led to the exclusion of a group from these three areas that form the trivet of central government in Türkiye. Personal and public expenditures for individuals who would have been employed in health, law and educational disciplines have also remained a cost

item due to the headscarf ban. Labor force potential in two basic areas of human capital that define the welfare state, the health and education, has been left inert. In addition, given that education is provided by public, it can be said that education expenditures for women with headscarves did not provide any benefit in the form of entry into work life.

“But the fact that people with a certain amount of accumulation and potential have withdrawn from the workplace and that people who could climb up the ladder with their education are right now inactive since they have dropped out of school, of course, has caused great losses. But it’s hard for me to tell you clearly what kind of losses they are.” (A7, employed, married, 42 years)

In order to explain that women with headscarves have created a strong human capital, the participants gave examples of their friends and acquaintances who continued their education to get an undergraduate degree and who then entered the work life after the headscarf ban was lifted. However, they also noted that the time lost because of the ban has caused a serious loss of labor both for the individuals and for the country.

“I have such a neighbor. I really admire her. She’s a grandmother now. 48 years old. She had to quit Ankara University’s Faculty of Dentistry just in the middle of her education. When the ban is lifted, she goes back to dentistry. She finished it, and now she’s a beautiful dentist. She’s now a grandma, and her kids study at great places. She also has her own dental clinic. But how old is she? 48-50 years old. She couldn’t make it in time; she just opened up her place this year and began putting back her economy in order. A lifetime. It’s not coming back, no way to make amends for it.” (A3, employed, married, 41 years)

Conclusion

The headscarf ban in Türkiye that lasted nearly 16 years has negatively affected the participation of the women with headscarves in education and work life. There is no data on the number of women who had to quit their university education or leave work life during the ban. However, the headscarf, which has been on the agenda of Türkiye’s politics for a long time and still discussed

long after the ban has been lifted, is one of the priorities of politics in Türkiye. This study attempts to understand the headscarf ban, not from its political context, but from the aspect of how the women who first faced the ban reflect upon their participation into the labor force, being an input for Türkiye's economy, and from the aspect of the meaning they attribute to the relation of the ban and Türkiye's human capital. Within this scope, 6 themes have been identified from the semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with 15 participants.

In the theme headscarf ban's reflections on women's socioeconomic status, the participants have explained that the ban is reflected negatively both on their economic and social status, and that they are deprived of better social and economic life due to the education and employment ban. Although the ban had been based on political grounds, women had to be involved in social and economic life as low-profile individuals because of their clothing. After the ban has been lifted, these women had turned away from their former socioeconomic status goals, since they re-started their university education at their 30s, since they were estranged from their professional skills due to the pause in their work lives, and because of their hopelessness, reluctance and purposelessness due to their perception that their right to education or work with headscarf would not be possible. Participants have encoded the effect of the ban on their individualization as a woman as a loss of self-esteem. Another significant finding is that although the participants are now involved in work life and the ban has been lifted, they try to remain invisible when the situation demands the representation of the institution that they are employed. This could be due to the humiliation that they have faced due to the headscarf ban and the feeling of helplessness against security personnel, academics and the directors of the institutions that they have worked, often expressed during the interviews. And this can be interpreted as being a woman with headscarf is accepted to be a disadvantage.

Decisions or experiences of the women with headscarves that had an impact of their future plans during their encounter with the ban indicate that the ban caused traumatic experiences. The

constant pursuit of law enforcement, hair shaving, wearing wigs, pressures in school and work environment led the women with headscarves to seek different alternatives. Foremost among them are the tendency to seek jobs they can work with a headscarf and marriage. Being a teacher in the private sector has been prominent among the jobs that can be worked with the headscarf. Their demand for professions were not according to their own qualifications and skills, but increasingly for professions where they could work with their headscarves. On the other hand, many participants declared that despite not being in their former plans, they began considering getting married due to the ban. Women with headscarves were left out of the women's struggle for economic independence and employment –the struggle to avoid being economically dependent to a man, whether he is a partner, father or brother. Along with the political dimensions of the headscarf ban, this also shows its sexist structure. While women couldn't participate in education and work life due to the headscarf ban, men who shared the same worldview, men who were their partners, fathers and brothers etc. did not face any sort of ban. From the aspect of gender equality, it can be said that the headscarf ban increased inequality.

According to the participants, the woman's position in the community and family has been affected by the headscarf ban in two different ways: First, the pressures on these women by the society to abide by the rules of the ban became more overwhelming in the cases where their families did not show support. And second, despite being successful university students, they were despised by their relatives and neighbors, since, as expressed in the commonly quoted expression, they "sat at home" following the headscarf ban. The women who worked for a while have emphasized that when they were employed, the perspective of their spouses and children changed and their role in the family has been more valued; and yet, when they did not, that value was reduced. Thus, the attitudes of the closest people to these women who support their stance against the headscarf ban and their "unemployed" status affected their roles within the family. Their views on their work life were based on the framework formed by feelings and

observations of falling behind on their peers, their acceptance of the current situation and the unjust practices against the employees with headscarves by the employers who took advantage of the ban. By providing examples from their friends' current careers, they mentioned the negative consequences of being late to start the work life on both individual competence and work efficiency. They have highlighted that even if the ban has been lifted, because of the ban, investment on human capital has brought returns at a delayed time, not when it was due.

Participants stated that the ban had a negative impact on their economic and social status. However, this is remarkable that they also consider the difficulties experienced by their other friends as "a great loss of human capital". Leaving aside their own experiences, their own careers, their own goals and their own plans, their attempts to describe the status of their successful friends may be interpreted as they still do not see themselves as qualified labor force that is an input of the country's economic production process. In addition, the women who have a successful career abroad are considered a loss of human capital for the country. They also underlined that the high added value to Türkiye's economy that the women who have dropped out of school or work would have provided is totally ignored. However, the fact that all participants consider their friends as a loss to the country rather than thinking about their own quality, skill, and competence can be interpreted as even if the ban has been lifted, they do not consider themselves sufficient. This suggests that even if they were involved in education and work life after the headscarf ban, the feeling of deprivation prevails.

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